

TALKING POINTS

**MARIA JOSE TORRES, UN RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVE AND UNDP
RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVE**

LILONGWE INTERNATIONAL MAYORS FORUM,

16-18 MAY 2018

Salutation

- *Minister of Local Government and Rural Development, Hon. Kondwani Nankhumwa;*
- *His Worship the Mayor of the City of Lilongwe, Councillor Desmond Bikoko;*
- *All Mayors from around the world present here;*
- *Principal Secretary, Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development; Mr. Kiswel Dakamau,*
- *Other Senior Officials from Malawi Government and Lilongwe City Council;*
- *Head of United Nations Office for Sustainable Development (UNOSD), Dr. Jong-Soo Yoon;*
- *Ladies and Gentlemen*
- *All Protocols Observed*

- I speak here on behalf of the United Nations Office for Sustainable Development, who, in partnership with other UN organizations and , have organized this International Mayors' Forum here in Lilongwe, to discuss perspectives and lessons on the implementation and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals.
- I would like to congratulate the Government of Malawi and, the Mayor of the City of Lilongwe for hosting this Forum; the first to take place in Africa. Indeed, it is an honour for Malawi to be the first African host country.

1. Mayors are key to advancing SDGs implementation at the local level

- It is an international platform for policy dialogue and knowledge sharing on the implementation of SDGs at local levels. It is also a platform to share successes, lessons and workable mechanisms for accelerating transformation required to make communities sustainable and resilient.

- This Forum is timely as Malawi is in the process of localizing the SDGs through the dissemination and alignment of the 3rd Malawi Growth and Development Strategy with district and city development plans (DDPs).

2. Rising urban populations call for development of sustainable cities

- The Forum is timely also as worldwide, more people than ever before now live in cities. Africa is currently undergoing a rapid urban transition. At its current rate of urban growth of 3.42 percent, the continent is projected to be predominantly urban in less than two decades. The speed and scale of urbanization presents opportunities for inclusive sustainable growth but also poses challenges for African cities in their efforts to cope with planning and managing the urbanization process.
- Malawi is one of the least urbanized countries in the world, with the urban population in 2014¹ estimated at 16.1 percent² but projected to increase to 30 percent by 2030 and 50 percent by 2050. One out of every five people in urban areas live in poverty compared to three out of every five in rural areas; income inequality³, is much higher in urban areas (0.491) compared to rural areas (0.375).

3. Developing sustainable cities requires resilience building and 'leaving no one behind'

- Clearly this underscores the importance of focusing on a composite agenda for making cities and urban areas inclusive, sustainable, safe and resilient. The effective implementation and monitoring of Goal 11 of the Sustainable Development Goals, is of particular significance to ensure sustainability of cities and communities.
- Urbanisation, poses both challenges and opportunities for social, economic and environmental transformation. Inclusion, which is a critical part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, should

¹ <http://data.un.org/CountryProfile.aspx?crName=Malawi>, accessed on 23 December 2015

² Urban population in 1987 was 10.7% and 15.3% in 2008; Malawi Population census

³ As measured by the Gini coefficient which has values between 0 and 1, where the extreme 0 shows perfect equality where everybody has identical incomes, and 1 shows that all income goes to one person.

therefore be one of the guiding principles for building sustainable cities in which the needs of the most vulnerable are met. Further, integration of traditional leaders, youth and women in local government structures will ensure that no one is left behind in localized community development processes.

- The major challenge is the inability to meet the demand for basic services for a rapidly growing population, due to limited resources. Likewise, cities and local authorities must act against the impact of increased congestion and pollution and focus on appropriate land use planning. The risks of rising inequalities, environmental degradation and exclusion are great.

4. Cities are an opportunity to drive innovations and sustainable economic growth

- However, cities can also be accelerators for progress. The economic dynamism of cities provides livelihood opportunities and social mobility possibilities not found in rural areas. Throughout history, cities have been hubs of innovation in technology, commerce and social organization. The concentration of people, resources and ideas allows innovation to occur at tremendous speed, generating economic activity and wealth at unprecedented rates. Cities around the world are taking the lead on meeting the commitments taken at Paris in 2015 on limiting carbon emissions and forging ahead to build vibrant, resilient and empowered communities.
- For example, here in Malawi, UNDP has been supporting the City of Lilongwe in waste management. UNDP is engaging the cities of Blantyre, Mzuzu and Zomba to improve disaster risk management and urban resilience. Further, UNDP is also supporting job creation and market innovations in partnership with established companies as well as young entrepreneurs.
- While advancing such initiatives and economic growth in cities, we must not forget to identify and address the barriers faced by disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in accessing resources, services and opportunities so that they equally benefit from development benefits.

5. Creating sustainable cities requires good data

- Inclusiveness cannot be achieved without having good data that shows how equitable empowerment and non-discrimination is being achieved. To identify and address constraints limiting some groups from participating in development and enjoying its benefits, cities require necessary information and data on who and where are the vulnerable and marginalised people?
- The production of quality statistics and research on human settlements and sustainable development should therefore be enhanced.

6. Ending urban poverty and social problems needs strong linkages and partnerships

- There are significant synergies between SDG 11 and other SDGs and if implemented well it can have a multiplier effect in reducing poverty (SDG1), improving health water and sanitation services (SDGs3 &6); tackling inequalities through equal opportunities(SDG10) and combating climate change through resource efficiency and resilience to disasters (SDG7,12 13, 14 15).
- During the Forum, many of you will be showcasing examples about how cities around the world are taking action to deliver progress on the SDGs, while leaving no one behind. I hope you will find these exchanges useful and it will help build links for exchanging experiences long after the Forum has finished.
- We also encourage the media to listen to these examples, to learn more about how cities are shaping change in Africa and across the world today, while building greener, more liveable and prosperous cities for all citizens.

Thank you.