

**Remarks by Ms. Maimunah Mohd Sharif, United Nations Under-Secretary-General
and Executive Director, UN-Habitat**

**Climate-Health Ministers Meeting: Preparatory Meeting for the UN Climate Action
Summit 2019, Abu Dhabi**

Monday 1 July 2019 at Emirates Palace Hotel, Abu Dhabi

**Your Excellency Mr. Abdul Rahman Mohammed Al Oweis, UAE Minister of Health
and Prevention,
Your Excellency Dr. Thani Al Zeyoudi, UAE Minister of Climate Change and
Environment,
Your Excellency Madame Amina J. Mohammed, UN Deputy Secretary-General,
My dear colleague Dr. Tedros Adhanom, Director-General, World Health
Organization,
Ambassador Luis Alfonso de Alba, UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the
Climate Action Summit,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

A very good morning,

Asalamu a'leykum

On behalf of UN-Habitat, first of all, I wish to convey our most sincere appreciation for the invitation to participate in this Climate-Health Ministers' Meeting. The climate-health nexus is perhaps one of the most important fields of work in the 21st century.

On Urban Air Pollution...

Air pollution – outdoor and indoor - was estimated to cause nearly 8 million premature deaths worldwide in 2012 (WHO). Significant sources of air pollution include the transport sector, “dirty” household fuels, industrial facilities, and the open burning of solid waste. These cause respiratory and other diseases, which can be fatal, especially for the poor.

Our experience is that air pollution and emissions can be tackled together very efficiently and effectively. Better urban planning to reduce demand for travel, a move to modern public transport integrated with better facilities of walking and cycling, shifting to cleaner sources of household energy (for instance LPG for cooking and electricity for lighting), more energy efficient buildings and better municipal waste management are all important parts of an integrated strategy to reduce air pollution and cut green house gas emissions.

UN-Habitat has implemented such efforts in several countries and will continue to support the efforts of member states and partners in identifying and replicating effective policies and best practices in this area.

We have been actively engaged in the Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC) since 2015. In our work with partners like WHO, we are demonstrating that better urban planning and management leads to improved urban air quality as well as significant climate and health co-benefits. This is truly a high impact, multi-benefit pathway!

On Climate-induced disasters & weather events....

We must not forget that, nearly one in seven of the world's population lives in slums and informal settlements, often in precarious sites that face a high risk of flooding and storm surge and other climate hazards (SDI 2018). Climate-induced disasters don't affect the rich and poor equally – these people living in urban poor communities are acutely vulnerable and need special attention.

Climate change, through both water-scarcity and flooding, exerts a significant impact on health. More than 2 billion people live in countries experiencing high water stress. We have just heard that the Indian city of Chennai has completely run out of water!! On the other hand, the proliferation of waterborne diseases often accompanies flooding. Children in slums and informal settlements are particularly vulnerable thanks to poor sanitation and contaminated water. Therefore, both water scarcity and water abundance, if we can call it that, have huge health impacts.

UN-Habitat is working in several countries on community adaptation and resilience building. In the Solomon Islands, for example, we work in partnership with the Adaptation Fund to improve community resilience including through water security and flood-protected sanitation. This effectively reduced health risks and exposure related to climate change, especially for the urban poor. We supported the Capital City of Honiara develop its Resilience Strategy, which was approved by both the National and City Governments – recognizing that effective and sustainable climate adaptation requires multi-level solutions.

So how can we mobilise support for these high-impact interventions?

We are going to present a new global initiative here in Abu Dhabi titled Building Climate Resilience of the Urban Poor. This initiative puts the most vulnerable communities at the centre of all adaptation interventions, and connects their efforts with hotspot mapping, city-wide planning and national policy. It targets 140 cities and almost 150 million acutely vulnerable urban poor in its first phase, until 2023. The cost is not even that staggering – if we spend ONLY a 100 dollars per person on community-level adaptation efforts, then add costs of integrated city-wide planning for 140 cities, and national level policy support and institution building for the 50 countries they are located in, it comes to 15 Billion Dollars.

Now, if the big climate funds and donors – maybe just 4-5 of them – joined hands to launch 2 RFPs of 500 million each year to support these interventions, in four years these 140 hotspots and 150 million people would be covered. So, its not a staggering amount. It just needs to be mobilised in the right way, for the right cause, and channeled to the right level of implementation, always with those affected, at the centre!