



UN Habitat Executive Board Meeting on 29 July 2020

Statement of Prof M Siraj Sait, Co-Chair of UN Habitat Stakeholder Advisory Group Enterprise (SAGE); Member, UN Advisory Group on Gender Issues (AGGI) and Director, Noon Centre of Equality and Diversity, Royal Docks School of Business and Law, University of East London

Mr. Chair, Your Excellencies, thank you for this opportunity to make a statement on behalf of UN Habitat partners at this significant Executive Board meeting attended by Member States. I have the honour of speaking in my capacity as co-chair of UN Habitat Global Stakeholder Advisory Board Enterprise (SAGE) which liaises with the wide range of UN Habitat constituents and advises the Executive Director (ED), as a member of the UN Advisory Group on Gender Issues (AGGI), steering committee member of the Global Land Tool Network (GLTN) and my own university and network as Professor and Director of the Noon Centre on Equality and Diversity, and Royal Docks School of Business and Law in the United Kingdom, having worked closely with UN Habitat for over 20 years.

I would seek to make four brief points. First, to congratulate the Member States on the election of the new leadership team of the UN Habitat Executive Board, which is a reaffirmation of your collective commitment to address challenges of sustainable cities and development for all in emerging contexts.

The second is to thank the Executive Director of UN Habitat for her inspiring leadership to expand and strengthen partnerships in developing, implementing and monitoring the work of the agency with States and other partners. Indeed, the ED has kept her promise of greater transparency, efficiency, focus and governance not only with Member States but with all groups. From over 200 delegates at last year's UN Habitat Assembly at the Stakeholder Forum facilitated by SAGE to 13,000 participants at the successful World Urban Forum in Abu Dhabi, these expanding multi-stakeholder partnerships are vital for achieving the SDGs, New Urban Agenda and international human rights. As this Executive Board is fully aware, this COVID crisis has laid bare the inequalities and challenges faced by urban poor and disadvantaged groups and the need for response at multiple levels but not just for the constituencies but WITH them, urban poor, professionals, especially grassroots women and disadvantaged groups and communities, to collectively cope and build back better. We will continue to monitor and deliver on UN Habitat's work programme addressing spatial inequality and poverty; shared prosperity; climate action and urban environment; and crisis prevention and response.

The third is to appreciate UN Habitat senior leadership for involving SAGE members and other stakeholders in developing the agency's well planned global response on pandemics, for example through regular meetings with the ED and participation in Global State of Cities Report and Pandemics, and other initiatives outlined by Director Christine Knudsen at the last

Executive Board. However, we request the Board to urgently finalise the draft stakeholder engagement policy, and the partnership strategy which will enhance civil society participation. We also request resources and focus on the implementation of UN Habitat Assembly resolutions such as on gender equality and human rights at the last Urban Assembly, supported by AGGI.

Finally, stakeholders are very concerned about the political and financial situation confronting UN agencies, including UN Habitat. In these challenging times we would appeal to member states to do more to set an example to the world on how with deliver inclusive and sustainable urban development. Any budget reductions to UN Habitat should not cut core and essential activities that in turn hurt the poorest and the most disadvantaged and vulnerable.

On behalf of the Noon Centre at the University of East London, the co-chair of Stakeholder Advisory Group Enterprise Dyan Currie and UN Habitat networks, we reiterate our commitment to the mandate and work programme of UN Habitat and appreciate the guidance and support of the UN Habitat Executive Board.

Prof Siraj Sait
29.7.2020