



Opening Speech by Dr. Joan Clos

UN Under-Secretary-General
UN-Habitat Executive Director,

Nairobi, 08 May 2017



UN HABITAT
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

Your Excellency Uhuru Kenyatta, President of the Republic of Kenya,

Your Excellency Peter Thomson, President of the General Assembly of the United Nations,

Honorable Ministers and Heads of Delegations,

President of the Governing Council, Ambassador Mlynar,

Distinguished Members of the Bureau,

Madame Director General of UNON, Sahle-Work Zewde,

Mr. Erik Solheim, Executive Director of UN Environment,

Mr. Chairman of CPR, High Commissioner James Kimonyo of Rwanda,

Your Excellences, Ambassadors, Permanent Representatives and Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

Members of the Independent Panel for the Assessment of UN-Habitat, appointed by Secretary General Antonio Guterres,

Honorable Mayors and Representatives of Local Authorities,

Partners of UN-Habitat,

Members of the Media,

Dear Friends, Marafiki,

It is my pleasure and honor to welcome you all to the 26th session of the Governing Council of UN-Habitat here in Nairobi, the Headquarters of the United Nations in Africa.

We are honored and delighted by your presence here today.

Mr. President, Your Excellency Uhuru Kenyata,

From Nairobi, Kenya, UN-Habitat as the global UN programme on urbanization, analyzes the urbanization trends of not only Africa, but Asia, America and Europe.

Kutoka hapa jijini Nairobi, UN-Habitat, ikiwa kama Shirika la Makazi la Umoja wa Mataifa, huchambua mienendo ya upanukaji au kutokeza kwa miji sio tu kwa Afrika, bali pia kwa bara la Asia, Amerika na Ulaya.

We are very proud of Nairobi as the host of the global observatory of urbanization.

Tunajivunia kuwa Nairobi ni kituo cha kimataifa cha waangalizi wa upanukaji wa miji.

We are profoundly grateful for the support that we have always received from the Government of Kenya.

Tunatoa shukrani zetu za dhiti kwa msaada ambao siku zote tumekuwa tukipata kutoka kwa serikali ya Kenya.

Pardon me for my limited Kiswahili.

Naomba Radhi Kua Kiswahili changu duni

Thank you very much Mr. President

Asante Sana Mr. President.

Mr. President,

In Habitat III, together and with the efforts of all, we have succeeded in developing a New Urban Agenda that has opened the door to a new paradigm shift of urban prosperity and development.

Urbanization worldwide, but most specifically in Africa, will be one of the most significant economic and social transformations in the next decades.

The African continent is experiencing a shift towards more productive sectors of the economy, from the agrarian and extractive industries, towards industrial and service oriented economies.

One of the most critical vehicles for this transition is well-designed urbanization that provides a productive scenario necessary to sustain this very strategic transformation for Africa.

Mr. President, Excellences,

The theme of this session of the Governing Council is devoted to “Opportunities for the effective implementation of the New Urban Agenda”.

The New Urban Agenda is offering us an opportunity that we cannot miss.

During this week here in Nairobi, we are all called to action, to make the implementation of the New Urban Agenda a success, leaving no one behind.

We have no choice. Urbanization is one of the few human and social processes that happen without incentive.

It is going to happen with or without our consent. It is therefore our obligation to address it properly.

Urbanization is a complex issue of strategic importance, not only for development but also for peace and security.

If not managed properly, it is a very serious strategic risk.

But urbanization is also one of the few social and economic phenomena in which a public investment generates private value, out of the emerging properties of human cooperation.

Investing in good urbanization is guarantee of prosperity and development, particularly in developing countries.

The New Urban Agenda is an action plan to effectively address the complex challenges of urbanization and by doing so, contributing to prosperity, employment and growth.

The New Urban Agenda recognizes urbanization as a strategic issue for development at national, sub-national and local levels and consolidates the vision of urbanization as an endogenous source of development.

Neither the central government nor the local authorities can address alone the challenges of urbanization.

One of the innovations of the New Urban Agenda is the reinforced dialogue between central and local governments.

Mr. President, Excellences,

UN-Habitat has more than 40 years of experience in urbanization and our expertise is highly appraised by member states and local governments.

Our expertise combines normative, coordination and operational elements which make it one of our greatest assets.

As a focal point for sustainable urbanization in the UN system, we are fit for purpose to support the delivery of the New Urban Agenda (NUA), SDG 11 and the implementation of the urban related SDGs.

We have already defined an Action Plan for the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda (AFINUA) and a Strategic Plan that will be discussed in the upcoming sessions.

We look forward to working with you during this Governing Council in developing a more responsive, effective and accountable UN-Habitat and we count on your support in strengthening the work and the capacity of the programme.

Today, we are also very pleased to welcome the members of the High Level Panel to assess and enhance the effectiveness of UN-Habitat, recently appointed by the Secretary General of the United Nations.

Welcome to UN-Habitat and to our Governing Council.

During the next months, you will witness the transformational results in sustainable urban development carried out by UN-Habitat, ranging from normative to direct transformative impact on people's lives.

With the current urban and demographic trends, UN-Habitat's work is needed more than ever.

We recognise the extremely important contribution of our stakeholders in this effort. First of all, the member states of the United Nations, but also the mayors and local authorities around the world, civil society, parliamentarians, academicians, and other major groups associated to the General Assembly of Partners (GAP), the grassroots associations that represent the people which are fighting everyday in sustaining their livelihoods in many difficult parts around the world; the gender groups represented in UN-Habitat through AGGI (Advisory Group on Gender Issues), the private sector and all other stakeholder that have contributed in an excellent manner to the success of our programme.

I must say Mr. President, that more than hundred fifty thousands persons of these stakeholders platform participated personally and for free, in the process of the elaboration of the New Urban Agenda.

We strongly believe that effective urbanization is a social, economic and environmental achievement that is not reached by chance but by choice and design.

The positive outcomes of urbanization depend largely on the quality of its design. It requires effort and public commitment.

Urbanization will continue to be one of the most important processes for our development.

Let us plan, design and finance sustainable cities together.

Finally, I would like to thank the outgoing bureau and its President, my friend Ambassador Mlynar, for their contributions and commitment to UN-Habitat and the New Urban Agenda.

I would like to thank also the work of the CPR, in the inter sessional period between Governing Councils, supervising and monitoring our activities.

Enjoy our discussions, get involved in the process of debate of UN-Habitat, enjoy the beautiful city of Nairobi and Kenya, the prominent and host country.

Thank you very much.