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## WUF11 Highlights: Monday, 27 June 2022

The official opening day of WUF11 was dominated by the themes of solidarity and resilience. Many speakers during the morning's opening ceremony highlighted the multiple crises affecting cities, from the COVID-19 pandemic to climate impacts, inflation, and armed conflict. In the afternoon, an Extraordinary Dialogue on Urban Crisis Response and Recovery and a Special Session on Urban Recovery Frameworks allowed participants to discuss in depth how cities can respond. Roundtables on Local and Regional Governments, National Urban Policies in a Changing World, Business and Industries, and a Special Session on Urban Data and Circular Economy also convened in the afternoon.

### Opening Ceremony

Moderator Anna Butrym welcomed participants to WUF11. Mateusz Morawiecki, Prime Minister of Poland, said the COVID-19 pandemic showed urban life must be redefined, prioritizing tackling inequalities in cities.

Via video, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said cities are central to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and addressing climate change.

Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Executive Director, UN-Habitat, listed five themes for WUF11: housing services and urban development, climate action, urban prosperity, multilevel governance, and post-conflict and post-disaster recovery.



Mateusz Morawiecki, Prime Minister of Poland

Via video, Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev spoke on rebuilding cities in liberated territories and presented his country's offer to host a future WUF. Colombia's President Iván Duque Márquez described his country's development as an "axis of sustainable future," focusing on green urban development policies and projects.

Grzegorz Puda, Minister of Development Funds and Regional Policy in Poland, pointed to Katowice's transformation into a modern city and Poland's growth as examples for WUF11 discussions.

Małgorzata Jarosińska-Jedynak, Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy, Poland, said WUF11 organizers



Speakers cut the ribbon to open WUF11.



Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Executive Director, UN-Habitat

sought to involve the entire city in preparations, including a Youth Council. Underlining the importance of citizen involvement, Marcin Krupa, Mayor of Katowice, attributed his city's transformation from "industrial to modern" to the work of thousands of residents.

Elisa Ferreria, Commissioner of Cohesion and Reforms, European Commission, stated that there is never a situation where less cooperation is beneficial, and that social and demographic challenges cannot be solved by being blind to the needs of cities and their surrounding areas.

Berry Vrbanovic, Governing President, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), called for both city-to-city and local, regional, and national collaboration to create the enabling environment needed to achieve the SDGs.

Katarzyna Smętek, WUF11 Youth Council, said while WUF's initiative to establish and work with a Youth Council represented progress, further efforts should meaningfully engage youth calling for systematic inclusion in delegation.

Lewis Akenji, Hot or Cool Institute, emphasized transforming cities by addressing social tensions: rising production vs. dwindling resources; poverty vs. consumerism; increasing waste vs. decreasing sinks. He urged "thriving" cities for people, not cars, with universal basic services; car-free centers; measures of well being; and capacity-building that avoids the "small action trap."

Mohd Sharif then declared WUF11 officially open.

### ***Extraordinary Dialogue on Urban Crisis Response and Recovery***

Emilia Sáiz, Secretary-General, UCLG, stressed the need to transform local systems to increase their efficiency in addressing crises of health, man-made conflict, and natural disasters.

Moderator Nigel Fisher, UN-Habitat, invited speakers to reflect on: the nature and scale of urban crises; how recovery can offer opportunities to accelerate necessary transformations; and the role of mayors as first responders and visionaries.

Leilani Farha, Director, The Shift, said the housing crisis is driven by the extraction of wealth from housing. Mary Kaldor, London School of Economics, said as wars are shifting to cities,

civilians suffer the highest casualties and must thus be better protected. Clarissa Augustinus, UN-Habitat, urged agile, fit-for-purpose systems to enhance biodiversity and address housing and other equity issues.

Andy Deacon, Global Covenant of Mayors, explained that local leaders have the tools to "lead the way to the zero-carbon future we desperately need." Filiép Decorte, UN-Habitat, noted communities need localized data to access resources needed to mobilize action.

