

Message from the UN-Habitat Executive Director Maimunah Mohd Sharif
Serbia National Urban Forum 11 April 2022

It is my great pleasure to join you today at this National Urban Forum. On behalf of UN-Habitat, and the entire UN system, I am honoured to join you in celebrating this milestone.

UN-Habitat's collaboration with Serbia builds on a long history and was revitalised when Serbia - as one of a few Eastern European countries - submitted its National Report to the Habitat III conference in Quito in 2016.

The *2030 National Strategy for Sustainable and Integrated Urban Development* is an important document. UN-Habitat is pleased to support the well-coordinated implementation of the priority actions identified in this Strategy.

I had my first opportunity to visit Belgrade in September last year and I was deeply touched by the warm hospitality of Minister Momirovic and colleagues at the Ministry of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure.

I was also pleased to meet with the officials from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Environment, the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities, and the UN Resident Coordinator. I also had the honour of being received by the First Lady, Madame Tamara Vucic.

One of the items we discussed and proposed was for Serbia to establish its 'National Urban Forum' in 2022. Therefore I am particularly excited, to celebrate with you the opening of the first ever National Urban Forum- congratulations on your work in making this aspiration a reality!

In my mission, I learnt about the major progress made in localizing the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, and the New Urban Agenda, in Serbia. I saw the deep commitment of Serbia to the goals of sustainable urbanization.

This is also reflected in our very constructive engagement with the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Serbia to UN-Habitat.

I am committed to strengthening the relationship between UN-Habitat and the Republic of Serbia, within the framework of the broader UN engagement with the country.

Together with the United Nations Country Team, UN-Habitat stands ready to support all your efforts towards achieving inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities and communities in Serbia.

At the same time, we also share your vision of a regional cooperation that aims to address common urbanization challenges, such as integrated planning, housing, climate change, environmental issues, and migration and informality, among others.

I hope we will take this conversation forward at the Eleventh Session of the World Urban Forum which will take place from 26 to 30 June 2022 in Katowice, Poland. Its theme “*Transforming our Cities for a Better Urban Future*” seeks to accelerate the implementation of global urban commitments and SDG11.

As the world recovers from the Covid-19 pandemic, the climate emergency, and increasingly frequent and protracted conflicts, including one very close to here, the role of a well-planned and well-managed urbanization is ever more important.

This will be the first time that the World Urban Forum takes place in Eastern Europe. I am pleased to hear that Serbia will present the progress made in the revitalisation of 11 public spaces towards achieving SDG11. It was done not only in the capital city, but also in intermediary cities. I hope to see many of you in Poland.

I wish you a very successful National Urban Forum, thank you.

