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PRESS RELEASE

Urbanisation in the spotlight as world marks first World Cities Day

Shanghai 31 October 2014-- The first World Cities Day is being to be commemorated today across the globe under the theme “Leading Urban Transformation”.

In his statement to mark the occasion, United Nations Secretary General Mr. Ban Ki-moon “With the decision by the United Nations General Assembly to establish World Cities Day, we now have an annual date on which to celebrate one of humankind’s greatest and most complex creations.”

The global celebration will be hosted by Shanghai Municipal People’s Government, in collaboration with the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development, China and UN-Habitat.

Mr. Ban added: “This new day is one of the legacies of Expo 2010 Shanghai, at which the international community explored urban best practices and concepts from all over the world. So it is fitting that Shanghai is hosting the main inaugural event of this new UN observance.”

According to the Secretary General, the theme of this first World Cities Day — “Leading Urban Transformations” — highlights the pioneering power of cities.

“Today is also a moment to recognize the contributions of mayors and other city leaders. Urban transformations require political will and the capacity to coordinate many actors and stakeholders. Mayors give voice to their citizens and play a central role in building well-planned cities and making them engines of prosperity, innovation and inclusiveness,” he said.

UN-Habitat Executive Director Dr. Joan Clos emphasized the transformative potential of cities to contribute to sustainable development. “Cities are able to create positive transformations if well-planned and well-managed. A well-planned city making use of optimal density can provide services to its citizens in a more efficient and affordable manner than sprawling urban areas,” he said.

The Shanghai celebration will take place at the Expo Park, where some 300 participants are expected to attend. Participation will include high-level officials from the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development and other national government institutions in China; top officials from UN-Habitat and other stakeholders from around the world.

Meanwhile, while in Nairobi on official mission, Mr. Ban visited an exhibition mounted by UN-Habitat as part of the Urban October. The exhibition features a paper city and an exhibition on urban issues mounted by professional photographers based in Kenya.

“In the run up to the United Nations Conference of Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III in 2016), this first World Cities Day is an opportunity to consider a new urban paradigm. Instead of waiting to see how our cities turn out, let’s seize this opportunity to start to shape the cities we need,” said Dr Clos.

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