

WUF9 HIGHLIGHTS WEDNESDAY, 7 FEBRUARY 2018

JOINT OPENING OF WUF9 ASSEMBLIES

Moderator Kimberley Leonard, Sky News presenter, welcomed participants and called attention to their common goals of assisting all to live with dignity and to save the planet.

Noh Omar, Minister of Urban Wellbeing, Housing and Local Government, Malaysia, noting that more than 50% of the world's population now lives in urban areas, stated that cities must be reformed to be safe, inclusive, sustainable and prosperous. He noted that the World Urban Forum (WUF) is hosting a Grassroots Assembly for the first time, aiming to give a platform to local leaders.

Magdalena Garcia Hernandez, Women's Constituency, General Assembly of Partners (GAP), emphasized the importance of good governance and UN frameworks such as the New Urban Agenda (NUA) in advancing gender equality and fighting social discrimination.

S.M. Shaikat, UN-Habitat Youth Advisory Board, underscored the challenges facing urban youth, such as finding employment, affordable healthcare, and education. He added that the NUA is a "comprehensive solution" to fulfilling the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and becoming accountable to future generations.

Violet Shivutse, Chair, Governing Council of Huairou Commission, called for stronger partnerships and empowerment of grassroots women in business.

Reem Al-Saud, Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs, Saudi Arabia, highlighted her ministry's inclusive urban strategy that engages women and youth and is aligned with the NUA.

Zoleka Mandela, Global Initiative for Child Health and Mobility, called for strong action against drunk driving, and for cities to provide adequate safe crossing places for children, noting that her own child was killed by a drunk driver.

Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Executive Director, UN-Habitat, welcomed the audience to Kuala Lumpur and to WUF9, her first Forum as Executive Director. As she opened the Assemblies, she underscored the NUA's emphasis on inclusivity and noted UN-Habitat's role as the focal point for its implementation.

ASSEMBLIES

WOMEN'S ASSEMBLY: Sri Husnaini Sofjan, Huairou Commission, introduced the sessions and welcomed Executive Director Maimunah. Maimunah highlighted Penang's introduction of gender-responsive and participatory budgeting during her term as mayor. She stressed the need for acquiring data on women's unique challenges, such as their safety on public transport.

Maria Noel Vaeza, UN Women, called for women's representation in all areas of governance. Sharifah Hapsah Syed Hasan Shahabudin, President, National Council of Women Organizations, Malaysia, called for a "morally strong urban society" which would include parental oversight over their children's use of social media.

Plenary discussions: Two plenary discussions took place, on: implementing the NUA; and regional perspectives on challenges in localizing the SDGs.

Julia Bentley, Canadian High Commissioner in Malaysia, shared her government's vision of gender equality as an essential pillar of sustainable development. Ana Falu, Advisory Group on Gender Issues, called for the establishment of a major program focusing on the nexus of women, infrastructure and planning. Kathy Klein, GAP Older Persons Group, underscored that the biggest obstacle for ageing communities is their lack of visibility, including in data collection. Suneeta Dhar, Jagori, India, presented her organization's work in creating safer cities for women, highlighting some gains in criminal law and policing reforms, and on ending impunity for sexual violence. Other speakers emphasized the importance of collaborative action at the grassroots level, and noted that Sustainable Development Goal 11 (SDG 11) will be reviewed at the High-Level Political Forum on sustainable development in July 2018.

TEDx-style presentations: Clare Short, Chair, Cities Alliance Management Board, said women should not only be engaged in policy making in large numbers, but must become a transformative force in society. Rose Molokwane, Slum Dwellers International, highlighted the growing influence of grassroots organizations since Habitat I, and their ability to participate in decision making. Ivy Josiah, Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development, described how market women in Manila had successfully campaigned to be included in renovation planning of the market facilities, after which the local council created a new seat specifically for them. Ellen Woodsworth, Women Transforming Cities, Canada, described her organization's work in promoting gender-sensitive cities through café-based events and collaborations. Other speakers spoke about efforts to empower women, and particularly grassroots women, at all levels of governance.

Thematic working groups: In the afternoon, participants split into 11 groups to discuss: strengthening women's role in local governments; safe and accessible public spaces; rural-urban links and food security; slum upgrading and basic gender-responsive service delivery; legislation in the framework of the Right to the City; land and property ownership; economic inclusion of women and girls; inclusion of women with disabilities in an urban environment; humanitarian crises and migration; and 'engendering the Right to the City.'

Groups reiterated their key messages, which included the importance of disaggregated data collection, building partnerships, and challenging patriarchal norms in cities. Jan Peterson, Honorary President, Huairou Commission, encouraged participants to monitor gender-related developments in their own cities and to report back in upcoming meetings on implementation efforts taken since Habitat III.

Closing: Several speakers, including Violet Shivutse, thanked Peterson for her work helping and mentoring women, and the International Women Communication Centre presented Peterson with an award.

BUSINESS ASSEMBLY: Moderator Nicholas You, Co-President, Global Cities Business Alliance, reminded participants of the NUA's call for businesses to apply their creativity and innovation toward solving sustainable development challenges.

Advocating for the 'Global Goals': In the morning, participants heard a panel discussion on how the NUA and SDGs provide a clear framework for business to invest in sustainable development while also serving the interests of their employees and shareholders. Eugenie Birch, Co-Chair, GAP, stressed: the role of legislation in creating an enabling environment in which businesses can thrive; the importance of building the capacity in local governments; and considering environmental impacts when planning urban development. Danielle Grossenbacher, International Real Estate Federation, called for creative solutions to increase the affordability of land, and to improve building techniques and materials. She requested that participants share smart affordable housing examples from around the globe through the Federation's website. Other panelists discussed examples of how business and cities can work together to raise awareness of the socioeconomic case for sustainable urbanization, including promoting sustainable consumption and production, and reducing inequalities.

