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**Statement at the 26<sup>th</sup> Session  
of the Governing Council of UN-Habitat  
Nairobi  
May 8 2017**

Distinguished President Mr Uhuru Kenyatta,  
Honorable Ministers,  
President of the Governing Council,  
Director General of UN Nairobi,  
Executive Director of UN-Habitat,  
Executive Director, UN Environment,  
Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen.

It is my great pleasure to be here in Nairobi to address the 26th Session of the Governing Council of UN-Habitat.

I'd like to begin by thanking President Kenyatta, for the hospitality and support that your Government has provided to me on this visit. I'd also like to thank Executive Director Clos for inviting me to address you.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen.

Last October, not long after I took office as President of the General Assembly for the 71<sup>st</sup> session, I witnessed the adoption of the New Urban Agenda, in Quito Ecuador alongside world leaders and no doubt many of you present in this room today.

The New Urban Agenda is an action-oriented framework to help our cities and human settlements become more inclusive, more resilient, more sustainable, and safer for all their inhabitants. It is in fact a perfect complement to the all important 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

In speaking to you today my main point is that fidelity to the Paris Climate Agreement and implementation of the 2030 Agenda's Sustainable Development Goals, represent the best hope of a secure future for our children and grandchildren.

These agreements are the masterplan for the sustainability of human life on Planet Earth and

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they are inextricably linked to the health, vitality, quality and success of our cities and urban spaces.

As members of the Governing Council, you know better than most the critical role that cities are playing in our globalized world.

They account for over 54% of the world's population and are increasingly home to those who have been displaced by war and disasters. They generate 80 per cent of GDP. They are home to our most creative and innovative leaders in business, technology and the arts. They are the places where people of all hues gather to seek better opportunities. They are, in short, both the engines of our economies and the hearts of most of our nations.

You also know that standards in many of our cities are far from where they should be; far from where they must be if we are to meet our 2030 commitments.

Cities continue to host over 1.6 billion people living without adequate housing; and 2.4 billion people without adequate sanitation facilities. They continue to be places where unmet expectations can fuel violence and discrimination; where young women and children are often the most vulnerable. They are too often places where the natural environment is destroyed by pollution, waste and poor planning with responsibility for over 70% of global carbon emissions, pushing humanity closer to the precipice of unsustainability.

Thus it is that your focus on “opportunities for the effective implementation of the New Urban Agenda” is timely and inextricable to our progress.

Since taking office, I have been pushing stakeholders across the world to implement the Sustainable Development Goals, calling on them to unleash solutions at the speed and scale for the global transformation the 2030 Agenda requires.

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Next week, at UN Headquarters, I will bring together many of the world's leading voices on innovation to encourage them to align their efforts towards implementation the SDGs; and to help us to navigate many of the advances and uncertainties that exponential technological change is bringing to our societies and economies.

Critically for us all, in less than one month's time, The Ocean Conference will be held at the UN in New York to support the implementation of SDG 14, the Ocean Goal. The conference is dedicated to producing the game-changing commitments and actions necessary to reverse the cycle of decline in which our Ocean is currently caught.

From such activities, it is very clear that we possess the appetite for change and that there are tangible opportunities being created by which we can embrace more inclusive, just and sustainable societies.

To harness this global appetite for change; may I suggest some steps that we should all be taking together.

First, we need to advance a rights-based and people-centered approach to development such that greater attention is given to reducing inequalities, to supporting our most vulnerable, to leaving no one behind.

Second, we need to dramatically increase global public knowledge of the essential actions of transformation, captured in the New Urban Agenda and the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

Third, we need to do much more to unlock the trillions of dollars needed to finance this transformation. National Governments must do more to raise domestic resources. International partners must meet their ODA commitments. And governments, partners and financial actors alike, must establish the enabling environment and the project pipeline that can quickly divert private international finance towards

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sustainable investments. Business is keen to participate in SDG implementation and we have to facilitate early private sector entry.

Fourth, particularly in cities, we need to strengthen multi-stakeholder action and collaboration. This transformation will only happen if we maximize the dynamic ecosystem of actors that make up today's societies.

Fifth, we must embrace technology and innovation to help us overcome some of our greatest challenges.

And, last but not the least, we need to ensure that the United Nations is fit to facilitate these kind of engagements, to support those countries in greatest need and to work together in unison behind these universal Agendas.

As you know, Secretary-General Antonio Guterres will over the coming months set out significant proposals to reform the UN in the areas of development, peace and management. Each of these will impact on your work here at

UN-Habitat and I counsel you to support the necessity of reform for the common good.

I'm pleased to tell you that on 29-30 August at UN Headquarters, New York, I will convene a High Level Meeting of the General Assembly to enable delegates to respond to the proposals that will be put forward by the Secretary-General and his High Level Panel, regarding the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the positioning of UN Habitat.

These are crucially important discussions for us all, for the world needs a UN that can support progress and catalyze change in our cities and human settlements. I therefore encourage you all to engage actively in this High Level Meeting, so that we may ensure that every step is taken to support implementation of the deeply connected New Urban Agenda and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

As I've already said, these agreements represent the best chance we have for our

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children and grandchildren to maintain a sustainable way of life on this planet.

Let us work together both this week and at the High Level Meeting in August to get their implementation off to the best possible start.

Thank you.