

Well-planned and managed cities can drive sustainable development – UN agency chief

7 February 2018 – The head of the UN Human Settlements Programme ([/UN-Habitat](#)) has said that a week-long conference on sustainable urban development that kicked off Wednesday in the Malaysian capital, Kuala Lumpur, will open a “global conversation about our cities and human settlements.”

“With its genuine openness and inclusive nature, the World Urban Forum [[WUF9](#)] is unique on the United Nations conference circuit,” said Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Executive Director of the UN Human Settlements Programme ([/UN-Habitat](#)) in her remarks to the opening of the Forum, which runs through Saturday, 13 January.

“It is a chance for stakeholders from all over the world – from ministers, local government and urban planners, to civil society groups, the private sector, academia and the media – to contribute to the global conversation about our cities and human settlements,” she added.

Ms. Sharif called WUF9 a platform where people from all walks of life share their experience of finding homes, jobs and lives in urban spaces around the world and a chance for some of the world’s most marginalized to highlight their experiences in being denied some of the advantages cities pose.

For current and future partners, the UN-Habitat chief saw the Forum as an opportunity to showcase the innovative ideas and solutions to challenges being confronted in urban and rural human settlements – and to learn from experts in the field.

Ms. Sharif maintained that WUF9 is “the ideal platform to debate the contribution that positive urban development makes to delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)), in particular Goal 11, and the [New Urban Agenda](#),” which was adopted in 2016 by the UN conference known as [Habitat III](#).

Recent debates and studies have indeed acknowledged that sustainable urbanization is an essential tool for addressing the global challenges of poverty, exclusion, conflict and climate change.

“The New Urban Agenda comes at a critical moment, when for the first time in history over half of the world’s population is residing in cities,” she said, which, if planned and managed well, can be “the main tool for sustainable development and a solution to many of the challenges our planet is facing today.”

WUF9 is the first major milestone after the adoption of the New Urban Agenda, which lays out the vision for future cities based on the science of urban

development providing tools in crucial areas.

Barely three weeks into her tenure as the UN-Habitat chief, Ms. Sharif said it is “an honour and a privilege” that the Forum, which is held every two years in different parts of the world, was being hosted in her native Malaysia, saying “Kuala Lumpur will have the chance to showcase some of its own urban innovations.”

She concluded her statement with the assertion that she looked forward to joining “the global conversation on promoting socially, economically and environmentally sustainable cities for all.”

[UNICEF helping to restore health services for children and families returning to war-torn Mosul](#)

7 February 2018 – Warning about the “alarming” state of Iraq’s healthcare system, especially in war-ravaged areas in and around Mosul, the United Nations children’s agency has stepped up its support to help the Government provide critical medical services so that children and families affected by violence and displacement can resume their lives.

With less than 10 per cent of health facilities in Iraq’s Ninewah governorate functioning at full capacity, the UN Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)) said that as many as 750,000 children in the governorate are struggling to access basic health services although violence has subsided. Those facilities that are operational are stretched to the breaking point.

“The state of Iraq’s healthcare system is [alarming](#),” said Peter Hawkins, UNICEF Representative in Iraq, who has just completed a visit to the largest hospital in Mosul.

“For pregnant women, newborn babies, and children, preventable and treatable conditions can quickly escalate into a matter of life and death,” he said, warning that medical facilities are strained beyond capacity and there are critical shortages of life-saving medicines.

Three years of intense violence have devastated health facilities in Iraq. Over 60 health facilities have repeatedly come under attack since the escalation of violence in 2014, severely disrupting access to basic health services for children and families.

In Mosul, UNICEF has rehabilitated the pediatric and nutritional wards of two hospital centres, provided refrigerators to store vaccines for up to 250,000 children, and supported vaccination campaigns to immunize all children under

five years old. Most health centres in the governorate have also re-started vaccination services for children.

UNICEF says the Reconstruction Conference for Iraq hosted by Kuwait next week is a unique opportunity for the Iraqi Government and the international community to put children at the heart of reconstruction, including through increased budget allocations to services for children.

Mr. Hawkins said what he saw in the hospitals in Mosul was both “heartbreaking and inspiring,” explaining that the ingenuity and dedication of health workers who are committed to giving newborn children the best possible start in life in the most challenging of circumstances is remarkable.

“They too deserve support so that they can continue to save lives,” he said.

UNICEF is appealing for \$17 million to support rebuilding health facilities for children in Iraq in 2018.

