

Curb throw-away culture, says UN-Habitat chief, highlighting world day

Marking [World Habitat Day](#) on Monday, [UN-Habitat](#) – the agency mandated with promoting sustainable cities – has called for greater imagination and innovation in tackling the world’s waste management challenges, in particular at the municipal level.

“World Habitat Day provides us a unique opportunity to focus international attention on key issues surrounding sustainable urbanization, human settlements and improving urban living conditions,” said Maimunah Mohd Sharif, UN-Habitat’s Executive Director, during an event marking the day in Kenya’s capital, Nairobi.

“The amount of waste produced by individuals, communities, businesses, institutions, markets and factories continues to grow tremendously,” explained Ms. Sharif. “Some of it is recycled but a lot is simply discarded, causing health problems for people, their animals, and polluting our environment”.

Every year, the world produces two billion tonnes of waste.

“Tackling our waste management challenges requires imagination and innovation,” she stressed, noting that during her time as mayor of the State of Penang, in Malaysia, she pushed for people to “rethink” waste, in addition to adopting the now-famous “reduce, reuse, recycle” mantra.

According to UN-Habitat, 99 per cent of the items we purchase are thrown away within six months. “We can all make small adjustments to our consumption styles, by using alternatives to disposable plastic items, such as bottles, cups, plates and cutlery, making a conscious effort to recycle correctly and fixing broken items instead of simply throwing them away,” she said.

UN-Habitat, created in 1978 to promote sustainable urbanization on all fronts, is supporting cities more and more in their efforts to improve waste management practices, as well as design cost-effective systems to collect and dispose of garbage. Some of the initiatives highlighted by the agency include community-based waste management collection and recycling, as well as a one-off project titled “Trash to Art” calling on local artists to make a statement on sustainability by creating artwork using thrown-away materials.

“I believe that effective waste management starts with us as individuals,” said Ms. Sharif, adding that “through collective action, we can achieve a world that is cleaner, greener, safer, healthier and happier, for us to live, work and play”.

[On International Day of Non-Violence, UN Chief calls for world to follow Gandhi's example](#)

United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres has called on the world to follow the “enduring vision and wisdom of Mahatma Gandhi” on the [International Day of Non-Violence](#), which falls on 2 October – the birthday of the iconic leader who led India to independence, and inspired civil rights movements across the globe.

In his message for the day, the UN chief said that “at a time of protracted conflicts and complex challenges, Gandhi’s philosophy of non-violence remains an inspiration. At the United Nations, a world free of violence – and the resolution of differences through non-violent means – is at the core of our work.”

Mr. Guterres recalled Gandhi’s commitment to social justice. with inequality on the rise. He said it was important for a fairer globalization process to take root, based on human dignity, at a time when the world is “striving to achieve the [Sustainable Development Goals](#), ensure gender equality and leave no one behind.”

The [Charter](#) of the United Nations, said the Secretary-General, with its call in Chapter VI for the use, “first of all”, of negotiation, mediation, arbitration, judicial settlement and other peaceful ways to address threats to peace, echoes the spirit of Gandhi’s statement that “non-violence is the greatest force at the disposal of mankind.”

Noting that Gandhi proved that non-violence can change history, Mr. Guterres ended his message by calling on the world to be inspired by Gandhi’s “courage and conviction as we continue our work to advance peace, sustainable development and human rights for all of the peoples of the world.”

On Tuesday, as part of his official visit to India this week, Mr. Guterres is due to lay a wreath in honour of Gandhi, at the Raj Ghat Memorial, in New Delhi. It’s the 150th anniversary of the independence leader’s birth this year.

'We must work together like never before' to realize sustainable development, says Canada at UN

The international community must work together in new ways, to bring the aspirations of the ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to life, Canada's head of delegation declared at the United Nations General Assembly.

Addressing world leaders at the Assembly's annual debate, Marc-André Blanchard, chair of Canada's delegation called on the international community to find opportunities amidst challenges it confronts.

"We have to find new ways of doing things, for silos to be broken between Governments and civil society; between Governments and the private sector; between North and South; and between the traditional so called like-minded and non-traditional like-minded."

