

Talking Points DED
ECOSOC 2023 July Management Segment

Excellencies,
Honorable President,
UN colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for inviting me to address ECOSOC on the Agenda Item on Human Settlements. I wish to convey my greetings from Maimunah Mohd Sharif, the Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN-Habitat who is currently on mission travel. The focus of my presentation will be on the outcomes of the second session of the United Nations Habitat Assembly which took place in Nairobi on 5–9 June 2023.

Over 5,000 participants attended the session, with representation from delegations of 137 countries and over 80 ministers, highlighting the crucial role of the United Nations Habitat Assembly as the key intergovernmental platform for advancing global urban policy. The second session also ensured engagement with local and regional governments, academia, professional associations, grassroots organizations, foundations, and private industry, among other constituencies of the New Urban Agenda.

There was great emphasis on the importance of the work of UN-Habitat to support countries in accelerating the implementation of the New Urban Agenda as a road map for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and other global agreements.

This correlation was for the first time prominently acknowledged during twin meetings convened by ECOSOC and the General Assembly in New York in April last year to review the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. The two meetings succeeded in positioning the New Urban Agenda as a road map for attainment of the SDGs and in identifying the key action areas of housing, climate, crisis, localization, and financing to accelerate its implementation.

The Second Session of the United Nations Habitat Assembly took forward the work of ECOSOC and the General Assembly. Member States utilized the intergovernmental platform on global urban policy to adopt 10 resolutions that provide guidance for future directions to steer sustainable urban development and the achievement of the SDGs at the local level.

The policy priority areas of housing, climate, and crisis recovery were reflected in key substantive resolutions:

Housing: the resolutions on Adequate Housing for All and on Transformation of Informal Settlements, with focus on SDG Target 11.1, will contribute to providing universal guidance on how governments can meet the globally increasing need for adequate housing, through tools such as an intergovernmental expert working group and agreement on key actions.

Climate: the resolutions on Urbanization and Climate Change Resilience and on Biodiversity and Resilient Cities ask to identify municipal strategies to implement nationally determined commitments and national adaptation plans; and advance the Global Biodiversity Framework through the Plan of Action for Cities and other Subnational Governments.

Crisis: the resolution on Human Settlements Resilience Framework seeks to guide efforts to respond to the impact of multiple and interlocking crises, offering early warning, foresight, risk reduction, urban crisis response, and post-crisis recovery and reconstruction.

Furthermore, key means of implementation for the New Urban Agenda were elevated:

Localization: the resolution on Localization of Sustainable Development Goals sets out to supporting national and local governments to strengthen multilevel governance, policy coherence, cross-sector alignment, and multistakeholder engagement to accelerate the attainment of the SDGs.

Financing and Innovation: the resolution on People-Centered Smart Cities and on Urban Planning and Sustainable Infrastructure can inform discussions on the attainment of the SDGs through inclusive applications of technology and sustainable financing.

Planning: Member States requested UN-Habitat to develop a global technical digital platform for urbanization and infrastructure development to increase the capacity of subnational and local governments to plan, invest, govern, and deliver urban basic services in a socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable manner.

These resolutions offer important policy guidance to countries and give strategic direction to UN-Habitat. They also have important implications for intergovernmental meetings here in New York, beginning with the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) in July 2023, during which Member States reviewed progress towards the attainment of SDG 11 on Cities and Communities.

The outcomes of the United Nations Habitat Assembly will contribute directly to the SDG Summit, the Summit of the Future and the World Social Summit. Localizing the SDGs was identified as one of the high impact initiatives of the SDG Summit. The role of local governments in the multilateral system will be discussed during the Summit of the Future. Housing is a key track for achieving the new social contract, which will be the subject of discussions during the World Social Summit.

It is important to note that the United Nations Habitat Assembly also decided to extend the current UN-Habitat Strategic Plan to the period 2024-2025, and to resume the second session of the United Nations Habitat Assembly in Nairobi, in 2025, to adopt the UN-Habitat Strategic Plan 2026-2029, achieving alignment with the QCPR cycle (2025-2028).

Excellencies,

I reiterate my commitment to working closely with all of you to deliver on achieving SDGs by assisting countries to accelerate the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, the road map for sustainable human settlements in an urbanizing world. The report of the second session of the United Nations Habitat Assembly will be shared with you shortly.

Thank you.