**First UN-Habitat Assembly, 27 – 31 May 2019**

**Remarks by [Ms. Maimunah Mohd Sharif, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director], UN-Habitat**

**[NAME OF EVENT]**

**[DATE: Day/Month/Year] at approx. [TIME], [X] minutes, [LOCATION]**

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**[H.E., the President of the Republic of Kenya, Mr Uhuru Kenyatta]**

**[Other high-level persons]**

**Excellencies,**

**Distinguished Delegates,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**[A very good morning / good afternoon / good evening]!**

**[Habari za asubuhi / habari za jioni]!**

1. On behalf of UN-Habitat, I wish to convey our most sincere appreciation and pleasure to be part of the first ever Blue Economy Conference!

**Today, I would like to share with you three key messages:**

1. **One, on the physical context of cities in relation to the Blue Economy** – achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 11 has direct positive impact on achieving Goal 14 through proper management of our cities, and vice versa, achieving Goal 14 reinforces sustainable urban planning and resilience. Over fifty per cent of the world's population lives within 3km to a surface freshwater body, and over forty per cent of the world’s population lives in coastal areas. Since 1945, coastal cities and human settlements around the world have increased 4.5 times. Out of the world’s 22 megacities with a population of more than 10 million, 15 are located along the ocean’s coasts. **If we get our cities right, through holistic and sustainable development plans that fully integrate coastal and freshwater bodies, which cover 71 percent of the earth’s surface, the potential to transform marine resources into prosperous development are infinite.**
2. **My second point is on the vast potential contribution of marine resources to transform livelihoods and improve the development of coastal cities and communities.** The world’s population is increasingly concentrated in cities, near water bodies. Coupled with the fact that 90 per cent of the world’s trade goes through port cities, there are a multitude of Blue Economy opportunities. These range from aquaculture and fisheries, eco-tourism to renewable energy solutions – **the opportunities to lift millions out of poverty in cities are real and within our reach.**
3. **Of course, these opportunities have risks.** Uncontrolled and unplanned cities, particularly when they exist near water bodies, vastly increase environmental dangers. These include: habitat invasion, uncontrolled exploitation of natural resources, pollution, loss of biodiversity, reduced water quality, and threats to human health. In addition, frequent natural disasters such as flooding, coastal erosion, tsunamis and typhoons, leave urban dwellers – especially those poorest and most vulnerable who live in informal settlements – at risk of losing their homes, their livelihoods, and possibly even their lives.
4. **It is for this reason that my third message is a reiteration of my commitment to a sustainable and all-inclusive Blue Economy.** UN-Habitat is committed to improving the sustainability, preparedness and resilience of cities and all human settlements to work with nature. Together, we must protect, conserve and restore urban and coastal waterbodies, including oceans, lakes, wetlands, and rivers in the best way possible. UN-Habitat will take the opportunity of this significant platform to reaffirm the potential and critical role of cities and human settlements to enhance the sustainable Blue Economy agenda!
5. **I would like to close with sincere** congratulations to President Kenyatta, the Government of the Republic of Kenya and the co-organisers of this Conference.

**Thank you.**