

Remarks/Speech

Official Opening  
WUF11



- **Your Excellency, Mateusz Jakub Morawiecki, Prime Minister of Poland**
- **Honourable Grzegorz Puda, Minister of Funds and Regional Policy, representing the Local Organising Committee of World Urban Forum 11**
- **Honourable Małgorzata Jarosińska-Jedynak, Secretary of State at the Ministry of Funds and Regional Policy and Government Plenipotentiary for the preparation of the World Urban Forum,**
- **Honourable Mayor Marcin Krupa,**
- **Honorable Ministers and Mayors,**
- **Distinguished delegates and representatives,**
- **Colleagues, friends, ladies and gentlemen,**

It gives me great pleasure to welcome all of you to this 11th session of the World Urban Forum. Your Excellency, Mr Prime Minister, please allow me to play a video message from the Secretary-General Mr Antonio Guterres.

(Video is played)

Mr Prime Minister,

Please accept the grateful thanks of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) for hosting WUF11 in Katowice, Poland. This is the first time the WUF is taking place in the Eastern European region, and we are very happy to be able to meet in-person for the first time since the pandemic.

I would like to acknowledge the leadership of Honourable Minister Mr. **Grzegorz Puda** and **Secretary of State at the Ministry, Madam Małgorzata Jarosińska-Jedynak**, for demonstrating the good cooperation between the United Nations and the Government of Poland. I would also like to acknowledge Honourable Mayor Marcin Krupa for the excellent cooperation and celebration of the Sustainable Development Goals here in Katowice, Poland.

WUF11 is the first major UN conference for sustainable urbanization, where we can meet both in-person as well as online. It is also the most inclusive World Urban Forum, in terms of accessibility for the differently abled. Interpretation and the use of sign language has been mainstreamed throughout. The host country has also provided connectivity through digital services, making this the first truly hybrid WUF.

At the time when registration closed on 25 June 2022, some 22,595 persons have registered, representing 173 countries. In terms of speakers, we have achieved panel parity with 54% women and 46% men thought leaders.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The World Urban Forum is a unique platform where we can share uncomfortable truths about our urbanising world. In 2020, an additional 93 million people were pushed back into extreme poverty, and as many as 161 million more people faced chronic hunger. It is hard to face the reality that inequality is increasing in every region of the world.

Many children significantly missed out on schooling, and over 100 million more children fell below the minimum reading proficiency level and other areas of academic learning. With increasing inflation and a war in Europe, even those fortunate people born in the developed world today will face homelessness and joblessness. Estimations show that in 2020, 56% of the world's population lived in urban areas, and it is expected that this will reach 68% by 2050. 2 out of 3 human beings will be living in urban areas. Today, over 1 billion are living in informal settlements.

WUF is also a place where we can share inspiring stories like Katowice. In 1994, UN-Habitat working with other UN agencies and the regional authorities here in Upper Silesia, was able to lay the groundwork for the urban renewal of the cities and communities. The short walk that you will take from the Spodek arena to the International Conference Centre, is a giant step through time for Katowice. It is truly an amazing transformation, from an economy that is heavily reliant on a single coal mining industry, to a diversified one that is freer, cleaner and greener, based on culture and services.

I am an eternal optimist and from my vantage point, I believe we can regain the confidence of our fellow citizens if we fulfil our commitments. 87 Member States, including 45 Ministers and senior government officials gathered with the Global Task Force on Local and Regional Governments, Habitat Professionals Forum, Grassroots Constituency, Regional Economic Commissions, International Chamber of Commerce, and the President of ECOSOC, in what was among the most inclusive, and well attended sessions of the General Assembly in recent years.

Specifically, Member States call for five areas of action:

- 1) Housing, basic services, and urban planning
- 2) Climate action and environmentally sustainability
- 3) Urban prosperity, economic transformation, and financing
- 4) Multi-level governance, decentralisation, and localisation
- 5) Post-Conflict/disaster urban recovery

I was also informed that all 54 Member States of the Commonwealth of Nations, have endorsed the “*Responding to Rapid Urbanization and Climate Change: Call to Action on Sustainable Urbanization Across the Commonwealth*” in their meeting in Kigali, Rwanda. Let me thank the Government of Rwanda for the support we received at CHOGM.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

The WUF is not a legislative forum, but a unique one where governments meet stakeholders. In the 10th session of the World Urban Forum in Abu Dhabi, we made several commitments in the Abu Dhabi Declared Actions. In the past 30 months since we convened the WUF, some of these declared actions have been fulfilled:

- On **National Urban Policies**: As of March 2021, 156 countries have developed national urban policies, with almost half (74) already in the implementation stage.
- The **Global Water Operators Partnerships Alliance**: 187 water operators' partnerships improved the efficiency and effectiveness of their service delivery from being part of the Global Water Operators' Partnership Alliance.
- **Waste Wise Cities**. 200 cities are now part of the campaign towards sustainable integrated municipal waste management.
- **Public Space**: Over 1.82 million people in 75 cities are enjoying safe access to more than 104 public spaces that have been designed and upgraded.

- **City Investment Facility:** A fused offering of technical and financial advisory involving UN-Habitat and UNCDF expertise have been launched.
- **Sustainable Human Settlements Foundation** will be signing a contribution agreement with UN-Habitat at WUF11, creating consistent funding for UN-Habitat and the implementation of its mandate.
- **World Cities Report** will be launched at WUF11 and has been the key document to underpin discussions through the forum this year.

From this 11th session of WUF here in Katowice, let us commit more actions that we can take, as individuals, partners, communities, cities and countries to ensure that a better urban future is possible. We have focal points appointed for all sessions, and we have the WUF11 app where you can record your voluntary commitments. The time for action is now.

Thank you.