



## Statement by UN-Habitat Executive Director

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#### World Habitat Day 2020

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This year's pandemic has had a terrible impact on people in cities, towns, and communities.

The World Habitat Day 2020 offers an important opportunity to reflect on the effect of the COVID-19 crisis, and also how we can shape the future of human settlements more resilient.

Urban areas accounts for 95 per cent of all confirmed cases and have been at the epicentre of this pandemic. We have seen hospitals overflowing, jobs disappearing, schools closed and movement restricted. But we can, and we will recover, and use our experiences to build back better and greener.

Some of the key opportunities are highlighted in World Habitat Day's theme this year - Housing for All: A Better Urban Future.

Housing is now widely recognised as a frontline defence against COVID-19, with residents across the world being told to stay at home and wash their hands. But these simple measures are impossible for the 1.8 billion people living in inadequate housing conditions, informal settlements, overcrowded homes, homelessness, and unstable housing conditions.

Cities and towns have moved quickly to provide emergency housing solutions and shelter for the homeless, quarantine spaces, to postpone evictions and truck in water. We must not allow these achievements to be reversed once the pandemic is over. These temporary measures need to lead to long term policy changes.

Otherwise, poverty and inequalities will be further exacerbated, and millions of people are at risk of losing their homes, once temporary bans on evictions are lifted, or when the lack of the stable income results in missed rent or mortgage payments.

At the same time, we must recognise that providing adequate housing is a shared responsibility, which depends on national and local governments, civil society, businesses, and local communities working together.

UN-Habitat is launching a five weeks long campaign on 'Housing for All', to spread the message that housing is more than just a roof. Adequate housing is central to providing shelter against safety and health risks. It is an essential condition of living in dignity, and the basis for belonging and wellbeing, and a key for access to public spaces, job opportunities, hospitals, schools, and food.

Inclusive, affordable, and adequate housing is the central to transforming our cities and communities and making them resilient, and to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 11 and all the SDGs.

On World Habitat Day, we need to join forces to respond to the current crisis, share solutions and create cities of the future for everyone. **The time to act is now.**