

**Speech of the UN-Habitat Executive Director at opening the 9<sup>th</sup> Africities Summit on the role of intermediary cities of Africa in the implementation of the Agenda 2030 of the United Nations and the African Union Agenda 2063****Date: 17 May 2022**

Your Excellency Uhuru Kenyatta, President of the Republic of Kenya,  
Your Excellency Moussa Faki, Chairperson of the African Union Commission,  
Honourable Eugene Wamalwa, Cabinet Secretary for Devolution,  
Your Excellency Peter Anyang Nyong'o, Governor of Kisumu,  
Your Excellency Martin Wambora, Chairperson of the Council of Governors of Kenya,  
Madame Christine Mba Ndutume, President of the United Cities and Local Governments of Africa,  
Monsieur Jean Pierre Elong Mbassi, General Secretary of the United Cities and Local Governments of Africa,  
Honorary members of the United Cities and Local Governments of Africa.

Honourable Ministers and Mayors.  
Distinguished Delegates,

It gives me great pleasure to introduce a recorded message by the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations Madame Amina Mohammed on the occasion of the opening session of the 9<sup>th</sup> edition of the Africities Summit 2022.

[video message of the DSG]

Mr. President,  
Your Excellencies,

Let me take this opportunity to thank the organisers, who have worked very hard with the support of many young people in the city of Kisumu to make this summit possible. I always look forward to meeting young people, especially women and girls, whose future is intimately tied to the United Nations' human settlement agenda.

When a young child, born this year, celebrates her eighteenth birthday, she will join other Africans in building an urban future. More likely than not, it will be in an intermediate city. By 2050, 50% of all Africans will live in urban areas. She will be among the additional 1.4 billion people that will be born or will migrate to urban settlements.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like us to try to imagine what that urban future will be like for our young woman born in 2022. Today, more than 64 % of the urban population in Africa live in informal

settlements. There is a deficit of housing and housing finance with only 15% of urban dwellers in Africa able to afford to purchase their own homes. Depending on where our young lady is born, it will be a major battle to get a job, own a home and start a family. This is the urban future she will have if we do nothing to change the urban agenda in Africa.

## **The role of intermediate cities**

Your Excellency President Kenyatta,

I would like to recognise your contribution to Africa and the people of Kenya. Your foresight and the investments made by the Government of Kenya in housing, infrastructure, industry and job creation will be felt many decades to come. You have successfully created an abode of peace and development in East Africa, a model for the continent and the rest of us in the developing world.

Thank you for taking the initiative to host this important summit during unprecedented times when the world is experiencing the effects of what I call the confluence of the three Cs: Climate, Conflict and COVID-19. This perfect storm is increasing the socio-economic vulnerability of cities. Often overlooked are our intermediate cities. Too small to be made a national priority but not big enough to be independently resilient. Kenya, under your leadership, is showing the way to foster closer cooperation and resource allocation between national and local governments. This is helping to deliver resources to communities most in need.

Excellencies,

In the last fifty years, the United Nations in Africa, have contributed to ensuring that urban communities here have greater access to basic services, transport infrastructure and now digital connectivity. Our engagement with more than 30 countries in Africa has given us opportunities to foster collaboration with both national and local governments towards prosperous, safe and resilient cities in Africa, with the support for the development of national urban policies in 20 countries in Africa.

I would like to appreciate the collaboration with the Government of Kenya at both national and county levels, in the sector of housing, physical planning, promoting resilience for the urban poor; waste management and on the blue economy initiative for coastal cities planning being jointly carried out by UN-Habitat and UNEP to boost the circular economy with the financial support of the European Union.

I cannot over-emphasize our great collaboration with the Kisumu county on the lake front development, on municipal revenue enhancement, and on local economic development for long term recovery from COVID-19. I believe the new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework under the leadership of the United Resident Coordinator, will foster further collaboration with the Government of Kenya and will offer

an opportunity to the whole UN family to accelerate the Sustainable Development Goals in Kenya.

Distinguished delegates,

Let me also highlight the UN-Habitat Strategic Plan and our focus on housing, climate adaptation and localizing the Sustainable Development Goals. I understand that we must not leave out rural communities. The first goal of the UN-Habitat Strategic Plan is all about urban and rural linkages. This is why we are supporting this summit wholeheartedly. We believe that the transformation will come from intermediate cities. It is not about turning reversing urbanization. What we need to do is to make it more equitable.

Let me also appreciate the collaboration with UCLGA on capacity development for local government, and our recent collaboration jointly with UNECA on Voluntary Local Reviews. This includes local governments to actively participate in SDGs reporting. The participation of local governments has deepened our understanding about the socio-economic impact of COVID- 19 allowing governments to be more targeted in their resource allocation to deliver help to those most in need. I hope that the ongoing joint work in Kisumu on local economic development can be scaled up in the county at the regional level.

Distinguished Delegates,

We should remind ourselves that ultimately the goal for all of us is to see an African continent which shows inclusive growth and sustainable development, social transformation, and improvement in the standard of living and quality of life of people in both rural and urban areas. To accelerate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 and the African Union's Agenda 2063, we all need to work together; the United Nations, other stakeholders, including national and local governments, non-state actors including the private sector.

I look forward to seeing the conclusions of the summit translated into actions in the Eleventh Session of the World Urban Forum. Let me invite all of you to Katowice in Poland from 26 to 30 June 2022 where we can include the commitments from this summit on intermediate cities in the Katowice Declared Actions.

As I conclude let us recall the young woman born in 2022. I am confident that if she is fortunate to be born in Kenya, she will have the strong foundations to get a good education, a steady job and the opportunity to one day be the first woman president of the country.

Mr. President,

Thank you for the support you have shown to UN-Habitat and our mandate. More importantly, for your leadership as a champion for sustainable urbanisation in Africa. It's

our hope that urbanisation as a vehicle for economic growth in Africa will feature in an African Union Summit to come.

Wishing all you a successful 9<sup>th</sup> Edition of the Africities Summit here in Kisumu.

Thank you!