

**Uniting Global Cities to Tackle Climate Change towards
Sustainability**

**- Closing Speech at the 16th Annual Session of Global Forum on
Human Settlements (GFHS 2021)**

Mr. Lv Haifeng, Secretary General of Global Forum on Human
Settlements

October 29th, 2021

Dear Dr. Taj Hamad, dear Moderators, hello everyone!

Thank you for your active engagement, wonderful exchanges and great support. On behalf of the Global Forum on Human Settlements (GFHS), I wish to extend our heartfelt gratitude to all our partners who have contributed to this Annual Session and sincere thanks to all speakers, moderators and participants.

Under the theme of “Accelerate Green Transformation and Innovation towards Healthy, Resilient and Carbon-neutral Cities,” with the goal of uniting global cities to address climate change towards sustainability, this year’s fruitful Session contributes positively to the anticipated outcomes of the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) to be held in Glasgow, United Kingdom, in two days. The success of GFHS 2021 attributes to all our partners and participants.

This year's Session has seen more participants and exchanges than ever before. A total of 25 authoritative co-organizers, including ten major UN agencies and a number of well-known international institutions, have worked on the smooth running of the event. More than 110 outstanding speakers, moderators and commentators from six continents of various fields have engaged in discussions with informative insights. More than 20 cities from five continents have officially assigned representatives to deliver speeches. The forum attendees' in-depth discussions, feasible solutions and suggestions for policy-making in relation to over ten key issues have been shared simultaneously with an online audience of more than 100,000 via live streaming.

Another highlight of the Session comes in about an hour, i.e., this year's Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements Awards Ceremony. I bet you and the online audience look forward to congratulating the winners later at 8:30pm Beijing Time.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Faced with the dual crises of the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change, we see new rough obstacles in the trajectory towards SDGs. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres stressed that **“Let's be clear: human activities are at the root of our descent towards chaos.”** **“2021 must be the year to reconcile humanity with nature.”** At the lately

concluded 76th session of the UN General Assembly, Secretary-General Guterres and many state leaders called for humanity to increase trust and solidarity to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change.

At present, a green transition is sweeping the world. 2021 marks the beginning of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and the initial year of global efforts to carbon neutrality. **As the main battlefield to claim carbon neutrality and sustainable development, future-oriented cities feature several trends, i.e., decoupling, de-carbonization, decentralization, digitalization, polarization and glocalization, where both opportunities and challenges exist.**

GFHS 2021 calls for rapid green transformation and innovation with cities at the core to improve urban security, resilience, inclusiveness and sustainability. We should mitigate climate change while adapting to it and accelerate building carbon-neutral urban areas for achievement of SDGs and global carbon neutrality.

GFHS 2021 participants have put forward the following suggestions: we should build climate-resilient cities with Managing Urban Hydrology and Integrated Water Resources Management to meet the severe challenges of extreme weather condition, flooding and rising sea levels as well as improve disaster prevention and relief; we should integrate eco-climate-friendly planning and urban sprawl controlling measures into

a series of holistic and scientific urban planning policies; we should follow the nature and features of ecosystems in building human settlements and invest more in green urban infrastructure to maintain ecological balance and integrity and promote harmony between man and nature; we should significantly reduce the carbon emissions across the entire building life cycle and transit to future-proof buildings, communities and infrastructure that are more adaptive, more resilient, smarter and more durable; we should work on zero-waste cities and communities by adopting nature-based solutions, recycling and reusing resources and improving resource and energy efficiency; we should formulate and implement a scientific and orderly energy transition scheme that enables a just transition from fossil fuel to green energy with a stable energy supply; we should enhance the urban governance capabilities of all stakeholders, and to drive transformation and innovation on how cities are planned, invested, developed and managed, thereby make cities and human settlements inclusive, healthy, resilient, carbon-neutral and sustainable.

A digest of this year's opinions and examples will be shared in an draft outcome document later. We'd appreciate your feedback.

Glasgow, the host city of COP26, will be a global focus of attention in just two days later. GFHS Annual Session and COP26 are long-time partners. At last year's session, UNFCCC Executive Secretary Patricia

Espinosa shared her insights that “boosting ambition, building a more resilient future, and providing a just transition from fossil fuel to green energy are the three key elements we need to build a cleaner, greener and healthier future.”

At last year’s session, Glasgow was awarded the Global Green City by GFHS. At the awards ceremony, Councilor Susan Aitken, Leader of Glasgow City Council, said that “Glasgow is committed to achieving carbon neutrality by 2030.” Her ringing statement has inspired global urban stakeholders to work on new ambitious goals.

GFHS 2021’s commitment to uniting global cities to tackle climate change towards sustainability echoes with the purpose of COP26, which makes synergetic effects. It would be much appreciated

if you could popularize GFHS 2021’s gains and consensus at COP26 and in your own cities. In doing so, we hope to inspire and motivate more like-minded activists to act for sustainability and encourage more people, especially national policymakers, to join our efforts. We expect that COP26 in Glasgow will live up to our keen anticipation and carry out the noble mission of addressing climate emergencies for the sake of humanity.

As pointed out by the IPCC report and many far-sighted people, the future of the planet depends mainly on the choices made by mankind

today. Every organization and everyone can and should do their part for our world by making the right choice. Here I'd like to quote Secretary-General Guterres: Don't wait for others to make the first move. Do your part.

The cause of sustainable development will always move forward. Let's work together with perseverance and support each other despite many difficulties in the course. I hope to meet you all again next year at GFHS 2022.

To conclude, I would like to, once again, thank all partners, speakers, moderators and attendees. I wish you good health and all the best. Thank you for your attention!