



**STATEMENT**

**BY**

**H.E. MR. COLLEN V. KELAPILE  
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC  
AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (ECOSOC)**

**AT**

**HIGH-LEVEL MEETING OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY TO ASSESS  
PROGRESS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE  
NEW URBAN AGENDA**

**28 APRIL 2022  
10:00 HOURS**

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY HALL**

*Please check against delivery.*

- **Mr. President of the UN General Assembly,**
- **Executive Director, UN-Habitat,**
- **Excellencies,**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

1. I am honoured to address this **High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly to Assess Progress on the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda**, in my capacity as President of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).
2. As part of its mandate to monitor implementation of the 2030 Agenda, including SDG 11, at ECOSOC we consider the full implementation of the New Urban Agenda as at the core of the principle of leaving no one behind especially in urban settings.
3. To that end, I am delighted use this opportunity to share a summary of the key messages and recommendations that emerged from the recent **ECOSOC Special Meeting on Sustainable Urbanization and the New Urban Agenda**, that I

convened on 21<sup>st</sup> April. The full version of the Summary is available on the ECOSOC web page, for ease of reference.

4. But first and foremost, I must observe that the convening of the Council's Special Meeting exemplified the strong cooperation and collaboration that exists between the Presidents of the General Assembly and ECOSOC.
5. I thank the President of the General Assembly for not only making this happen, but for also inviting me to be part of his **Advisory Committee on Sustainable Urbanization** -- a ground-breaking initiative, which has accompanied this process of preparation for today's meeting.

**Excellencies,**

6. The ECOSOC Special Meeting revealed that the New Urban Agenda (NUA) continues to provide a robust pathway towards more equitable and sustainable cities. Cities play a pivotal role in achieving all SDGs,

offering the opportunity to address the Goals in an integrated way, and with a long-term perspective.

7. The Covid-19 pandemic has reconfirmed the role of cities and the relevance of the NUA in addressing inequality, climate change and health.
8. Three key messages emanated from the discussions:
9. **First**, despite the New Urban Agenda's urgent call to leave no one, and no place behind, cities continue to be marked by extreme inequalities.
10. As highlighted in the Quadrennial Report submitted through ECOSOC, housing is becoming unaffordable to many; slums continue to grow globally; and homelessness is on the rise. Urban planning and development often reach only those that are already well off.
11. The urban poor often pay far higher costs, and for a poorer level of service than urban residents who are better off.

## **Excellencies,**

12. Consistent with the priorities I set for my ECOSOC Presidency, I urge the Member States to address growing inequalities through more inclusive and gender-responsive urban planning; enhanced participatory processes; stronger long-term visions; and complete acknowledgement of non-governmental organizations, civil society and grassroots organizations.
13. Furthermore, rural and urban issues must be seen in a much more integrated way as part of one economic, social and political ecosystem.
14. **Second**, the financing of the New Urban Agenda remains a major obstacle to adequately address urban inequalities.
15. Cities are powerhouses of economic growth and value creation, yet little of that is tapped adequately for human development and services for the benefit of all.

16. Housing has become a commercial commodity, and urban land markets are captured by the political elite. Therefore, Member States are urged to position housing above all as a human right.
17. The challenge to unlock financing for affordable housing, and other essential services, should be seized as an opportunity to create much needed jobs through the local production of housing and a catalyst to enhance endogenous revenue that cities raise.
18. **Third**, multilateral cooperation is essential to accelerate the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. The United Nations is increasingly engaging with cities and their networks.
19. The joint activities of UN-Habitat with sister agencies highlighted the potential of coordination and collaboration, while the urban perspectives from various UN entities further illustrate the contribution of the NUA to the UN Mandates.

**Mr. President,**

20. Better multilateral cooperation and innovative programming are exemplified by the multiple collaborations between UN-Habitat and sister agencies; by the ongoing interagency processes around the '**Future of Cities**' and **Local 2030**; and by the commitment by the UN Regional Commissions to strengthen support to cities and prioritise urban programming.
21. I was particularly impressed by the strong commitment and actions of Member States to advance the New Urban Agenda. Yet, we are collectively falling short to achieve the ambitious goals that are set in the Agenda.
22. In the meeting, Member States called upon the UN system and UN-Habitat to increase assistance in building capacities, developing tools and monitor progress of the Agenda's transformative commitments.

23. With urbanization as a global 'megatrend', as President of ECOSOC, I noted that the mandate of UN-Habitat has increased substantially. As the UN-system and Member States have called upon UN-Habitat to take up more tasks to accelerate the implementation of the NUA, I urge you all to consider what guidance is needed to resolve the gap between its mandate and its available resources.
24. The follow-up and review of the New Urban Agenda must have effective linkages with the follow-up to and review of the 2030 Agenda, to ensure coherence.
25. Let me conclude, **Mr. President**, by stating that the Economic and Social Council is committed to working with you all to accelerate our efforts to this end, as we build back better from the pandemic.
26. Beyond my current mandate, as President of ECOSOC, I am delighted to inform that -- in our national capacity -- Botswana has teamed up with a group of other like-minded countries to set up an informal **Group of Friends of UN-Habitat, Sustainable**



**Urbanization and the New Urban Agenda** to shine a spotlight on the mandate and role of this important programme.

**I thank you for your kind attention.**