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WUF10 Highlights: Saturday, 8 February 2020

Joint Opening of WUF10 Assemblies

Welcoming delegates, moderator Nesreen Barwari, University of Duhok, emphasized all stakeholders' commitment to ensuring sustainable urban development and leaving no-one behind, and called for creating cities of opportunities by learning from, and supporting, each other.

Opening the session, Mohamed Al Khadar Al Ahmed, Abu Dhabi Department of Municipal Affairs and Transport, welcomed participants to Abu Dhabi, encouraging the forum to engage in "masterpiecing" through an exchange of views and experiences throughout the week.

Leah Namugerwa, Fridays for Future and Urban Youth Assembly representative, urged: more action and implementation, particularly against climate change; representation of children and youth in decision making; and resilient cities based on an understanding across cultures and generations.

Violet Shivutse, Huairou Commission and Women's Assembly representative, highlighted challenges faced by women in cities, including recognition as stakeholders in policy making, and called for a role for women in monitoring the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the New Urban Agenda (NUA).



Violet Shivutse, Huairou Commission and Women's Assembly representative

Rose Molokoane, Slum Dwellers International (SDI) and Grassroots Assembly representative, called for strong partnerships between local governments and grassroots movements. The latter, she argued, identify challenges and collect data that are essential to the implementation of the NUA.

Arsalaan Ahmed, CEO, HSBC Amanah and Business Assembly representative, said the public sector must create an enabling environment to foster innovation, and that the world could look to Islamic finance as an example of an alternate model of capital market.



Falah Al Ahbabi, Abu Dhabi Department of Municipal Affairs and Transport, and **Maimunah Mohd Sharif**, Under-Secretary General and Executive Director of UN-Habitat, preside over the flag-raising ceremony at the start of WUF10.



Arsalaan Ahmed, HSBC Amanah

Mohamed Boudra, President, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments representative, said a model of sustainable development with strong roots in culture and heritage is necessary to achieve the required societal transformation.

Siraj Sait, UN-Habitat Stakeholder Advisory Group Enterprise, noted the need for multi-stakeholder platforms that put forward evidence-based and pro-poor solutions.

In closing remarks, Maimunah Mohd Sharif, UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director, UN-Habitat, called for WUF10 to be an action-oriented and inclusive meeting, noting that implementation happens primarily at the local level. She commended the organizers for making this the first WUF where more than half of speakers are women.

Assemblies

URBAN YOUTH ASSEMBLY: First segment of the Youth and the Decade of Action high-level panel: Leah Namugerwa, Fridays for Future, called for urgent climate action, adding it is the first common crisis humanity has ever faced. Isaac Mutisya Muasa, Mathare One-Stop Youth Centre, said challenges facing youth, such as an unemployment, can be turned into opportunities in urban areas. Kristian Mjøen, Trondheim Municipality, spoke of various initiatives globally to promote youth engagement at the local level. Jennie Moore, British Columbia Institute of Technology, said young people are driving a cultural shift towards a sustainable economic



Siraj Sait, Co-Chair of the UN-Habitat Stakeholder Advisory Group Enterprise



Juan Ramón Lazcano De la Concha, Vice Mayor, Santa Cruz de Tenerife

system. Juan Ramón Lazcano de la Concha, Vice Mayor, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, described how his municipality sought to engage youth in cultural matters in consultations on how to better use urban space. Joyce Msuya, Deputy Executive Director, UN Environment Programme (UNEP), said the UN must gather fresh ideas from the youth as well as empower them to put pressure on politicians.

Breakout Sessions: Groups convened on: livelihoods in the blue and green economy; youth, peace and security; innovation and information and communication technologies; Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), cities and youth; governance; climate action in cities; the New Urban Agenda+5; and culture and public spaces. Participants discussed many pathways for youth to best contribute to the implementation of the NUA and the SDGs in cities, including through: new curricula in schools to bridge the digital divide among youths; consulting with young people on how to engage them using e-governance tools; and best practices in urban planning to foster youth-friendly public spaces. Participants highlighted, among other initiatives, various educational efforts to promote awareness of the SDGs in countries such as Russia and India.

