

OBSERVANCE OF THE WORLD CITIES DAY 2023
INTERACTIVE DISCUSSION ON SOCIAL POLICIES
UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS IN NEW YORK
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 31, 2023
10:00-11:15 AM (NEW YORK TIME)
CONFERENCE ROOM 7
Closing remarks UN-Habitat

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished delegates, colleagues, and guests,

As we draw the curtains on this insightful and interactive discussion on the observance of World Cities Day 2023, which has centered on the crucial theme of "Social Policies," I find myself inspired and encouraged by the wealth of knowledge and solutions that have been shared here today.

First and foremost, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to the International Federation of Family Development for orchestrating this event, a platform where we could come together to dig into the challenges and opportunities that urbanization presents to our families. Urbanization, an unmistakable hallmark of the past century, has fundamentally shaped the lives of families around the globe, a trend set to continue with two-thirds of the world's population expected to reside in cities by 2050.

We have, however, been reminded that the rapid and often unsustainable nature of urbanization has exposed urban families, especially the diverse and marginalized categories within them, to the harsh realities of inequality. These challenges have been further exacerbated by the triple crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, and conflict, testing the resilience of families worldwide.

Yet, it is here in our cities that we find hope and innovation. Cities have been the driving force behind initiatives that bridge the equality gap, advance climate action, and promote green and inclusive recoveries from the pandemic. Local and national governments, recognizing the family as the foundational unit of society, have been working to enact family-friendly policies aimed at bolstering their resilience and fostering prosperity.

International development frameworks, notably the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the New Urban Agenda, offer a blueprint for sustainable urban development. These frameworks underscore the importance of addressing poverty, youth employment, violence prevention, and so much more.

UN-Habitat is the United Nations entity overseeing sustainable development in cities and human settlements, UN-Habitat has been actively pursuing to make our urban spaces safer, more inclusive, and more resilient:

Housing: UN-Habitat's commitment to providing adequate housing for all, irrespective of age, gender, income, or social status, has been instrumental in preventing forced evictions, constructing community-driven housing, and formulating improved housing policies.

New Technologies: UN-Habitat's focus on innovative approaches and tools has helped bridge the digital divide and inspire imaginative solutions for urban challenges, such as the Her City toolbox, which promotes urban development from a girl's perspective.

Education: The organization's efforts to promote inclusive and quality education, as well as intergenerational learning, have been evident through initiatives like the Kampala Principles for Youth-led development and the global public spaces program.

Healthcare: UN-Habitat's work in positioning health outcomes at the center of urban development has contributed to healthier cities through effective urban design, cleaner environments, and better prevention strategies.

Safety: The Safer Cities Program has been pivotal in addressing the root causes of urban crime and insecurity, ensuring that all city dwellers, including women, the poor, children, and the elderly, can feel safe in their homes, streets, and public spaces.

Clean Air: Recognizing the importance of green spaces and climate action, UN-Habitat's City Resilience Profiling Tool has measured and strengthened the resilience of cities to climate hazards, impacting the urban poor and families.

Transportation: UN-Habitat has worked toward creating safe, affordable, accessible, integrated, and sustainable transport systems, aiming to reduce congestion, air pollution, and road traffic accidents while promoting non-motorized transport.

Affordability: UN-Habitat's design and promotion of age and disability-friendly cities ensure affordability and inclusivity, reinforcing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Vulnerable Families: UN-Habitat's commitment to social inclusion, including addressing discrimination in housing and providing affordable housing solutions, resonates in its programs aimed at empowering marginalized families.

In conclusion, the challenges we face in our cities and the actions taken by various stakeholders are a testament to our collective will to build back better, greener, and more inclusively. With the family's diverse nature at the core of our efforts, the inclusion of every member in the development process is a vision that promises reduced inequality, poverty alleviation, productive and inclusive urban economies, sustainable energy investments, and flourishing ecosystems.

As we leave this gathering, let us carry forward the spirit of collaboration and innovation that has marked this event, and let us continue to work hand in hand to create urban areas that truly reflect the aspirations and needs of our families. Together, we can shape inclusive, safe, and resilient cities for all.

Thank you, and may we move forward with renewed determination and a shared commitment to building a better urban future for our families.