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FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

Statement at High-level
Political Forum

Science Technology and
Innovation: Triggering
transformation and sustaining
a science driven recovery

Monday, July 10th, 2023
16:30
New York City

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Dear Colleagues,

As we consider opportunities to connect science, technology and innovation to achieve major transformations, it is critical to consider the context within which this is happening.

We live in an urban world today with more than 4.4 billion living in cities and human settlements. Indeed, humanity's present and future is urban.

Science, technology and innovation offer immense opportunities to ensure a better quality of life for everyone, everywhere across our cities and human settlements.

Cities themselves are, and have always been, incubators for innovation, across civilizations.

At UN-Habitat we recognize the vast potential of science, technology and innovation to transform how we design and manage cities for the benefit of all.

Strengthening the science-policy interface is a priority to ensure that evidence-based plans and strategies address the real needs of communities.

We are advocating for a smart city model that is people-centered– where technology is embedded in principles of sustainable development and is used to serve people and improve the quality of lives of urban residents while respecting human rights.



Through our innovation lab - the UN Innovation Technology Accelerator for Cities, or short UNITAC – UN-Habitat is carrying out applied research and developing technology tools to help our local government partners make better sense of innovation and the opportunities and risks presented by digital solutions.

Indeed, digitalization is transforming urban planning and public service delivery positively,

Yet, we need to be mindful about threats to security and trust, and about the environmental and climate footprint of this transformation.

Here, the essential role of local and regional governments cannot be overemphasized.

Cities can do a lot to steer innovation – through investment and regulation –and establishing partnerships with the scientific community will contribute to managing interlinking crises such as pandemics, climate change, and human conflicts.

Last month at the second session of the United Nations Habitat Assembly in Nairobi, Member States prioritized people centered smart cities and adopted a resolution for UN-Habitat to develop International Guidelines on People-Centered Smart Cities.

This is a unique moment for developing norms, principles and values on smart cities and responds directly to the increasing demand by Member States to have a consolidated support system for decision-makers on smart cities that can be universally relevant.

We therefore call on strengthening a people-centered approach in digital transformation and innovation globally to build cities that truly work for all, leaving no one and no place behind.

Thank you for your attention.



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