



## Uniting World Cities to Tackle Climate Change towards Sustainability

### – The 16<sup>th</sup> Global Forum on Human Settlements Successfully Concluded

(October 29, 2021) The 16th Annual Session of Global Forum on Human Settlements (GFHS 2021) was successfully held in a virtual format as an observance of World Cities Day from October 27 to 29, 2021, with the theme being “Accelerate Green Transformation and Innovation towards Healthy, Resilient and Carbon-neutral Cities”.



***The distinguished speakers at the opening session***

The forum was addressed by honorable guests such as Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Ambassador Anwarul K. Chowdhury, Chairman of Global Forum on Human Settlements, Former UN Under-Secretary-General and High Representative, Dr. Elena Manaenkova, Deputy Secretary-General, World Meteorological

Organization (on behalf of Prof. Petteri Taalas, Secretary General of World Meteorological Organization), Dr. Bambang Susantono, Vice President for Knowledge Management & Sustainable Development at Asian Development Bank, and Kazushige Endo, Director, United Nations Centre for Regional Development. At the opening, the large-scale academic literature – *The Collection of Global Forum on Human Settlements* was officially launched.

GFHS 2021 aims to unite world cities to tackle climate change towards sustainability. 25 leading organizations joined the forum as co-organizers and collaborators, including 10 major UN agencies, such as World Meteorological Organization, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, United Nations Industrial Development Organization, and United Nations Centre for Regional Development, as well as the Asian Development Bank, the African Development Bank, and a number of well-known international institutions.

More than 110 outstanding individuals, including heads of international organizations such as the United Nations, senior government officials, mayors of leading cities, renowned experts and scholars, and well-known business leaders delivered speeches and shared their insights.

The three-day forum has reached out to over 100,000 professional audiences through live streaming and remote participation. Participants from different countries on six continents conducted in-depth discussions on 10 key issues, put forward scientific solutions and policy recommendations, reached a consensus on a set of outcomes and recommended a batch of outstanding sustainable development practices and innovations. The forum has made positive contribution to the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) to be opened in Glasgow two days later.



***The distinguished keynote speakers***

Ambassador Anwarul K. Chowdhury, Chairman of Global Forum on Human Settlements, Former UN Under-Secretary-General and High Representative pointed out in his opening remarks that “This Sixteenth Forum is again another timely, relevant, and appropriate initiative that is aimed at making the international community alert and proactive about the issues of urbanization in a holistic manner. Sustainable development is the fundamental, intergenerational responsibility of our societies’ efforts which benefits all. Successful, well-governed cities greatly reduce climate-related risks for their populations and for our planet as a whole.”

Dr. Elena Manaenkova, Deputy Secretary-General of World Meteorological Organization stressed that “Cities are the hotspots of global warming facing large implication and more frequent and intense extreme events. Integrated urban services and multi-hazard warnings are required to save lives and minimize losses. WMO Unified Data Policy Resolution should be followed for free and unrestricted exchange of Earth system data for advanced high-resolution forecasting and urban-scale modeling.”

Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity recommended that “We need to create a design model and construction code for truly green cities. This should include transitional and transformative technologies towards nature. This means incorporating water, ecosystems and soil into the texture of cities’ infrastructure and urban metabolism. We also need to scale up finance and investment for the green city model. This includes construction and renovation as well as operations. In other words, green and blue incentives, as well as an acceleration of the circular economy should be promoted.”

Dr. Bambang Susantono, Vice President for Knowledge Management & Sustainable Development at Asian Development Bank emphasized that “People must be allowed to identify and realize their aspirations, satisfy their needs and change or adapt to their environment. Health, therefore, is a resource for everyday life, not simply an objective of life. The road to healthy and resilient cities will not be easy. But if we work together in advocating holistic, green urban development, we will certainly have a better, cleaner and greener urban future ahead of us.”