During the lunch hour, Executive Director Maimunah noted that private companies offer the talents necessary to address the global urban challenges, and explained that the role of business in the development of smart cities cannot be overestimated.

Technology and Innovation for Development: Moderator Eduardo Moreno, UN-Habitat, emphasized that harnessing technological innovation is essential to achieving sustainable development, and can have a transformative impact on how cities plan housing, transport, basic services, healthcare, education, and jobs for future generations. Panelists agreed that technology is essential to filling the local-level 'data gap' to help business and governments prioritize decisions and investments to meet sustainable development targets. Participants provided inputs on technology's role in implementing the NUA and what is needed to ensure that cities capture the benefits of new technologies and innovations.

Financing the NUA: Transformative Actions by Development Finance Institutions: Moderator Sameh Wahba, World Bank, noted the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the NUA has provided a fresh impetus to strengthen partnerships with business towards enhanced, transformative investments in urban development. He added that sound fiscal performance of local governments is fundamental to achieving the NUA. Panelists discussed developing strong governance frameworks that allow financial institutions to engage more effectively with local municipalities, and the financial bias towards major urban centres with secondary cities lagging behind.

Building Effective Public-Private Cooperation: Moderator Roland White, World Bank, said achieving the NUA and SDGs require both a catalytic vehicle for transformative investments in urban development, and a facilitation mechanism for cooperative partnership, drawing together committed public and private sector organizations and stakeholders, and all levels of government. Panelists considered: diversifying economies to build cities' resilience to adversity; providing slum dwellers with access to decision-making processes; and building capacity at the local level to accelerate change while becoming more efficient.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH ASSEMBLY: The Youth Assembly opened with a video message from Idris Haron, President, World Assembly of Youth, Malaysia, who called for the inclusion of youth in urban development. Ediola Pashollari, Secretary-General, World Youth Assembly, called for: ensuring opportunities for young people; youth empowerment; and ensuring the NUA supports the achievement of the SDGs. Donovan Gutierrez, UN Major Group for Children and Youth, explained that the Youth Declaration from the Assembly will be presented to WUF9.

Thematic working groups: Groups convened on: youth, livelihoods and Indigenous youth; peace, safety and security; human rights and participation; challenges facing youth migrants and refugees; health and livability; urban resilience and climate change; culture and public spaces; LGBTI and the city; and 'place-making in cities for youth.'

Participants raised many different proposals to benefit urban children and youth, including strategies to ensure that youth have opportunities in non-urban areas. LGBTI rights campaigners highlighted examples of positive actions to address violence against LGBTI youth, such as free 'inclusive yoga' sessions that paired LGBTI youth with drop-in participants; and a photo exhibition, 'This Is Also A Family' which presented non-stereotypical family configurations such as same-sex couples and single people with pets.

Sessions on 'ideation and decision thinking' and a Children's Assembly took place concurrently with the thematic working groups.

Dragon's Den for Youth Projects: In the early afternoon, teams presented their Urban Youth Projects, which were designed to tackle urban issues, to a panel of experts. The teams focused on waste management, lack of public spaces, access to quality education, air pollution, lack of affordable housing, and improving the image of nuclear energy.

Highlights from the breakout group outputs were also presented, with a view to using them as a basis for a Youth Declaration to be produced at a later date.

Closing: Douglas Reagan, UN-Habitat, moderated the session, which reflected on critical moments in progressing the youth agenda. Ahmad Alhendawi, the former Youth Envoy to the UN Secretary General, noted that responses to the economic crisis, the Arab Spring, and the rise of radical extremism could be opportunities for integrating actions to fulfill the SDGs.

Aisa Kirabo Kacyira, UN-Habitat, highlighted the role of youth in achieving sustainable development, noting that the UN has appointed a Special Envoy on Youth for the first time. She urged youth to transform passion into action, stating that 'hope is not sufficient without a strategy.' She recommended strategic planning and monitoring, and cautioned that such efforts should not become disconnected from the grassroots level. She concluded by encouraging youth to take leadership roles, and to hold other leaders accountable.

JOINT CLOSING OF WUF9 ASSEMBLIES

Moderator Esther Mwaura-Muiru, Grassroots Organizations Operating Together in Sisterhood, emphasized that WUF9 is not just about SDG 11 but relates to all the SDGs, emphasizing that action on urban issues 'will make or break' the 2030 Agenda.

Children and youth representatives called for the active engagement of youth at all stages of decision-making in urban development, beyond tokenism. They urged moving away from a growth-centered paradigm to one that is people and planet-centered, with human rights and justice at the core.

Women's representatives summarized themes that emerged from the Women's Assembly, including, the importance of: putting resources behind the commitments made in Quito; partnerships with stakeholders; designing gender friendly cities; and changing social norms. They also stressed the role of an online platform, created with UN-Habitat, in opening the Women's Assembly to those unable to be at WUF in person.

Mwaura-Muiru underscored the importance of the business constituency, whose representatives were not available to report back at the closing.

Concluding the session, Maria Noel Vaeza, UN Women, called for: the removal of discriminatory policies that prevent women from engaging in local governments; additional statistics on women in order for governments to address their needs; and financing for women, particularly in business.