Second Segment of the Youth and the Decade of Action high-level panel: Christine Knudsen, UN-Habitat, underlined that youth are leading the way in making cities sustainable. Stefan Germann, CEO, Botnar Foundation, said frontier technologies can be harnessed to improve the wellbeing of adolescents and young people in cities. Senegalese rapper Didier Awadi said that culture and music can be used to engage youth in sustainable development processes. Mohamed Maliki Bin Mohamed Rapiee, International Youth Center, said youth should be seen as having potential, pointing to the Malaysian 'Yellow Ribbon' program that gives young ex-convicts second chances. Maria Fernanda Rojas, Bogotá, said youth are rejecting the economic system adults are leaving them. Yosuke Nagai, Accept International, added the many youths in extremist organizations must not be left behind. Adil Sait, BuroHappold Engineering, said both structural and social change are needed to make cities more aid-responsive.

Closing session: Sharmaarke Abdullahi, UN-Habitat, presented a draft 'WUF10 Children and Youth DeclarAction' which calls on governments and local authorities to improve the implementation of the NUA and the SDGs. Representatives from the breakout sessions proposed adding new language

Moderator **Beth Chitekwe-Biti**

to the document based on the discussions that took place in their respective groups. They suggested, for example, that the DeclarAction call for the digital transformation of urban spaces, as well as for education systems that prepare young people for green jobs.

Grassroots Assembly: Opening: Beth Chitekwe-Biti, SDI, and Mino Ramarosan, Huairou Commission, moderated. The session highlighted grassroots achievements since WUF9. Violet Shivutse, Huairou Commission and Shibuye Community Health-Workers, shared experiences in disseminating the NUA among local communities and empowering these to select priority issues and participate in related decision making. Rose Molokoane, SDI, emphasized the role of community-led data collection in enabling engagement with local and national governments. Kerstin Sommer, UN-Habitat, highlighted the importance of leveraging local solutions, involving grassroots movements in all policy areas, and engaging the private sector.

Panels: In a panel on the impact of grassroots partnerships and tools in NUA implementation, speakers highlighted: government-led committees for the development of villages; community-led data collection as a support to permanent partnerships between local and national levels; sharing of community-level data collection practices across countries; including youth in data collection; capacity building for climate resilience in communities; and technology as an enabler for sharing best practices. They also stressed the importance of educating policy implementers and of community resilience funds.

**Sheela Patel**, Slum Dwellers International

In a panel on benchmarking grassroots needs and opportunities to ensure sustained participation, speakers shared experiences about: users of science-based tools, such as social and environmental surveys, and collaboration between academia and communities to develop new research tools in support of sustainable urban settlements; training youth to document communities' stories; and consideration of grassroots communities as agents of change instead of objects of charity.

A panel on building meaningful partnerships heard stories from: women's cooperatives in Nepal that provide low-interest rate loans to women and youth and are based on a nationwide network that works closely with the government and private sector; a UN-Habitat-supported project in Malawi improving livelihoods through urban infrastructure; and a community-managed fund in Ghana providing loans for ablution facilities, supported by multi-partner research, multi-stakeholder financing, and participatory implementation.

In a panel on cultural adequacy and innovative approaches against inequality and exclusion, panelists highlighted: new technologies, such as social media, for informing groups of their rights and for enabling communities to engage in policy processes; focusing on training and skills development; and ensuring participation of government representatives in community-led initiatives. They also called for emphasis on slum improvement and security of tenure over slum upgrading and displacement.

Key recommendations and outcome conclusions: Breakout sessions discussed: ensuring inclusion of grassroots needs, solutions and initiatives in the current development framework; building meaningful partnerships to incorporate bottom-up innovations into the implementation of the NUA and SDGs; and shaping the role of grassroots organizations in supporting diversity and cultural sensitivity.