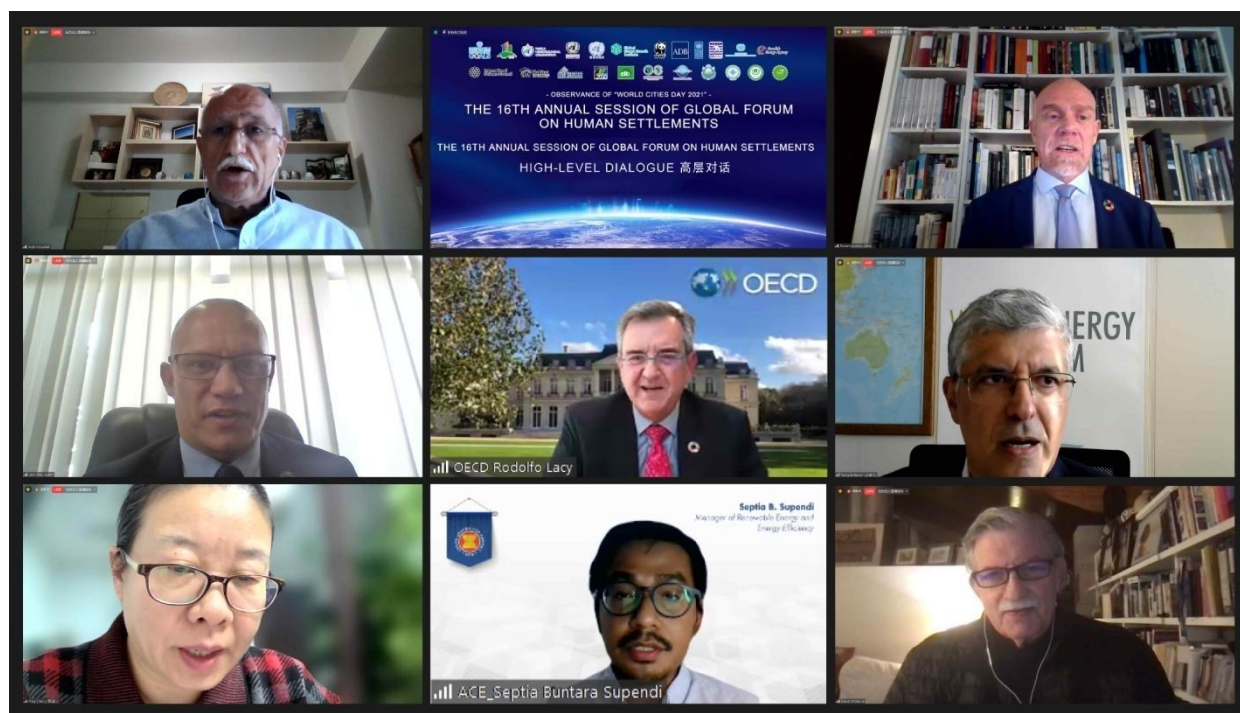
Dr. Frank Rijsberman, Director General, Global Green Growth Institute indicated that “There is ample green and climate finance available from public and private sources, but a shortage of well-developed projects that meet the financial and ESG requirements of investors. When it comes to zero waste, cities should focus on recycling and commercial processing of bio-mass waste to bio-gas and bio-CNG and plastic waste to refuse-derived fuel. With appropriate enabling policies in place, including tipping fees or equivalent concessional or climate finance of \$10-20/ton, zero waste projects can be financed commercially through private investment.”

GFHS Secretary General Lu Haifeng pointed out in his closing remarks that “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's commitment to uniting global cities to tackle climate change towards sustainability echoes with the purpose of COP26, which makes synergetic effects.”

Other important speakers at GFHS 2021 include Dr. Kevin Kanina Kariuki, Vice President for Power, Energy, Climate and Green Growth, African Development Bank Group, Dr. Awni Behnam, Fmr. United Nations Assistant Secretary General and Hon. President of International Ocean Institute, Marco Lambertini, Director General, WWF International, Dr. Robert Andr  n, Director General of Swedish Energy Agency, Dr. Rodolfo Lacy, Director of the Environment Directorate, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Tareq Emtairah, Director, Department of Energy, United Nations Industrial Development Organization, Dr. Nuki Agya Utama, Executive Director at ASEAN Centre for Energy, Dawood Abdul Rahman Al-Hajri, Director General, Dubai Municipality, United Arab Emirates, Ramon Torra, Chief Executive Officer, Barcelona Metropolitan Area, Spain, among others.