[UN releases \\$9.1 million to fill ‘critical healthcare gaps’ in Yemen](#)

7 February 2018 – With only 50 per cent of medical facilities fully functional in Yemen, the United Nations health agency is striving to fill a “critical” healthcare shortage and will use a \$9.1 million emergency response grant to assist 630,000 vulnerable people in districts around Sana’a and al-Hudayda.

The World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) is working with partners “to fill [critical gaps](#) in the provision of basic healthcare, to respond to disease outbreaks, to strengthen disease surveillance, to distribute medical supplies and to deliver life-saving services to mothers and their children,” said WHO Yemen Representative Nevio Zagaria.

The grant from the UN Central Emergency Response Fund ([CERF](#)) will be used to deliver urgent health assistance to 189,000 internally displaced persons and 441,000 people from host communities, including chronically ill people, pregnant and lactating mothers, severely malnourished children, and injured people.

Assistance will be provided in the form of health services close to where they live, including for general services and trauma; child and nutrition care; reproductive, maternal and new-born care; mental health; and treatment for communicable diseases and life-threatening non-communicable diseases.

“CERF funding will provide additional resources help make our work

possible at a time of great need for the people of Yemen,” said Mr. Zagaria.

With only half of health facilities fully functional, 16.4 million people in Yemen require assistance to ensure adequate access to healthcare, with 9.3 million in acute need. Ongoing outbreaks of cholera and diphtheria have underscored the impacts of a failing health system.

[Liberia: UN mission farewell ceremony honours last departing police and military personnel](#)

6 February 2018 – After 14 years of serving in the United Nations Mission in Liberia ([UNMIL](#)), an official farewell ceremony was held on Tuesday in the capital, Monrovia, to honour the last departing Police and Military personnel serving there.

“Today, [Liberia is a success story](#) and classical example of a post conflict nation that has emerged stronger than ever before, the country is indeed a symbol of hope for other nations engulfed in conflicts and wars” said Force Commander Major General Salihu Zaway Uba, who heads UNMIL’s Military component – that includes Nigeria, Pakistan and Ukraine personnel.

In 2003, UNMIL began with 16,475 uniformed personnel. Since that time, 61 contingents from various countries have served there. At Tuesday’s farewell ceremony 404 Military and 285 Police personnel were honoured.

According to the Major General, the Mission’s military and police have taken greater stride towards strengthening peace and security, rule of law and governance, among others in Liberia.

Police Commissioner Simon Blatchly Heads the Formed Police Unit, which is composed of Nigerian and Chinese personnel.

The Force Commander stated that it was not all roses particularly for the military, which had the highest fatalities of 138 personnel, while the police lost 21 persons.

“As we are closing, the memory of those 159 persons and others in the Mission will continue to live in our minds, we will continue to pay special tribute to them and those who contributed to peace and security in Liberia” said the Major General.

On behalf of Police Commissioner Blatchly, the Force Commander expressed their profound appreciation to the uniformed component of UNMI, saying “As

individual units and contingents, you have done remarkably well to keep the flags high, we are proud of your endeavours as significant contribution to peace in Liberia.”

[Over 14,000 farmers in rural Nepal to benefit from new UN project](#)

6 February 2018 – Thousands of family farmers are expected to benefit from a United Nations Development Programme ([UNDP](#)) initiative in Nepal that uses an innovative approach to build both the farmers’ capacities as well as add value to their products.

Being implemented in partnership with the Government of Nepal, the Cooperative Market Development Programme aims to establish and operationalize cooperative market chain of fruits and vegetables to increase farmers’ income and other livelihood opportunities.

“This [partnership] will directly benefit thousands of Nepali farmers over the next five years, through crucial support in modernizing their production and market chain,” said Renaud Meyer, the UNDP Country Director for Nepal.

“The active engagement and financing from the Ministry [of Cooperatives and Poverty Alleviation] shows strong commitment, leadership and ownership of the programme,” he added.

According to UNDP-Nepal, the Programme focuses on six districts near the country’s capital, Kathmandu, which despite having a number of farmers’ cooperative groups, are plagued by poor infrastructure, lack of transport and storage facilities, inadequate access to market information as well as regulatory and institutional bottlenecks.

In addition to improving infrastructure, the initiative also aims to enhance quality, quantity and consistency of the supply of fruits and vegetables as well as train farmers on employing better techniques, as well as building their marketing and institutional capacity.

In all, about 14,000 farmers and their families are expected to benefit from the initiative, which is also expected to contribute to the South Asian country’s implementation of Sustainable Development Goals 1 and 2 on ending poverty in all its forms, and ending hunger and achieving food security, respectively.