In reporting back, participants highlighted, *inter alia*: institutionalization of engagement spaces; ensuring that communities understand the benefits of development projects and are aware of national legal and policy frameworks and the SDGs; additional resources for project implementation; and documenting and scaling up good practices at the community level.

On partnerships, participants identified: planning for meaningful engagements; training, education and information for grassroots groups; equality in decision making; and adequate collection and storage of data to inform policymaking. On diversity and cultural sensitivity, participants stressed the need for capacity building that "goes both ways."

Closing panel: Sheela Patel, SDI and SPARC India, said the recommendations represented "the struggle for recognition, acceptance and learning from each other that governments and grassroots groups can do together." Hajah Zuraida Kamaruddin, Minister for Housing and Local Government, Malaysia, said her government's policies are based on the acknowledgement that engaging people is crucial for bringing needed changes. UN-Habitat Executive Director Maimunah Mohd Sharif issued a call for action to support the UN Decade of Action, saying "the local level is where plans are implemented."

World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments:

In opening remarks, Maimunah Mohd Sharif and Mpho Moruakgomo, Commonwealth Local Governments, emphasized the need for actionable commitments by city and regional governments. Sharif suggested that at WUF11 in 2022 focus should be on “what we have done” rather than just “what we should do.” The Assembly was divided into three “moments,” consisting of two roundtables each.

1st Moment: Interventions in the first roundtable on ‘global partnerships and initiatives for sustainable urbanization’ came from the International Union of Public Transport and Mayors of Polokwane, Tehran, Utrecht, and Soria. Speakers called for mainstreaming culture into the Voluntary National Reviews for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and creating multi-level alliances to institutionalize NUA implementation strategies.

A second roundtable on ‘how urbanization affects and is affected by culture and innovation’ featured interventions from the Instituto de Investigación de Vivienda y Hábitat and local government leaders of Tunis, Sala, Sakha Republic, and Barcelona. Emphasis was placed on how experiences of cities are different for women and sexual minorities, and the challenge of ensuring technology is used to promote inclusion and justice rather than multiplying existing economic inequalities.

2nd Moment: The first roundtable on ‘the role of urban and territorial policies in preserving cultural heritage’ saw remarks from the Ministry of Housing and Local Governments of Malaysia, and local government leaders from Banjul, Kalmar Region, Madrid, Kitchener, Tawau, and Deir Nbouh of: reorienting public interest towards culture; legal approaches to heritage preservation; and efforts to promote culture and inclusion through housing.

The second roundtable on ‘local and regional governments’ role in maximizing the relationship between tradition, culture, and sustainable urbanization’ heard remarks from mayors and councillors from Dortmund, Esplugues de Llobregat in Barcelona, and Turkestan. They agreed that while culture has been regarded as a source of division in cities, it has now been proven to drive innovation and build resilience. They highlighted how technologies such as traffic digitalization, public internet access, and environmental monitoring have boosted urban economies. The International Federation of Library Associations, Cities Alliance, and Habitat for Humanity International noted that cities have always been “melting pots” of culture and tradition. They said these provide both opportunities and complexities, and that urban development needs to be inclusive.

3rd Moment: The first roundtable on ‘how can local and regional governments shape new technology for the future of their communities?’ featured speakers from Kismu, Tirana, Acapulco, Subang Jaya, and Cairo. They explained how technology can streamline citizen engagement, that technologies should be adapted to local environments, and that there are technological solutions for cities of all income levels.

The ‘innovation and culture for the achievement of the global goals’ roundtable included representatives from World Enabled, Qena, Bulawayo, Barcelona Metropolitan Area, and Bogotá. Speakers underscored the importance of communities feeling “ownership” of development efforts, providing public spaces, and how cultural promotion can create jobs. They also encouraged promoting civic behavior and recognizing modern sources of culture such as street art and gaming.

