

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.”