PUBLIC DIALOGUE ON CITIZENS ROLE IN INNOVATING FOR BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE FOR URBAN COMMUNITIES IN KENYA

KEY NOTE ADDRESS ON INNOVATIVE CITIZEN’S ACTION IN URBAN GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT IN KENYA

OPENING REMARKS BY
MME MAIMUNAH MOHD SHARIF, UN UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF UN-HABITAT
NAIROBI,
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Mr. James Macharia, Cabinet Secretary, Transport, Infrastructure, Housing and Urban Development
Excellencies Ambassadors
Distinguished guests
Ladies and Gentlemen

I take this opportunity to welcome you all to the first pre-Assembly event which is being held on the sidelines of the 1st UN Habitat Assembly. This is a historic event and the first of its kind, it plays a key role in bringing the Assembly to the people. This in line with the theme of the UN Habitat Assembly – ‘Innovation for better lives’. I commend the National Habitat Committee that has put this together, for a job well done.

This Urban Dialogue is significant in that it is the first public forum that brings together stakeholders in Government, private sector, academia, civil society to discuss urban governance and management issues in Kenya ahead of the UN-Habitat Assembly. It also provides a platform for these actors to reflect and collate issues that could contribute to a successful UN-Habitat Assembly.

This year's Assembly has an elaborate programme which includes a number of pre-assembly events, 57 side-events, a high-level segment, a Mayors and Governors Forum, a Business Leaders Dialogue and a Global Stakeholders Forum. I am pleased to inform you that we have received overwhelming interest in the Assembly, with 4000 delegates registered to attend. I am encouraged to note that a good percentage of these delegates come from our host country, Kenya.

Foundations, (xiii) Media, (xiv) Grassroots and informal sector, (xv) Parliamentarians, and (xvi) Farmers. I invite those of you here who are accredited to attend and be part of this great and unique opportunity to interact with global experts and benefit from their experiences, best practices and lessons leant. This will no doubt inspire new thinking and innovation. We anticipate that the pre-assembly forums such as this Public Dialogue, will provide critical input to the outcomes of this important Assembly.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

For purpose of this dialogue, I would propose that Kenya’s urban development fraternity reflects on innovations that would spur sectoral growth and contribute to the realization of President Uhuru Kenyatta’s Big 4 Agenda. This presents an opportunity for urban sector actors in Kenya to deal with some of the challenges facing urban areas nationally and develop approaches aimed at accelerating the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Some thoughts on innovations should include establishing sustainable and effective mechanisms for the management of urban areas and building the capacities of urban boards; training of technical and administrative staff in municipalities, towns and cities through partnerships with private sector; as well as strengthening citizen participation at municipal, county and national levels.

The principle of **Leave no one behind** as elaborated in the popular version of the Kenya National Urbanization Plan, is a critical factor for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. Public participation in the decision-making process is key for the realization of this principle and sustainable urban settlements.

U.N. Habitat is known for promoting the concept of public participation and we remain ready to assist Kenya and other interested member states to adopt participatory approaches. In Kenya, we have worked closely with the Government and other partners to successfully deliver on major projects through participatory approaches. For examples, the Lake Victoria Water and Sanitation Project provided over 222,000 people with access to clean drinkable
water and 80,000 to proper sanitation. Through our Participatory Slum Upgrading Project, over 12,000 households in Mtwapa, Kilifi County benefited from improved infrastructure and livelihoods through Community Development Funds. In Kalobeyei, Kakuma, participatory planning processes contributed significantly to building of integrated communities. These are just a few examples of our engagement in Kenya and these can be further upscaled to enhance citizen participation in urban management.

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

I urge that the outcome document of this session should complement national Government efforts and priorities, and should be implementable. UN Habitat is committed to work with the Government of Kenya to improve the conditions in urban areas and create a liveable and pleasant urban environment. Towards this end, we invite all stakeholders here to work with us and Government of Kenya to implement the Habitat Country Programme for Kenya which I launched together with the Cabinet Secretary in July 2018.

With these few remarks, I thank you all for your attention and wish you fruitful deliberations.