



**THE NINTH SESSION OF  
THE WORLD URBAN FORUM**

Cities 2030, Cities for All:  
Implementing the New Urban Agenda



WUF 9 OPENING SPEECH: 8 February 2018

**Madam Maimunah Mohd Sharif**

**Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director, UN-Habitat**

The right honourable, Dato' Sri Haji Mohammad Najib bin Tun Haji Abdul

Razak,

Honourable Ministers,

Mayors and Representatives of Local and Regional Governments,

Stakeholders,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Welcome to the Ninth session of the World Urban Forum in Kuala Lumpur.

It is a great honour for me to welcome you to my first event as Executive Director of UN-Habitat, the lead United Nations Programme for human settlements and sustainable urbanization.

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I would like to convey my sincere gratitude to the Government of Malaysia and the City of Kuala Lumpur for hosting WUF9, and to my countrywomen and -men, the Malaysian people, for the warm welcome you have extended to us, the United Nations family and the participants of WUF from 173 countries. I understand that over 25,000 people have registered for WUF, and this week, some 470 organizations and representatives of Member States have come together to take part in nearly 560 official events.

This is a very special World Urban Forum, because it is the first since the adoption of the New Urban Agenda, in Quito, in 2016. It is also the first since Member States committed to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015.

Additionally, this is the first WUF to be held in Asia in a decade, since WUF4 took place in Nanjing in 2008.

Our cities today host more than half the world's population, generate more than 70 per cent of the GDP worldwide and are responsible for as much as 70 per cent of global energy consumption. Our cities are also the backdrop to many armed conflicts in the world and play host to millions of refugees and migrants.

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The challenge facing our cities – in both developed and developing countries – are many, and we are only now beginning to identify and overcome those challenges.

At the same time, cities have the potential to lead a country's growth, as drivers of sustainability and as tools for social integration and equality. Cities often symbolize hope, and possibility. Well-planned, well-managed urbanization is a tool for development. Used properly, its effects are felt far beyond the boundaries of a city: through villages and townships, in rural as well as urban areas and across regional and country borders.

If we want to have a chance of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, we need to get our cities right.

Excellencies,

My dear friends,

The theme of WUF9 is “Cities 2030, Cities for All: Implementing the New Urban Agenda.”

With its open and inclusive nature, the World Urban Forum is an opportunity for partners from all over the world, representing many priorities and points of view, to contribute to the global conversation on our cities and human settlements.

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The World Urban Forum is a platform for all people to exchange their views, ideas, expertise, and perhaps even frustrations, to work together for a better future. All humans live in human settlements by definition, whether they are rural or urban. The challenges of sustainable urban development are therefore intuitive to all of us: the language may be technical sometimes, but the ideas behind them make sense to each and every one of us.

By selecting *Cities 2030, Cities for All* as the theme, we wished to recognize that all people must be at the core of the thinking on urbanization. Cities attract people from all walks of life; they therefore need to embrace diversity, and make social inclusion a priority. The city of the future must be one that leaves no one behind, regardless of his or her gender, age, physical ability, and nationality or migration status.

The needs of integrated and holistic development plan at national / central level, at regional / state level and at local level is very important to consciously implement the New Urban Agenda and 17 Sustainable Development Goals. With the good governance and geared towards outcome based.

This makes WUF the ideal platform to debate the contribution that positive urban development makes to delivery of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 11, and the New Urban Agenda.

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The New Urban Agenda is the result of a long process of negotiations. It sits alongside other key pieces of documentation, such as the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

The New Urban Agenda provides a clear framework for activities and reinforces existing aspirations laid out in Goal 11 – to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable – and all other urban aspects of the SDGs.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Until three weeks ago, I was a Mayor, who, at the Habitat III PrepCom in New York, was appealing to the United Nations and others to localize the New Urban Agenda and the SDGs. Now, I need to “walk the talk”. Now, as Executive Director, I am appealing to you, our partners, to support one another, and the United Nations, to help countries achieve the SDGs, through the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. UN-Habitat wants to work with you to make that happen. Having been on “the other side” I know that the expectations of people, in large and small cities, and large and small towns and villages, are high.

UN-Habitat has more than 40 years of experience in urbanization and our expertise is highly valued by member states and local governments. Our expertise combines normative, coordination and operational elements, which make it one of our greatest assets.



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As a focal point for sustainable urbanization in the UN System, we are committed to supporting countries to deliver on the New Urban Agenda, SDG 11 and the implementation of the urban-related SDGs in close collaboration with other UN agencies and stakeholders.

A strengthened UN-Habitat is one that can effectively coordinate the United Nations' work on sustainable urbanization, and monitoring and reporting on the New Urban Agenda. An empowered UN-Habitat can mobilize actors and partners to support implementation of the urban-related SDGs but also assists governments to apply the normative standards of the New Urban Agenda with the operational knowledge drawn from UN-Habitat's forty years in the field.

We are also well placed to promote localizing the SDGs and to ensure their implementation is contextually applied. In collaboration with the World Bank and other UN agencies, we are committed to facilitating increased financing of urbanization for countries, cities and human settlements.

I count on your support to strengthen UN-Habitat as we continue on this important path towards a better urban future.

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Excellencies, friends,

I would like to conclude my remarks by thanking you for your serious and committed discussions during this journey, which has placed urbanization on the top of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you, including my new colleagues at UN-Habitat, and my predecessor in the post, Dr. Joan Clos, who so skilfully led the Habitat III process.

Our destination is clear: inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable human settlements for all. The New Urban Agenda is the path by which we will reach it.

I wish you all a fruitful week here at the World Urban Forum.

Thank you.

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