

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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VIDEO MESSAGE ON WORLD HABITAT DAY 5 October 2020

Each year World Habitat Day focuses attention on the state of the world's towns and cities. This year's observance highlights the centrality of housing as a driver for sustainable urban development.

Currently, 1 billion people live in overcrowded settlements with inadequate housing. By 2030, that number will rise to 1.6 billion. Action is needed now to provide low-income families and vulnerable populations with affordable housing with security of tenure and easy access to water, sanitation, transport and other basic services. To meet global demand, more than 96,000 housing units will need to be completed every day – and they must be part of the green transition

The urgency of improving living conditions has been brought to the fore by COVID-19, which has devastated the lives of millions in cities. Access to clean water and sanitation, along with social distancing, are key responses to the pandemic. Yet in slums it has proved difficult to implement these measures. This means an increased risk of infection, not only within slums, but in whole cities, many of which are largely serviced by low-income informal sector workers living in informal settlements.

On World Habitat Day, in this crucial Decade of Action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, I call for heightened efforts to promote the partnerships, pro-poor policies, and regulations needed to improve housing in cities. As we strive to overcome the pandemic, address the fragilities and inequalities it has exposed, and combat climate change, now is the time to harness the transformative potential of urbanization for the benefit of people and planet.