



**UNFCCC Nairobi Work Programme,
2018 Focal Point Forum on Human Settlements and Adaptation,
COP23 Venue, Bonn, 8 November 2017**

***Deputy Executive Director
Opening keynote on 'Urban Climate Change Adaptation – Learning from
Experience'***

Mr Chair, Distinguished Delegates , Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen.

1. Importance of the Focal Point Forum & the Nairobi Work Programme

It is my great honor and privilege to address this important forum today. I would like to warmly thank the delegations and the UNFCCC for choosing this relevant topic on Human Settlements, and Climate Change Adaptation for this 11th Focal Point Forum.

This is an important gathering at the COP because it provides an interactive space for information-sharing and exchange among Member States, experts, practitioners and policy-makers, and this helps to facilitate collaboration and partnerships.

Such partnerships are crucial for translating knowledge into concrete actions and for UN-Habitat this is a welcome opportunity to strengthen partnerships with relevant institutions under the UNFCCC process, and also to connect expertise from a broad range of partners, which allows us to better respond to needs at country-level.

UN-Habitat is very pleased to be an active partner to the UNFCCC and the Nairobi Work Programme in reviewing experiences and in supporting human settlements in adapting to climate change.

2. Introduction, Climate Change Adaptation

This meeting could not be more timely as we all have fresh pictures in our minds from the Caribbean, where devastating hurricanes have destroyed communities, settlements, and most importantly human lives. In other parts of the world we see that fires are destroying houses due to extreme droughts. Here in Germany, storms have disrupted infrastructure and lives have been lost.

Rising sea levels, floods, increasing temperatures, changing rainfall patterns and more frequent extreme weather events clearly indicate that climate change is no longer a distant threat that requires action to be taken only for future generations. We need to make climate action our top priority now.

Urban areas hold more than half the world's population and by 2030 two thirds of the people will live in cities. They also host most of its built assets and economic activities and house a high proportion of the population and economic activities most at risk from climate change.

Some of the most vulnerable people live in cities and informal settlements, the urban poor, as they are often located in low-lying flood-prone areas, on vulnerable coastlines, steep slopes and with fragile and interrupted basic services. In order to fortify the maximum number of people possible against climate impacts, we must improve the climate resilience of our cities, towns and settlements.

If we fail to do so, we are jeopardizing the development achievements of the past, and risk failing the sustainable development promises for the future. We risk leaving those people behind, who are locked into an everlasting cycle of poverty, because climate change destroys their houses and workplaces, washes away their schools, and hospitals.

3. What has been achieved so far

On building climate resilience of human settlements, we have come a long way in the past 4-5 years. Globally, countries have formalized number of key international agreements on resilience in human settlements:

- Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development with Sustainable Development Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable;

By 2020, substantially increase the number of cities and human settlements adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans towards ... mitigation and adaptation to climate change, resilience to disasters, ...

→ The Paris Agreement includes a goal on adaptation: increasing the ability to adapt to adverse impacts of climate change. Further, our review of the NDCs has shown that 113 out of 164 NDC include urban content, with 64 countries of these focusing on adaptation.

→ The New Urban Agenda [shared vision; para13g] ‘envisages cities and human settlements that ...reduce vulnerability, build resilience and responsiveness to natural and human-made hazards and foster adaptation to climate change;

At the global level, networks of researchers, cities and partners, including networks of cities, United Nations organizations, multilateral and bilateral donors, and universities, have launched initiatives to facilitate access to existing knowledge, exchange information and build collaboration on adaptation action in human settlements. This shows that adaptation action in human settlements is now an established and recognized practice by actors at all levels.

4. Urban Adaptation at UN-Habitat

UN-Habitat has begun learning about city-level adaptation in about 2008, and supported assessment of climate change vulnerabilities and city-level resilience in human settlements in four cities in three regions: Maputo, Mozambique, Kampala Uganda; Esmeraldas, Ecuador; and Sorsogon City, the Philippines.

Since then UN-Habitat has directly supported the development of such assessments in more than 50 cities throughout the world, especially in Asia-pacific and Africa, and directly involved more than 1,000 local participants - from city Authorities and technicians to local community leaders and civil society representatives.

We continue adapting city-level tools and methodologies to assess sensitivity & vulnerability to climate change at the neighborhood level, focusing on the most vulnerable populations living in informal settlements.

