Bicycles, walking ideal for Kenyan cities – UN-Habitat boss

By MAGDALENE WANJA, Daily Nation, TUESDAY DECEMBER 3 2019

Kenyans have been urged to embrace non-motorised traffic (NMT) as a way of reducing congestion in cities and promoting a healthy population.

These include bicycles and walking.

Speaking after an event in Nairobi Monday to highlight the importance of safe riding, UN-Habitat Executive Director Maimunah Mohd Sharif said many city dwellers waste valuable time and energy stuck in traffic jams.

She noted that this could be reduced if people embraced cycling to work as a form of transport.

Ms Sharif urged the government to provide safe riding spaces, saying this will make it easier for many people to reach their destinations in time.

“I believe that Nairobi could become a very good city for cycling if safe infrastructure is provided. The demand for cycling is high and the climate is favourable as well,” she said.

According to the National Transport Safety Authority, about 90,000 new vehicles are added in Nairobi alone each year.

“This is hard to imagine against the background of the already traffic-choked streets and highways,” she added.

Ms Sharif also urged the government to come up with a modern and high-capacity public transport systems that integrated with walking and cycling.

Participants took part in the riding from Popote Gardens in Kilimani, via State House Road to Serena hotel.

Some of the riders included Nairobi Governor Mike Sonko, Belgium’s ambassador to Kenya, representatives from various ministries and Nairobi Woman Representative Esther Passaris.

Nairobi County adopted a non-motorised transport policy in 2016.

Housing and Urban Development Principal Secretary Charles Hinga noted that the Nairobi City County NMT Policy recognises the main NMT modes as being walking, cycling, animal and human-drawn carts as well as wheelchairs, skateboards and strollers.

It aims to develop and maintain a transport system that fully integrates them as part of the city’s transport system.

He said Kenya’s Integrated National Transport Policy (2012) also recognizes NMT as a form of transport in addressing the mobility needs of non-vehicular commuters.

“I am glad to note that the Nairobi Integrated Urban Masterplan (NIUPLAN) for the period 2014-2030 identifies insufficient provision of walkways, crossing facilities, inadequate provision of signalised crossings and lack of continuity as the key NMT challenges in the City,” Mr Hinga said in a statement read by Mr Michael Owino.

“This compromises safety for vulnerable road users, whilst increasing their difficulty of travel.”