

Intervention by Meera Al Sheikh – HLPF Review of SDG 11

Excellences, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies & Gentlemen,

Good Afternoon. It is an honor for me to address this High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. Our shared developmental challenges bring us together and also create **enormous** opportunities for us.

As we all know, cities are the cradles of human civilization in which a majority of human beings live, and a **large** majority of natural and man-made resources are consumed. More than half the world's population now lives in urban areas. These urban areas consume 75% of natural resources, produce 60-80% of greenhouse gas emissions, and generate 50% of all waste.

So basically, our social, economic and environmental challenges are mostly manifested in urban environments, and hence SDG11 plays an extremely important role in the achievement of Agenda 2030.

Realistically, each city has its own particular characteristics, **along with its own challenges**. Hence, it is important for cities to identify their **current status** with respect to SDG11 goals and targets. The gap between the current status and the intended targets in SDG11 provides **massive** potential for innovation in cities and communities.

Stakeholders, including Governments, the private sector, academia, civil society and - very importantly - **the city inhabitants themselves** can collectively work as partners to close these gaps. Science, technology and innovation (STI) can be used as **powerful tools** to formulate targeted action items. **I would like to use the opportunity to share examples using our national approach to bridging the gaps in the implementation of SDG11:**

- Our energy strategy focuses on:
 - o increasing the contribution of clean energy from 25% to 50%;
 - o and reducing the carbon footprint from power generation by 70%,
 - o this will allow us to save 190 billion US dollars by 2050¹.
 - o We have **already** commenced our efforts on that by building the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Solar Park in Dubai which will be **the largest single-site solar park in the world.**
- Similarly, our water security strategy aims to reduce total demand for water resources by 21 percent and increase the reuse of **treated** water to 95% by 2036.

In Dubai, our achievements have been due to the **very strong** leadership support and empowerment to government entities, working towards the common vision of becoming the Happiest City on Earth. At Smart Dubai, the government entity entrusted with Dubai's city-wide smart transformation, we have incorporated digital transformation and sustainability **at the core** of our strategic agenda. We have embraced 4th Industrial Revolution technologies such as Blockchain, AI, IoT and data science to make every day experiences **much** easier and seamless for residents and visitors. We focus on sustainable solutions for all our city dimensions, implementing over 20 Blockchain and 34 AI use cases through strong city partnerships. STI based projects and emerging technologies have enabled us to make significant progress in a relatively short time.

We have also managed to achieve 1.2-billion-dollar operational efficiency by engaging in public sector partnerships to implement a large number of shared ICT services and infrastructure.

These partnerships have also enabled us to do creative and agile financing mechanisms for our ambitious initiatives.

Despite all our global challenges **we**, collectively as cities and communities, have a unique opportunity to **share** our SDG11 knowledge **and effective solutions** globally with each other.

- Rather than reinventing the wheel, we can create a framework by which cities can identify their gaps, and exchange knowledge intensively for their effective practices.
- As a regional trade hub, we in Dubai have learned over millennia **that no nation or city** is relatively competitive in producing everything. Hence, trading ideas, practices and innovations among cities and communities would be the natural course to an accelerated path for achieving SDGs.

During the annual World Government Summit in Dubai earlier this year, the Global Councils on SDGs were launched. The **17 Global Councils** comprise of a unique interdisciplinary network of decision-makers from the public and private sectors who will work together to:

- **Share** cutting-edge practices;
- **Discuss** the creative implementation of the SDGs; and
- **Build** new partnerships between countries and organizations.

[more information will be available at the UAE side event on 17 July]

Her Excellency Dr. Aisha Bin Bishr, Director General of Smart Dubai Office, **leads** the SDG11 Global Council, which consists of 11 members from the public, private and civic sectors, with plans to work until early 2020.

As part of this council work, we aim to create a generic **yet customizable** framework for cities with different levels of development to allow them to

- **Assess** their current positions and gaps with respect to SDG11 targets; and
- **Implement** action items and share best practices.

We also intend to pilot our approach and showcase successful implementations in different cities around the world, and are open to working with you all to identify good practices. After all, we have much to learn from each other as we work towards the SDGs, and sharing knowledge is essential to maximizing impact and bridging the gaps in targets by 2030.

Thank you very much.

[1-Minute Concluding Remark]

City administrations should assume high-level leadership and ownership for implementing SDG11. They should work very closely with all their stakeholders, and engage their city constituents inclusively by creating a highly productive and empowering environment for joint innovation.

STI can be used as a robust enabler once the right framework and governance is established.

Cities should explore and utilize a multitude of financing options for their SDG11 initiatives – including traditional and alternative mechanisms-, where feasible.

I'd also strongly encourage cities to share their practices and lessons learnt openly through common platforms such as initiatives undertaken by United Nations agencies, or the newly established SDG Global Councils mentioned earlier.