Bogotá's Mayor Claudia López Hernández recounted seven "waves" of crises in her city, from the pandemic to unemployment and social strife, and the democratic changes and sustainable policies that have built opportunities. Responding to a question about financial challenges, she discussed her initiative of freezing taxes for households while increasing taxes for industries profiting from crises.

Mohd Sharif called for youth and local governments to be given the means to lead on urban crises and warned we are returning to a world of "me, myself, and those I know" at a time when solidarity is needed. Sameh Wahba, World Bank, stated that investing in urban resilience is no longer a luxury, but a necessity. Raouf Mazou, UNHCR, stated that cities are absorbing most displaced peoples globally, facing difficulties in the process.

Gilles Carbonnier, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), spoke to the challenges of areas in urban warfare, namely ensuring the protection of citizens, critical infrastructure, and access to essential services.

Emmanuel Jal, independent artist and former child soldier, explained how he used imagination to survive and overcome trauma. He said access to books and education is essential to enable traumatized children to imagine a better future.

On solutions, Carbonnier outlined how health and education services were maintained in Brazilian cities through training service providers. Mazou said supporting refugees in cities rather than urban camps enables better services and integration. Wahba emphasized livelihoods and places as "two critically important dimensions that need to go hand in hand" in crisis recovery.



Claudia López Hernández, Mayor of Bogotá

## Roundtables

**Local and Regional Governments:** The Local and Regional Governments (LRG) Roundtable featured panels on empowered local governments and caring cities.

The first panel on empowered local governments urged, *inter alia*:

- Sufficient resources for providing vital services;
- Rethinking forms of government, with emphasis on decentralization;
- Green development;
- Caring for vulnerable groups, with emphasis on women's rights and sheltering those experiencing homelessness; and
- Direct, "non-sovereign finance," such as municipal bonds for water and large-scale equity partnerships.

The second panel on caring cities urged, *inter alia*:

- Implementing lessons from the pandemic, such as creating open spaces, digitally transforming services, and building resilience;
- Focusing on engaging in dialogue with people affected by crisis, and treating services, like education, as rights, not privileges;
- Reconfiguring local institutions for innovation and inclusivity; and
- Taking into account gender equality and the care of the elderly and children.

Emilia Sáiz, Secretary-General of United Cities and Local Governments, closed the roundtable, emphasizing that the LRG constituency is an "ally for multilateralism" and that "a culture of peace is the basis for development." She prioritized: a "universal agenda" linking issues; decentralization and sharing power; strengthening communities and ensuring they receive necessary services; and human rights as the basis for caring cities.

**National Urban Policies in a Changing World:** The National Urban Policies in a Changing World Roundtable led by Poland began with a statement from Maimunah Mohd Sharif on the strength of National Urban Policies (NUPs) in fostering intersectoral and inter-regional coordination. Poland's Minister of Development Funds and Regional Policy, Grzegorz Puda, then outlined the country's new NUP, which responds to the

challenges cities have been facing. After that, the roundtable began with a discussion including ministers and high-level European officials focusing on NUPs from the lenses of:

- Innovation and technology, with Veronika Remišová, Deputy Prime Minister of Slovakia highlighting the importance of data in effective decision-making;
- Environment and energy transition, where the Deputy Minister of Regional Development from the Czech Republic, Radim Sršeň, spoke of the connection between digitization and resilience, while Ireneusz Zyska, Ministry of Climate and Environment, Poland, discussed diversification of energy sources, and energy sovereignty;
- Housing, where Klara Geywitz, Germany's Federal Minister for Housing, Urban Development and Building highlighted the urgent and widespread need for affordable, sustainable, and secure homes;
- Mobility, where Sweden's State Secretary to Minister for Housing and Deputy Minister for Employment, Mattias Landgren, noted the need for sustainable, efficient, and safe transportation systems; and
- Spatial planning, where Karen Van Dantzig, Urban Envoy for the Kingdom of the Netherlands discussed efficient, functional, and beautiful land use when land is limited.

The session concluded with Poland's Minister of Economic Development and Technology, Waldemar Buda, stressing the need to break through silos and foster cross-sectoral collaboration on urban development.

