

Introductory Remarks to the 1st Session of the Executive Board of UN-Habitat (2022)

Zainab Hawa Bangura
UN Under-Secretary-General and Director-General of UNON

Monday, 29 March 2022 - 9:00AM EAT

Thank you, for that gracious introduction Mr. Chair.

Ms. Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Executive Director of UN-Habitat,
Honourable Charles Hinga, Principal Secretary of the State Department
for Housing and Urban Development and Head of the Delegation of the
Republic of Kenya representing our Host Country Kenya,
Honourable Martha Delgado, President of the UN-Habitat Assembly,
Your Excellency Mr Marek Garztecki, Chair of the Executive Board and
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Poland to UN-Habitat,
Honourable Ministers,
Distinguished members of the Executive Board,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

As the Director-General of UNON, I warmly welcome you on behalf of my
sister and friend, Executive Director Maimunah Mohd Sharif, to this [first
session of the Executive Board of UN-Habitat for the year 2022](#).

I congratulate you, Ambassador Marek Garztecki, for your leadership as
Chair of the Executive Board [since April 2021](#), and wish to [acknowledge
the tremendous work you have done in preparing for this Session](#).

[UN-Habitat was able to successfully convene in hybrid fashion its last
Executive Board Meeting. We expect the same modality with full
precautions taken as some countries are entering their sixth wave of
Covid-19.](#)

Inclusivity is key to all conferences and UNON will strive to ensure that
our facilities meet the expectations of all delegates. We have just

successfully supported UNEA 5.2 and UNEP@50 celebrations earlier in March this year.

I also wish to thank the Government of Kenya, and the Ministry of Health for their guidance and support.

UNON continues to make every effort to ensure that important meetings such as the Executive Board can be convened safely and with all precautions taken, given the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic. UNON is also making every effort to meet the urgent current as well as future expanded conferencing demands in terms of capacity as well as functionality, to support the UN-Habitat Assembly, the UN Environment Assembly, as well as other associated meetings in Nairobi.

Since 4 October, when UNON opened the Complex up to 60% of staff and other categories of personnel, we have seen increasing numbers of Delegates and colleagues at the Complex. We are determined to ensure the safety and protection of all of these colleagues, as well as Delegates. In line with the concept of the UN Complex as a safe-haven for all, today over 93% of staff, other categories of personnel and the contractors based on the Complex have been fully vaccinated. We are pleased to have both the Delegate's Lounge and the Recreation Centre open again, signaling a return to some level of normality. UN-Habitat's back to office rate is currently at 24%, and we expect more colleagues to return to the office following our guidance for gradual return to office policy.

I would like to congratulate Executive Director Maimunah Mohd Sharif, for her re-election as Executive Director of UN-Habitat for a second term. I look forward to working with her closely to ensure that UNON helps UN-Habitat achieve the targets that she has set for the Programme in the next two years.

The focus areas including housing, climate adaptation and localising the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly in Asia & Africa, is very much needed. My team is also helping UN-Habitat with the preparations for the High Level Meeting on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda that will be convened by the President of the General Assembly in New York on 28 April 2022.

We at UNON stand ready to support UN-Habitat achieve these noble goals despite financial constraints and the challenges associated with the Covid-19 pandemic. Let me wish all of you a very fruitful and productive Executive Board meeting here at UNON and also those of you attending and connecting from afar.

Asante Sana

(667 words – excluding salutation)