In particular, the response to climate change offers potential for new technologies, representing a 26 trillion-dollar opportunity, said Mr. Blanchard

"To harness this opportunity, starting with the most vulnerable, small island States, we must all work together with scientists, multilateral institutions, regional banks, investors, and civil society like never before," he urged.

In his address, the Canadian official spoke of the priorities of his country's G7 presidency, including its focus on strengthening climate resilience and disaster recovery.

He went on to inform the General Assembly of the North American nation's participation in UN peacekeeping efforts, highlighting the "Elsie Initiative" – a practical plan to double the number of women in peacekeeping operations.

"We know that having women in the ranks – and in charge – makes peacekeeping more effective and its results more durable," said Mr. Blanchard.

Turning to crises around the world, the Canadian official reiterated that his country's actions remain guided in its commitment to protect and promote human rights, citing a recent unanimous motion adopted by Canada's parliament calling on the Security Council to refer crimes against the Rohingya people to the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Concluding his address, Mr. Blanchard announced Canada's candidacy for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for 2021-22, recalling the country's "proven record" of working with other UN Member States to new ideas and approaches to tackle complex problems of international peace and security.

"If elected to the Security Council, we will bring to bear our longstanding

dedication to peacekeeping, our over thirty years of service as Chair of the UN's Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, and our active membership on the Peacebuilding Commission," he said.

[Full statement available here.](#)

[UN chief inaugurates new UN headquarters in Indian capital, as official visit gets underway](#)

The United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres, took part on Monday in the opening ceremony of the Organization's newly-refurbished headquarters for its multi-agency operations, known as UN House, in the Indian capital, New Delhi.

During the event, the UN chief noted "the strong bond between India and the United Nations" and told UN staff assembled there that the UN's work in India, cannot be "business as usual".

"Rather, we want the UN system to be united to fully support India's government development plans and to fully support India's leadership in relation to climate change, the Sustainable Development Goals and so many other efforts in which India is showing a leadership role," he explained.

On Tuesday, the Secretary-General is to lay a wreath in honour of Mahatma Gandhi – who in 1947, led his nation to independence – at the Raj Ghat memorial, as this year marks the 150th anniversary of his birth.

In addition, the Secretary-General will join India Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the closing session of the Mahatma Gandhi International Sanitation Conference and he will deliver a lecture to youth on global challenges and solutions. The event will be [livestreamed](#).

[Timor-Leste exemplifies continued UN help in settling sea dispute with](#)

Australia, General Assembly told

Timor-Leste, a country which the United Nations shepherded to independence from Indonesia 16 years ago, is a prime example of what the world Organization can do in resolving international conflicts and disputes, Delegation Chair Maria Helena Pires told the General Assembly on Monday.

“Timor-Leste is undoubtedly the leading example of the importance of an order based on international law. Next year, our Nation celebrates the 20th anniversary of the popular consultation organized by the United Nations, in which our people voted courageously for the independence,” she said on the last day of the Assembly’s seventy-third annual general debate.

Speaking on behalf of Dionisio Baba Soares, Timor-Leste’s Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, she stressed the UN’s continuing beneficial role in her country’s affairs with the resolution this year of a maritime conflict with Australia, holding it up as an example for other countries.

“Recently, the United Nations [played again a major role](#) in Timor-Leste’s future. For the first time, a Conciliation Commission, established in 2016 under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea ([UNCLOS](#)), succeeded in the positive resolution of a longstanding dispute between Timor-Leste and Australia about the definition of maritime boundaries,” she added.

“This new [Maritime Boundary] treaty allowed us to consolidate national sovereignty and establish an important model for the peaceful resolution of international disputes. In a time of increasing global geopolitical tensions over maritime disputes, the success of the first conciliation process in history assume an unprecedented international significance.

“Timor-Leste encourages other State Members to consider this mechanism for the peaceful settlement of maritime disputes. We believe that this mechanism will play an important role in appeasing global tensions on our seas.”

[Full statement available here.](#)