

**Draft Address by H.E. Ms. Lachezara Stoeva,
President of the Economic and Social Council**

**UN-Habitat corporate side event in the margins of the 2023
ECOSOC High Level Political Forum**

14 July 2023 – 8:00 am
Conference Room 11

Excellencies, Distinguished colleagues,

I am delighted to welcome you to this event on “rescuing SDG 11 for a resilient urban planet.”

Let me begin by expressing my sincere thanks to UN-Habitat and the Executive Director for hosting this event and for inviting me to speak on the vital topic of SDG 11 and sustainable urban development.

Today’s event comes at a crucial time. Halfway into the implementation of the Agenda 2030, UN-Habitat's report finds that we are far from achieving SDG 11.

Cities around the world face persistent shortages of affordable housing as billions of people continue to lack adequate homes and shelter. Our transportation meanwhile continues to be dominated by cars that pollute our air, restrict our equal access to space and mobility, and contribute to the global warming of our planet.

Global shifts during the COVID-19 pandemic have threatened the future of public transportation systems as ridership has failed to return in many cities across the globe. The war in Ukraine and conflicts elsewhere are meanwhile destroying the lives, livelihoods and homes of hundreds of millions of people around the world.

The task of rebuilding our cities in the face of these global challenges may seem insurmountable. But these challenges also provide us with rare opportunities to fundamentally re-think how we plan and develop our urban world.

The pandemic, for example, provided cities all over the world with opportunities to give streets and public spaces back to people, allowing for healthier, happier and more prosperous citizens, a more sustainable planet, and a broader reimagining of our urban possibilities. Destroyed infrastructure – whether from conflicts or disasters – has similarly allowed us to build back more strategically, thoughtfully and better.

Excellencies and colleagues,

In order to achieve a more sustainable and inclusive future for all of us on an increasingly urban planet, we must find more ways to radically re-think our urban environment.

During the Second Session of the United Nations Habitat Assembly, which I had the pleasure to participate virtually on June 7th 2023, Member States adopted 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 the substantive resolutions on Adequate Housing and on Transformation of Informal Settlements and Slums; on the Interlinkage between Urbanization and Climate Change, Biodiverse and Resilient Cities; and on Human Settlements Resilience Frameworks.

Furthermore, key means of implementation for the New Urban Agenda were elevated through the resolutions on Localization of the Sustainable Development Goals, Urban Planning and Sustainable Infrastructure, People-centered Smart Cities, and on Equitable Financing.

By implementing actions inspired by these resolutions and guided by the New Urban Agenda, we can rescue SDG 11 before our deadline in 2030.

I am excited to hear more from our distinguished hosts, panelists and colleagues today as we discuss how we can save this goal and transform our cities before it is too late. Let us make the most of our time today to listen attentively, think critically and act resolutely towards a better, more equal and sustainable urban future.

Thank you.