

## **Speech at the press conference in Istanbul, Republic of Türkiye, ahead of World Habitat Day 2022**

**Date: 29 September 2022**

Honourable minister Murat Kurum,  
Honourable mayor Yucel Yilmaz,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I sincerely thank the Government of the Republic of Türkiye and the City of Balıkesir for their excellent preparations and hard work to host the global observance of World Habitat Day. I also want to thank the First Lady of the Republic of Türkiye, Her Excellency Emine Erdoğan, for extending her support to this initiative.

This is a very important day that was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1985 to reflect on the state of cities, towns, and human settlements around the world and on the basic right to adequate shelter.

It is also intended to remind us of the transformative power of urbanization to improve living standards. World Habitat Day is also about the agency we have to shape the future of our cities and towns.

Today, more than half of the world's population lives in cities and towns. The number is growing every day. According to the UN-Habitat World Cities Report that was launched in June this year, urbanization is a megatrend that is here to stay. This presents some of the most significant opportunities and challenges to humanity.

Cities are the centers for economic growth and development but if they are poorly planned, rapid urbanization gives rise to demographic, environmental, economic and social problems.

The United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11 – “to make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable” – identifies sustainable urbanization as one of the key priorities for global development.

The adoption of the new Urban Agenda by the United Nations in 2016 was another significant milestone. It offers national and local governments a roadmap towards making SDG 11 a reality.

To achieve sustainable urbanization, towns and cities need to be well integrated, well-planned, and transformed into inclusive, creative and innovative places. We can do this if we ensure policies are translated into practice and action on the ground.

This year marks 36 years since World Habitat Day was first celebrated in 1986 in Nairobi, Kenya, under the theme ‘Shelter is my right.’ This year’s theme is **‘Mind the Gap. Leave No One and No Place Behind’**.

We will be discussing growing inequalities and the gap between the haves and have-nots that is getting wider. People living in cities and towns are affected the most. Many urban residents have lost their income or housing due to conflicts, natural disasters or the COVID-19 pandemic.

Tackling urban poverty and inequality has become a global priority.

Cities and local governments play a key role in responding to the crises. We have invited ministers of housing and urban development from the region as well as mayors and city leaders to join our global observance of World Habitat Day. We want to support governments and cities in addressing growing urban problems.

World Habitat Day on 3 October 2022 will open our Urban October month - 31 days to promote a sustainable urban future.

Urban October begins with World Habitat Day on the first Monday of the month and ends with World Cities Day on 31 October. Last year, UN-Habitat and partners held more than 300 different events on urban topics throughout the world. More than 10,000 people participated in key events throughout October.

We look forward to launching our Urban October in the city of Balıkesir. I would like to thank the city and the Government of the Republic of Türkiye for their support to UN-Habitat and commitment to advance sustainable urbanization.