**Business and Industries:** This roundtable focused on how to increase private sector engagement in sustainable city development and how the private sector can help address financial bottlenecks. Participants were presented with two success stories: the Regent Park revitalization project in Toronto, Canada; and the Lagos Inland Waterways Program in Nigeria. A panel of experts then discussed ideas to overcome challenges in private sector participation, including:

- Increasing cities' capacities to absorb public funding and private investments including for procurement, resettlement, and project development;
- Social contracts that articulate a long-term vision that can survive electoral cycles;
- Sound performance metrics and local sustainable development indicators to improve transparency and accountability;
- Engaging stakeholders around solutions, rather than projects;
- Involving all stakeholders, including the private sector, as early as possible in planning to ensure that the right solutions are procured;
- Mobilizing local capital; and
- Digital ecosystems to share knowledge and experience, thus allowing the scaling of successful projects.

One panelist noted that investment in municipal projects is often hindered by miscommunication about risk, with others agreeing that greater transparency is needed to allow investors to make informed decisions on whether a project is "investable," and which types of capital are needed.



Participants of the roundtable on Local and Regional Governments

### Special Sessions

**Urban Recovery Frameworks:** Moderator Nigel Fisher, UN-Habitat, noted international recovery partners tend to “parachute” into urban environments without fully understanding local realities.

Filipe Decorte, UN-Habitat, said urban recovery frameworks (URFs) offer integrated approaches to recovery but are difficult to implement when national and bottom-up frameworks are disconnected. Ryan Knox, UN-Habitat, gave a presentation on URFs piloted in Syrian cities. These were developed with local partners and sought to strengthen institutional arrangements.

In a first panel on governance and urban displacement, Martha Gutierrez, GIZ, said citizen consultations were essential when cities are confronted with an influx of internally displaced peoples. Lars Gronvald, European Commission, said the urban level is where multiple partners articulate a common strategy. Manuel de Araújo, Mayor of Quelimane, said there is a case for the management of crisis response to be allocated to local governments. Fatma Şahin, Mayor of Gaziantep, emphasized social justice as a key element of crisis recovery.

In a second panel on cultural heritage and financing, Yevhen Plashchenko, Ministry of Development of Communities and Territories of Ukraine, highlighted that the needs of Ukrainian refugees must be addressed in host countries now and Ukraine later when the country will prepare for their return. Ieva Kalnina, Swedish Association for Local Municipalities and Regions, noted it was preferable for humanitarian actors to work with local governments rather than NGOs. Wahba, World Bank, said both people-centered and infrastructural interventions are needed in crisis recovery.

**Urban Data and Circular Economy:** In the first segment of the special session on data and the circular economy (CE), Donald Simmonds, CitiIQ, discussed how simplified indicators could overcome data literacy issues, while Charles Mwangi, Kenya Space Agency emphasized that alongside data, open-source tools were needed to improve data uptake. Naledzani Mudau, South African National Space Agency, discussed data’s role in improving services, assessing risk, and managing utilities within informal settlements. Matt Benson, ThinkCity, explored how data could spur change, but expressed the importance of engaging the people behind the statistics. Angie Palacios, Corporacion Andina de Fomento, highlighted the divide between the growth in data availability, and the utilization of data by decision makers.

In the second segment, Mike Higgins, Circularwise, noted a primary barrier to achieving CEs lies in effectively communicating information to industry leaders. When discussing the support CEs required, Fedra Vanhuysse, Stockholm Environment Institute, mentioned open-source assessment frameworks, opportunities for resource recovery, and mapping the impact of transition. Jenni Philippe, Edge Environment, mentioned a shift beyond waste management and recycling was needed to develop a holistic vision for a CE measurement framework. Oriana Romano, OECD, cited the lack of government conviction and financial systems as barriers to achieving CEs. Umesh Madhavan, The Circulate Initiative, spoke specifically to CE gaps in ocean plastics, identifying them as a systems problem requiring significant investments to solve.



Speakers of the special session on Urban Data and Circular Economy