

KEY NOTE TALKING POINTS: GFHS Thematic Session 5A

- **Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen**

It is a real pleasure for me to be part of this session on health, smart and resilient cities and communities – a very important theme for the era we are living in.

Today, after almost 2years into COVID-19 pandemic, the re-examination of cities and their contribution to global development is particularly essential.

I recall in his policy brief on COVID-19 and in an urban world, the UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterrez, noted that “Urban areas are ground zero of the COVID-19 pandemic, with 90 per cent of reported cases.” “Cities are bearing the brunt of the crisis – many with strained health systems, inadequate water and sanitation services, and other challenges,” he added.

This 16th Annual Session of Global Forum on Human Settlements & Sustainable Cities is taking place against a backdrop of unprecedented change; an additional 2.5 billion people will be living in the world’s towns and cities by 2050 and in an African context;

- A recent report by the OECD named “Africa’s Urbanisation Dynamics 2020: Africapolis, Mapping a New Urban Geography” states that Africa is one of the least urbanized places in the world, and its urbanization rate will continue to grow among the fastest of the world’s regions in the coming years.” The report also “predicts that Africa’s population will double between now and 2050, and two thirds of this population increase will be absorbed by urban areas.
- Key findings from the “Global Report on Human Settlement” in the last decades shows issues related to Demographic challenges, Environmental Challenges, Economic Challenges, Socio-spatial challenges, and Institutional challenges.
- All of the above challenges also provide the opportunities that would shape current and future urban planning needs in cities.
- For example, the rapid increase in urbanization especially in the global south has led to informal/unplanned settlements. The existing shocks and stress within these informal settlements has been exacerbated by climate change impacts.

Cities and human settlements are where governments connect with their citizens, 60% on average of whom are under 30years of age. They are centres for education and

training, innovation and entrepreneurship; they are the engines of economic development, trade and employment (80% of global GDP is already being generated in cities). Cities and human settlements are major contributors to climate change (estimates suggest cities are responsible for 75% of global CO2 emissions, with transport and buildings being among the largest contributors) and where its impact is most keenly felt.

This session is timely because the world is at the crossroad of searching for innovative ideas to find sustainable solutions for the urban poor, who are the most affected by unplanned and disorderly urban growth and consequently climate change impacts.

The recent World Cities Report 2020 as well as Cities and Pandemics: Towards a More Just, Green and Healthy Future report looked at the Value of Sustainable Urbanization in the 3 angles mentioned here and highlights the opportunities and challenges of sustainable urbanization in the post-pandemic era with a focus on urban economy, society, and environment. I wish to encourage participants to refer to these reports. I find this session well-suited to this perspective, as it revisits the challenges and solutions of building healthy, smart and resilient cities and communities with multiple and overlapping risks and uncertainties.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Urbanization knows no borders or boundaries, and over the past several years, Rwanda has proven to be a reliable, authoritative and effective in developing networks among urban researchers, practitioners and partners worldwide to ensure its sustainable urban development agenda is achieved.

Green Urbanization and Urban Planning

- Rwanda is one of the most densely populated countries in Africa. In addition, Rwanda is facing high population growth of 2.4% per annum, with an average urbanization growth rate of 4.4% per annum.
- The Government of Rwanda through Vision 2050 has an ambitious objective of accelerating urbanization and increasing the average annual growth of the gross domestic product, and the annual GDP per capita. The Government took the positive side of urbanization as engine of socio-economic development and sustainable human settlement and has an ambitious objective of accelerating the urbanization to reach the urban rate of 70% by 2050; 35% by 2024 from 18.4% in 2017. To transform the economic

geography of Rwanda and achieve a balanced urbanization, the government is taking advantage of existing economic poles – the secondary cities with strategic location and economic performance trends, to support, structure, and balance the system of cities including satellite cities and urban corridors, prioritizing them in terms investment to fully unleash their economic potential.

- To this effect, the GoR has launched a National Urbanization Policy in 2015. The overall goal of the policy is to promote good urban development that enhances local and national economic growth and ensures good quality of life for everyone. The policy is an overarching document that advocates for coherent sectoral policies and stresses on four pillars of 1) Coordination 2) Densification 3) Conviviality 4) Economic Growth.
- With the support of our development partner Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI), Ministry of Infrastructure developed the National Roadmap for Green Secondary City Development in 2016, a coordination tool and a practical planning instrument, which aims to provide a clear strategic guidance for the Government and other key stakeholders with green guidelines to ensure sustainable growth of the secondary cities.
- To this end, the National Roadmap is a direct implementation tool for the National Strategy for Climate Change and Low Carbon Development that was adopted by the Government of Rwanda in 2011. The strategy was now revised to reflect national, regional and global commitments (including NDCs) and renamed Green Growth and Climate Resilience Strategy.
- Recently, the GoR has launched the National Land Use and Development Master Plan (NLUDMP) as one of the most prioritized plans stemming from Vision 2050. The Master Plan proposes 3 satellite cities along with 8 secondary cities as key growth poles for urbanization and economic transformation. With the support of GCF Readiness grant, GGGI in collaboration with RLMUA disseminated the NLUDMP to local levels of the district.
- Related to that, the Government of Rwanda with support from Green Climate Fund (GCF) and GGGI as the delivery partner elaborated green master plans for 6 secondary cities. The master plans integrate green growth principles that focus on densification, transit-oriented development, green and open public spaces to name a few.

Affordable Housing and Green Buildings

- To meet the increasing affordable housing demands, the Ministry with partners are working to ensure the housing needs are met with focus on affordability, green and climate resilient, and culturally appropriate designs.
- Infrastructure subsidies and other appropriate incentives are being provided by the government to eligible developers to reduce the cost of affordable housing.
- The GoR realizes the benefits of green buildings and the multiple economic, environment and social benefits and to this effect elaborated Rwanda Green Building Minimum Compliance System, a mandatory green building code applicable for all new large-scale public buildings across the country. The green building code is part of the Rwanda Building Code 2019 and encourages energy efficiency, water efficiency, environment protection, indoor environmental quality and green innovation in buildings.

Climate Resilient Settlements

- Rwanda is highly vulnerable to flood and landslide impacts. The GoR, with support from the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and GGGI as the delivery partner is implementing a National Adaptation Planning project to build resilience against flood and landslide risks especially in urban areas through robust infrastructure and Nature Based Solutions. Gender responsiveness and social inclusiveness are the key elements of this project. Lessons from this project will be scaled up across the country and the national and sub-national entities are being capacity to address the impacts.

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me to leave you with this provoking question worth exploring:

- 1) Are we planning our cities and communities looking at the contemporary challenges but not losing the opportunities that history provides?
- 2) To achieve a health, smart and resilience city and community, do we need a **Climate Action** or a **Systemic Action**?

I strongly believe that the debates to follow will advise and inspire new ways to address the threat of risks and contribute to building resilient cities and communities.

I wish you fruitful discussions and healthy debates.

Thank you.