

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SPEECH DURING WORLD HABITAT DAY

The world celebrates World Habitat Day on the first Monday of October each year. This is a day when the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) encourages everyone to see how to improve the lives of everyone in our cities and towns.

I am delighted that this year, Kenya, the host country for UN-Habitat headquarters, is organizing the national celebrations of World Habitat Day at Olkaria Geothermal Power Spa in Nakuru County on 4 October.

This is a very fitting location for World Habitat Day because this year we are calling for everyone to focus on combating climate change by rethinking how cities and towns are powered, the forms of transport residents use and how they dispose of waste.

The theme for this year's World Habitat Day is *Accelerating urban action for a carbon-free world*. Cities are responsible for some 70 per cent of global emissions of carbon dioxide which is the main greenhouse gas responsible for climate change. We have all seen how climate change is fueling extreme weather including floods, droughts and storms.

The future of our planet depends on national and local governments, organizations, communities, academic institutions, the private sector and all relevant stakeholders working together to create sustainable, carbon-neutral, inclusive cities and towns.

World Habitat Day will amplify the global **Race to Zero** Campaign and UN-Habitat's ClimateAction4Cities and encourages local governments to develop actionable zero-carbon plans in the run up to the international climate change summit COP26 starting at the end of October.

Action starts at home. UN-Habitat is committed to partnering with Kenya to support climate action projects.

UN-Habitat was a key player in the establishment of Michuki Park at a site previously used as dumpsite where thousands of trees have been planted. The Park is identified as an important part in the Nairobi River Regeneration Initiative (NRRI), a joint flagship initiative of the Nairobi Metropolitan Services and UN-Habitat. The NRRI is envisaged to breathe life into Nairobi's rivers, support biodiversity and reconnect the city to her people.

With our sister agency UNEP and in partnership with Governors of six coastal counties in Kenya, the Ministry of Devolution and the Blue Economy Secretariat, UN-Habitat helped launch the Go Blue initiative in Kenya earlier this year. The four-year programme aims to protect Kenya's coastal ecosystems while creating environmentally friendly jobs in a host of industries, including recycling, tourism and small-scale fishing.

UN-Habitat has implemented over 30 projects in the past decade in 22 counties in Kenya with over two thirds in the greater Nairobi metropolitan area (Nairobi, Kiambu, Machakos).

World Habitat Day marks the start of Urban October where national, regional and local governments, business people, local communities and individuals are encouraged to organize events around sustainable cities.

I hope that as we celebrate World Habitat Day and Urban October, readers of this paper will join in activities to raise international attention and inspire action to improve lives and prevent further climate change in our cities and towns.