
International Women's Day 2023 Statement Executive Director of UN-Habitat

Every Eighth of March, the United Nations family and the world observe International Women's Day. This year the theme for global celebrations is "DigitALL: Innovation and technology for gender equality."

UN-Habitat aims to create a better urban future. Today, we celebrate women and girls who have contributed to inclusive urban development. We admire female champions who have advanced women's rights in their own cities, countries, and globally.

I also take this opportunity to encourage all the girls out there with bold ideas. Now more than ever, we need you. Bring your innovations, passions, and solutions to the table. In the city, in the country, and in the world.

Our future is undoubtedly digital. The future of our cities and human settlements is also digital. Technology has the power to make our cities and lives inclusive and fair. However, if we ignore the digital gender gap, we can end up widening existing urban inequalities.

As the Executive Director of UN-Habitat, I want to see more women in urban planning and key city positions. Cities and towns designed for women and girls are cities and towns designed for all.

We need to make sure women are part of the decision-making shaping their cities. It can be planning, budgeting, or provision of basic services.

We must use smart technologies to ensure that urban benefits reach women and girls. Older women or women with disabilities might find themselves excluded from active participation. Technology can bridge the gap and make our cities truly accessible and inclusive.

UN-Habitat's digital Her City Toolbox empowers women and girls to take part in city-making and gives women a voice. We work in 350 cities. But we can do much more. We want to involve more cities around the world.

I believe that women must be at the table. As a gender champion, I made a commitment to ensure we achieved gender parity at global public forums. We achieved panel parity at WUF10 and gender parity at WUF11 last year. I call on other leaders and organisations to ensure women are heard!

I also encourage cities and urban colleagues to create ways for all women and girls to participate meaningfully and invite them to be part of urban transformations.

And to all the women and girls with bold ideas about how to make our cities better for everyone – let's make them a reality together!

Happy International Women's Day!