Assessments with strong community engagement utilizing the “Planning for Climate Change guide and tool” and “City Resilience Action Planning Tool” (CityRAP) have been conducted in informal settlements of Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso), Lami Town (Fiji), Honiara (Solomon Islands), and Montego Bay (Jamaica). Likewise the demands of working in nearly 200 rural villages in Laos have recently required us to rethink participatory methodologies and tools for more rapid results.

Application at the city level of our “Guiding Principles for City Climate Action Planning” has yielded insights into improved planning for climate resilience. These “Guiding Principles” were developed together with 45 endorsing partners and launched at COP-21. Since then, together with partners we have applied these eight Guiding Principles, together with associated indicators, in a number of cities engaged in ongoing planning processes.

One lesson is that – with attention – it is possible to build mitigation measures into a number of resilience actions. A resilience action plan in Vilankulu, Mozambique, for example, called for increased street lighting as a way to improve public safety. The original plan was for using conventional lighting. Following the Guiding Principles review, however, they have now begun to think about expanding street lighting using solar power or LED bulbs. Application of these Principles can thus lead to stronger plans.

More recently, we are seeing more and more success of those assessments being turned into plans and action, for example through projects generously funded by international Climate Funds like the Adaptation Fund, for example in East Africa, Laos, Fiji or the Solomon Islands, or through other global funding, philanthropies and donors in the field of resilience.

5. Lessons Learned

The motto of this COP is more, faster, together. For building climate resilience in human settlements, we can look towards the lessons learned and the opportunities that have been identified.

The most climate-vulnerable groups are generally infants, the elderly, as well as women, and those living in marginalized, or informal settlements. Assessment of vulnerability should be done at a sufficiently local and fine-grained scale to account for the influence of socio-economic and other local factors on vulnerability.

Numerous challenges still hinder more ambitious and more and broader adaptation planning processes in human settlements.

These include:

- 1) Poor access to quality data
- 2) Lack of government and community staff who have the technical skills for the analysis and planning process, and for addressing loss and damage,
- 3) Access to local, national and international financing for adaptation.

While capacity building activities do take place, further support to strengthen capacities on climate-resilience at the local level is urgently needed.

From the expert meeting held several days ago on this topic, several messages started to clearly come out whereby Member States can actively support this priority.

The assessments and understanding of vulnerability needs a successful localized process that brings together communities, government and urban stakeholders and defines a common vision. This takes time but it creates deeper knowledge on climate change and local capacity to plan for future impacts. For this understanding and knowledge to translate into plans and action is not automatic, but requires additional effort.

Integrating both short-term and long-term consideration into adaptation planning can help to avoid making mistakes, minimize climate-related loss and damage as well as build long-term adaptation capacities and knowledge.

Adopting a long-term view on adaptation involves clear and concise planned city extensions and providing safe space for urban growth, avoiding spontaneous expansion on vulnerable and dangerous locations.

Secondly, national Government have an important role in these local processes. In the National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), Member States can be sure to prioritize some actions that address human settlements. Several years ago, UN-Habitat reviewed a large sample of National Adaptation Programmes of Action and found that in most countries, these seemed to systematically under-represent activities in human settlements. Let's not repeat that pattern with the NAPs.

Next year we hope to continue working with partners to the Nairobi Work Programme in developing supplemental guidance on this topic -- but meanwhile we urge Member States to begin now to include urban actions in their NAPs.

Last but not least let us carefully consider how to provide local action with increased access to climate finance. There are ways to do this that do not necessarily involve direct access by local governments. For example countries, such as Indonesia and Rwanda have established climate and environmental funds that local governments can apply to for funding priority actions, and capitalized those facilities with both national and international resources. This is a promising mechanism , but it also exposes a new gap: the need to strengthen the capacities of local governments so that they can successfully apply for such resources and then implement priority actions.

6. Conclusion

Ladies and Gentlemen, Let me end my remarks with a quote from the Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change, who give us great hope in reminding us that:

"Well governed cities with universal provision of infrastructure and services have a strong base for building climate resilience if processes of planning, design, and allocation of human capital and material resources are responsive to emerging climate risks".

If we get urbanization right, we will actively contribute to building climate resilience and support sustainable development.

I hope this Forum will help us to foster stronger bonds do more, faster, and together.

Thank you very much for your attention and I wish you fruitful discussions.