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FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

PRESS RELEASE

UN-Habitat signs agreement with Save the Children to make cities greener, healthier, and more child-friendly

Nairobi, 30 January 2024 — The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and child rights NGO Save the Children have signed a partnership agreement to ensure global urban development is more responsive to the unique needs of urban children, particularly those living in slums and informal settlements.

Childhood is mostly and increasingly experienced in urban areas, and the number of children living in slums is expected to triple by 2050 to around 1.5 billion.¹ One in four urban children currently live in slums and informal settlements² and climate, conflict, and economic-induced migration will only further accelerate urban inequalities.

A major ambition of the partnership will be to implement bold child-friendly public space initiatives around the world in response to the lack of child-friendly, clean, and green public spaces, especially in low-income urban communities where they are most needed.

Michal Mlynár, UN Assistant Secretary-General and Acting Executive Director of UN-Habitat, said: “Through this partnership, we will be working to ensure that children’s needs and priorities shape the urban built environment. Of all the areas that will be urban in 2050, 75 per cent are yet to be built. UN-Habitat is instrumental in supporting governments to develop city plans, national urban plans, and slum upgrading programmes that work for all, including our children.

We are excited to work in partnership with Save the Children who have more than 100 years of experience in transforming the lives of children and creating opportunities for children and youth.”

Inger Ashing, CEO of Save the Children International, said: “The estimated 500 million children that live in slums and informal settlements today face multiple deprivations including lack of access to safe and secure housing, clean, and green play spaces, safe streets, running water, electricity, suitable toilets, decent schools, and health services.

¹ UN DESA Population Division (2019): *World urbanization prospects: The 2018 revision*

² UN-Habitat Global Urban Indicators database, 2022 version.

Transforming cities and slums into clean, healthy, and sustainable environments is central to ensuring children's rights are met and that they are able to survive, learn and be protected from harm."

The partnership will ensure children's and caregivers' voices, needs, and priorities are considered and reflected in national and local urban plans and policies and slum upgrading programmes. The agreement will also allow UN-Habitat and Save the Children to jointly advocate and communicate in global forums and to elevate urban issues affecting children living in cities and slums on the national agendas of Member States and at the World Urban Forum.

Access to green and safe spaces is vital for supporting children's physical and mental well-being, learning, play, and social relations. These spaces also provide much-needed cool shaded areas for local communities during heatwaves and a place for community events and gatherings.

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About Save the Children

Save the Children believes every child deserves a future. Since our founding more than 100 years ago, we've changed the lives of more than 1 billion children. Around the world, we give children a healthy start in life, the opportunity to learn and protection from harm. We do whatever it takes for children – every day and in times of crisis – transforming their lives and the future we share.

In 2020, Save the Children played a leading role in establishing and steering the Global Alliance – Cities4Children. In the past 3 years, we have grown in membership to 27 organizations and continue to lead and shape the work of the Alliance. In doing so, we have firmly established Save the Children as a thought leader for children in slums and cities; we edit the alliance's peer reviewed research series and blog, organize global events with alliance members, manage a website that has become the go-to place for everything related to children and youth in cities and slums, and maintain an active social media presence.

About UN-Habitat

UN-Habitat is the United Nations entity responsible for sustainable urbanization. It has programmes in over 90 countries that support policymakers and communities to create socially and environmentally sustainable cities and towns. UN-Habitat promotes transformative change in cities through knowledge, policy advice, technical assistance, and collaborative action. To know more, visit www.unhabitat.org or follow us on X @UNHABITAT.

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