***The Panelists at the High-Level Dialogue***

In addition, senior officials representing a group of leading international organizations have contributed to the forum discussions, such as Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, United Nations Economic and Social Commission in Asia and the Pacific, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, International Union for Conservation of Nature, World Economic Forum, C40, ICLEI, International Science Council, and others.

A green transition is sweeping the world. 2021 is the beginning of the Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, and is also a year of global action towards carbon neutrality. The first part of UN

Biodiversity Conference (CBD COP 15) has just been successfully concluded in Kunming, China. Cities are the home ground for reaching net zero emissions and achieving sustainable development. While being mired in the intertwined threats of extreme climate events, pollution, nature loss and the pandemic, the world is facing tougher challenges in meeting the sustainable development goals. In this context, the forum called for prioritizing cities, accelerating innovation and green transition, and improving urban safety, resilience, inclusiveness and sustainability. The forum also urged to galvanize efforts to address the climate crisis, notably through mitigation and adaptation, and to accelerate actions towards carbon-neutral cities, thus achieving sustainable development and carbon neutrality, and building a shared future for all life on Earth.



***The Mayors Panel***

According to the participants, it is high time that we should (a) enhance urban hydrology and integrated water resources management, and adapt to the severe challenges posed by the increasing extreme weather events, flood disasters and sea level rise; (b) strengthen disaster prevention and comprehensive response, and build climate-resilient cities; (c) formulate comprehensive and scientific urban planning policies, adopt eco- and climate-friendly design strategies to control urban sprawl; (d) learn from nature and build sustainable human settlements; (e) step up investment in urban green infrastructure, maintain ecological balance and integrity, and promote harmony between man and nature; (f) significantly reduce carbon emissions throughout the life cycle of buildings, improve the adaptability, durability, resilience and intelligence of buildings communities and infrastructure, and build future-proof buildings and communities; (g) implement nature-based solutions, promote resource recycling, improve

resource and energy efficiency, and create zero-waste cities and communities; and (h) formulate and implement a scientific and orderly energy transition development plan, stabilize energy supply, and ensure a just transition from fossil fuels to green energy. Finally, we need to improve the urban governance capabilities of all stakeholders and drive the overall transformation of urban planning, investment, construction and governance, thereby making cities and human settlements healthy, inclusive, resilient, carbon-neutral and sustainable.



### ***Speakers at the Closing Session – Summary and Recommendation***

The three-day event was grandly concluded with the Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements Awards Ceremony 2021 (SCAHS2021) which recognized outstanding projects, organizations and individuals from around the globe for their excellence in sustainable development practices and innovations. At a moment when the fate of mankind is at stake, these sustainability leaders play a significant role in mobilizing stakeholders on a wider scale to make joint endeavor towards sustainable development.





### ***Awarders and Awardees***

#### ***at the Sustainable Cities And Human Settlements Awards Ceremony 2021***

The awardees include the world-famous historical and cultural city – Barcelona Metropolitan Area, Spain; the advanced city of ecological civilization – City of Jiande from Zhejiang Province, China; carbon-neutral tourism destination – Sani Resort, Greece; carbon-neutral company – Signify, the Netherlands; Edward Mazria, American architect and the winner of AIA Gold Medal for 2021; Dubai 2040 Urban Master Plan; French Dream Town in Hangzhou; The Edge in Amsterdam; Chulalongkorn Centenary Park, Thailand, and others (The complete list of awardees can be accessed here: <http://www.gfhsforum.org/award>). At the same time, a group of cities and companies have newly joined the International Green Model City (IGMC) Initiative which aims to create zero-waste and zero-carbon cities. French Dream Town in Hangzhou is officially listed as a new pilot project of IGMC Initiative.

(By the Department of Public Information, GFHS)