

Statement by UN-Habitat Executive Director, Ms. Maimunah Mohd Sharif

Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh.

Good evening, good afternoon and good morning to all of you.

World Habitat Day 2020 is historic for many reasons. For the first time since 1986, we held the global observance in hybrid fashion. Surabaya is at the centre of a network of knowledge events and reflections across all continents, in 44 countries and 57 cities. For the first time, WHD is truly global in its reach and scope.

I would like to thank all the countries, cities and communities who built events around the theme Housing for All: Towards a Better Urban Future. As we are now 10 months into the Decade of Action towards 2030, I hope we have used World Habitat Day to take stock of our efforts to ensure no one and no place is left behind.

Many participants today have committed to working in partnership — be it with cities, local governments, the UN, grassroot groups, and the private sector — to accelerate implementation of the New Urban Agenda and achievement of the SDGs and in particular SDG11. Here are some of the commitments made by our partners on World Habitat Day:

The Government of France is committed to working with UN-Habitat and to developing innovative solutions for affordable housing.

The Government of South Africa is committed to translating the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda into regional strategies, action frameworks, and to foster interactive learning and innovative regional financing for Southern Africa.

The Mexican Government is committed to creating by the end of the year an urban excellence and innovation unit to foster innovation to solve the challenges of cities.

The city of Subang Jaya has committed to work towards doing its voluntary local review in commemoration of its city status later this month.

Mr. Ian Shapiro, Executive Director of Reall, a real estate company, is committed to working with UN-Habitat to work towards delivering housing to the growing populations of Asia and Africa.

These are commitments by countries, cities, the private sector and communities. I would like to urge all of us as individuals to make similar commitments and more importantly to ensure that we are able to put them into action.

I have asked my team to follow up with all the organisers of Urban October events - now more than 1 thousand of them worldwide to catalogue these commitments and to report in 2021 the actions undertaken by all our partners.

Ladies and gentlemen,

World Habitat Day is also an opportunity to exchange ideas, share experience and work together to find ways to scale up urban solutions. The housing challenge is never more urgent than this year. 2020, dominated by COVID-19, is all about ensuring everyone has adequate housing to protect our families from the disease.

Several key findings have emerged from the Roundtable discussions. This include the following:

Accelerating achievement of the SDGs and implementation of the New Urban Agenda requires partnership and coordination at all levels, and the sharing of experiences from the local level.

The Urban Agenda Platform is a great opportunity to accelerate actions towards the achievement of the New Urban Agenda and SDG11. As our distinguished guests have rightfully highlighted today, we truly believe that it will be a place to share and learn, an opportunity to engage in dialogue and exchange, and a powerful tool for us all to track, monitor, and evaluate our work. It is our hope that it will be a powerful catalyst to support policy making and evidence-based action, but also to show the benefits of urbanization.

Ensuring recovery from COVID-19 requires an inclusive, participatory approach and all of community action. We need to raise awareness of the situation in informal settlements, and equally we need to create incentives for stakeholders including donors and the private sector to finance plans and strategies to transform and improve lives in slums. And for the recovery to be resilient, a people-centered approach that empowers

the poor is needed to make sure not only infrastructure but also livelihoods are improved.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We only have 10 years left to achieve the ambitious Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). World Habitat Day marks the completion of three quarters of the first year of consolidated actions. COVID-19 has certainly made it easier to work together as champions of urban settlements.

We must keep our eye fixed on the prize. SDG #11, the urban SDG, is a docking station for all the other SDGs. Housing for All is not just about the built environment but fulfils a need more fundamental - the need to build homes and communities. I hope you see now why we regard housing for all as a human right.

For the rest of this month, which we are calling Urban October, I hope you will continue to join webinars and events in your own countries to renew ties and commitments toward a better urban future.

Finally, let thank the Government of the Republic of Indonesia and the city of Surabaya for hosting the global observance of World Habitat Day. Let me also extend my thanks to honourable ministers, mayors and community leaders who have made the virtual gathering possible. Your contributions are very much appreciated.

I now officially close World Habitat Day 2020 and I look forward to seeing all of you again at the end of the month when we celebrate World Cities Day on 31 October 2020 in Nairobi, Kenya.

Thank you / Xiexie / Shukraan / Merci / Spasiba / Gracias!