

22nd March 2023

**Statement by Ms. Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Under-Secretary
General and Executive Director of the United Nations Human
Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) on the occasion of the
Interactive Dialogue 2 on**

**Water for Sustainable Development: Valuing Water, Water-
Energy-Food Nexus, and Sustainable Economic and Urban
Development**

Wednesday 22 March, 3-6pm

- **Excellencies**
- **Honourable guests**
- **Distinguished delegates**
- **Colleagues, friends, ladies and gentlemen**

A very good afternoon to all of you!

I am honoured to join you as a panellist in this important Interactive Dialogue on Water for Sustainable Development.

Safe and affordable housing (SDG 11.1) is a basic human need that cannot be attained without access to basic services such as water and sanitation (SDG 6). These services are essential for maintaining a healthy, inclusive and productive urban living environment in which people can thrive.

The bulging urban population is already placing extra demands on both water resources and service delivery. Driven by rapid urbanisation, the climate crisis as well as conflicts, demand for water in cities is projected to increase by 50 to 70% in the next three decades. Estimates also show that by 2050, 1.9 billion urban dwellers will live with seasonal water shortages. Unless addressed, this will clearly have huge impacts on public health, poverty and inequality.

The good news is that 75 per cent of the cities and infrastructure expected to be in use by 2050 are yet to be built. Effective urban and territorial planning is instrumental in ensuring the integration of the water sector with other urban sectors, such as land use, housing, industry, energy, and transportation, and organize a more sustainable use of natural resources, including water.

The New Urban Agenda adopted at the UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) in Quito, Ecuador, in 2016 responds to the massive challenge of providing infrastructure and basic services, including water and sanitation to a growing urban population.

I would like to share with you four concrete actions that UN-Habitat and its partners are undertaking to promote sustainable economic and urban development and limit the footprint that cities have on water quality and quantity:

1. **Placing cities at the forefront of driving sustainable blue economic transitions** around the world – We support cities to adopt integrated land-sea spatial planning; the creation of jobs, skills, and people's and institutional capacity; waste and wastewater management; public spaces and urban ecosystem conservation; innovations in data; and building people-centred smart cities. For example, **The Go Blue Project: Connecting People, Cities and the Ocean**, is a partnership between the Government of

Kenya and the European Union, is an innovative Land-Sea planning project supported by UN-Habitat and UNEP.

2. **Promoting application of nature-based solutions in urban areas** - Applying nature-based solutions in urban planning interventions can significantly reduce water stress in urban areas. In the project, **Blue-green network planning as a spatial development and climate-resilient strategy in Belmopan, Belize**, UN-Habitat in collaboration with the Belmopan City Council and other local stakeholders, has developed a masterplan for the city that provides new strategies for managing urban flood risk, enhances and innovates the garden city character and promotes economic development in this rapidly developing city.
3. **Urban river regeneration** - Urban rivers have the potential to contribute immensely to the ecological, social and economic wellbeing of cities, thus planning and management of rivers can be leveraged as an opportunity to promote all-round revitalization of cities and climate resilience **The Nairobi Rivers Basin Regeneration Programme in Nairobi city, Kenya** is a joint initiative of the Nairobi City County Government and UN-Habitat to regenerate, restore and enhance the Nairobi Rivers Basin and related infrastructure.
4. **Finally, we nurture not-for-profit and solidarity-based peer partnerships partnerships between the hundreds of thousands of local public service providers** who are so critical to reaching SDG 6, but who urgently need capacity and resources to play their full role. We call on everyone – member states, municipalities, financiers, and civil society - to join the movement for Water Operators' Partnerships (WOPs) to take these partnerships to scale.

In concluding, local action is indispensable to global progress on the Water Action Agenda. UN-Habitat and its partners have registered three commitments to the Water Action Agenda:

- 1. Localising SDG 6- Transforming access to water by strengthened capacity of those closest to water provision.**
- 2. Wastewater 2030: Striving for a circular economy in a climate-resilient world.**
- 3. Global report on Sanitation and Wastewater Management in Cities and Human Settlements.**

Thank you.

687 words, 5 minutes