

Dear colleagues,

I am excited to observe together with you, my first *World Habitat Day* as UN-Habitat's Executive Director. I would like to encourage each one of you to be actively involved in this unique day to make it a resounding success.

*World Habitat Day* provides us a unique opportunity to focus international attention on key issues surrounding sustainable urbanization, human settlements and improving urban living conditions.

It is timely and fitting that the global observance of *World Habitat Day* will take place here at our Headquarters, our home, at the United Nations Office at Nairobi, Republic of Kenya. On 15th September on World Clean-up day 2018, I joined county and government officials cleaning up the beaches in Mombasa on the Kenyan coast. Following this, UN-Habitat will explore our partnership further, on how to improve municipal waste management in Kenyan cities, commencing with Nairobi, Mombasa and Kisumu.

This year's theme, *Municipal Solid Waste Management*, is particularly critical. The total waste in the world is enormous! Some of it is recycled but a lot is simply discarded, causing health problems for people and their animals and polluting our environment. The amount of waste produced by individuals, communities, businesses, institutions, markets and factories continues to grow tremendously.

**The following figures clearly demonstrate that we cannot continue to consume and dispose of waste the way we currently are:**

Every year, we produce over **2 billion tonnes** of waste globally.

**99%** of the stuff we buy is thrown away within six months

To accommodate the world's population of approximately 7.6 billion people, we would need almost **1.7 planet earths** to sustain our resource consumption and absorb our waste.



Tackling our waste management challenges requires imagination and innovation. During my time as Mayor of the State of Penang, Malaysia, I introduced an idea of rethinking waste management, to complement the 3Rs of reducing, reusing and recycling. Instead of allowing waste to be simply waste, a different approach to the concept of waste was introduced. We can all make small adjustments to our consumption styles, by using alternatives to disposable plastic items, such as bottles, cups, plates and cutlery, making a conscious effort to recycle correctly and fixing broken items instead of simply throwing them away.

UN-Habitat is scaling up its role in supporting cities to improve their waste management practices, to lead in designing cost effective and efficient systems to ensure we collect and dispose of waste properly. I am therefore pleased, that on 1 October 2018, UN-Habitat and partners are discussing a call for action on *Waste-Wise Cities* recognising cities that are leading in effective waste management.

I believe that effective waste management starts with us all as individuals. Through collective action, we can achieve a world that is cleaner, greener, safer, healthier and happier, for us to live, work and play in. I look forward to your active engagement in Kenya and around the world on this day in our efforts to promote cleaner, greener, safer and healthier cities.

Warm regards,

Maimunah Mohd Sharif