

2018 Annual Session of Global Forum on Human Settlements urging to boost urban innovation towards achieving SDG 11 and the New Urban Agenda

(Bangkok, October 30) The 2018 Annual Session of Global Forum on Human Settlements (GFHS 2018) successfully convened as an important observance of the World Cities Day 2018 at the United Nations Conference Center, Bangkok, Thailand on 30-31 October. Mr. Hongjoo Hahm, Officer-in-Charge of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific attended and addressed the forum.



Group photo of all participants

Themed as “Advancing Urban Innovations to Achieve SDG 11 and the New Urban Agenda (NUA)”, the 2-day event brought together over 400 major stakeholders from more than 40 countries for sharing experiences and building partnerships. More than 10 delegates representing cities, businesses, academia and civil society announced commitments to support sustainable and resilient cities at the forum. The Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements Awards (SCAHSAs) were presented to a total of 36 winners, including the city of Hua Hin, Thailand, the city of Indore, India, Kalundborg Symbiosis, Denmark, Qingdao Sino-German Ecopark, China, Arcadis Shelter Program, among others. The awarded practices have made significant contributions to sustainable cities and human settlements for all.



Observance of “World Cities Day 2018” – representatives from various sectors making the commitment to sustainable urban development



Mr. Hongjoo Hahm, Officer-in-Charge of UN ESCAP
giving a welcome remark

At the opening, Mr. Hongjoo Hahm, Officer-in-Charge of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific emphasized that “innovation as a strategic investment offering benefits to all stakeholders. Our vision of future cities can be powerful. We recognize that cities, supported by strong partners, can foster innovation and build great communities. If we are successful in working toward the objectives of the 2030 Agenda and the New Urban Agenda, we will

reshape the cities of the Asia-Pacific region, so they look and function very differently than they do today.”



Ambassador Anwarul K. Chowdhury, Chairman of GFHS, Former UN
Under-Secretary-General and High Representative
making an opening address

“We are encouraged as the world leaders adopted by consensus in September 2015 the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which included among its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a specific goal – Goal 11 - to “Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. Urbanization offers unprecedented opportunities for increasing living standards, life

expectancy and literacy levels, environmental sustainability and more efficient use of increasingly scarce natural resources. For women, urbanization is associated with greater access to employment opportunities, lower fertility levels and increased independence. GFHS strongly advocates for enhanced lasting partnership which not only echoes with SDG 17, but also calls for breaking the political, economic, social, gender and even geographic hierarchy and build up comprehensive, cooperative, pragmatic and equal partnership. This will facilitate implementation of SDGs and NUA.” said Ambassador Anwarul K. Chowdhury, Chairman of GFHS, Former UN Under-Secretary-General and High Representative.

Other distinguished guests include Mr. Ralph Regenvanu, Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and External Trade of Vanuatu; Mr. Stefanos Fotiou, Director, Environment and Development Division, UN ESCAP; Mr. Oudom Wang, Permanent Representative of Vanuatu to UNESCAP, Chairman of Global One Belt One Road Association; Dr. Taj Hamad, Vice Chairman of Global Forum on Human Settlements, Secretary General of Universal Peace Federation; Pol. Lt. Col. Kitibodee Pravitra, Governor of Krabi Province of Thailand, Prince of Thai Royal Family; Mr. Mushtaq Memon, Asia and the Pacific Coordinator for Resources Efficiency Programme, UN Environment; Mr. Choudhury Rudra Charan Mohanty, Coordinator of Environment Programme,

UNCRD/UN DESA, Mr. Lu Haifeng, Secretary General of Global Forum on Human Settlements; Dr. Benno Boer, Chief of Natural Sciences, UNESCO Bangkok Office; Mr. Serge Salat, President, Urban Morphology and Complex Systems Institute, Paris, France, Leading Expert of International Green Model City Standards 3.0, as well as mayors from different regions, renowned experts and business leaders.

The Forum was organized by the Global Forum on Human Settlements (GFHS) with support from the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), in cooperation with the Global One Belt One Road Association (GOBA), Universal Peace Federation (UPF) and other organizations.

GFHS 2018 was designed to enhance capacity building, foster new partnerships and effective actions, and promote cooperation and green development. The main programme addressed today includes a visioning session on Enhancing Progress in Achieving SDG 11 and New Urban Agenda, Mayors' Panel on Safe, Inclusive, Resilient and Sustainable City – policies, actions and practices, parallel sessions on resilient and circular economy, International Green Model City Initiative and urban innovations. More interesting topics will be deeply discussed on Oct. 31st, such as financing for sustainable urban infrastructure, blockchain

technology and smart cities, urban water cycle management and related SDGs, and eco-city and fabricated buildings.

While the SDGs are global, their achievements will depend on the ability and efforts of local and regional governments and the partnership with stakeholders to make them a reality in cities and communities. As stressed in the Synthesis Report of the UN Secretary General, “many of the investments to achieve the sustainable development goals will take place at the subnational level and be led by local authorities.” SDG 11 calling for sustainable cities and human settlements is the lynchpin of the localizing process of all 17 goals. GFHS 2018 has emphasized not only the great potential of cities to foster innovation and realize green growth, but also the profound significance of well-designed policies, strategies and approaches to maximize the benefits of local actions from city governments, industries and civil societies.

As a highlight of the forum, the Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements Awards Ceremony (SCAHTSA) 2018 was unveiled at the United Nations Conference Center in Bangkok. This year’s Global Green City was awarded to city of Hua Hin, Thailand, the Global Green District was given to Qingdao Sino-German Ecopark, China, and Langfang Dachang Movie Town, China was selected as a Global Model on Characteristic Town. Daintree National Park, Queensland, Australia

bagged the honor of Global Low-Carbon Ecological Scenic Spot. Global Human Settlements Award on Planning and Design was presented to Mr. Alex Kerr's rural revival project in Japan through restoring abandoned houses, and Global Human Settlements Model of Green Technology was granted to Climate Drops designed by KT-Energy LLC in Ukraine. The complete list of award winners can be accessed by clicking the link (http://www.gfhsforum.org/Hiring?_l=en).



Awarders and awardees, Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements
Awards Ceremony, 2018

Meanwhile, the “International Green Model City (IGMC) Initiative” has drawn a lot of attention through a few interesting activities. To improve public awareness and engagement, the premiere show for IGMC 3-D animation film that was inspired by IGMC Standards 3.0 and produced based on the life of the SaSa family of three provided a quick visual

representation of what a smarter, greener, more inclusive city looks like. At the forum, a special training session was conducted to further promote the understanding of IGMC Standards 3.0 and to propel substantive actions of integrating the Standards into urban planning and development. IGMC Standards 3.0 is an assessment and planning tool for sustainable urban development and provides technical means and evaluation methods for the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the New Urban Agenda at local and community levels.

On top of that, to carry forward the theme of the “World Environment Day” this year, an exhibition that calls actions on plastic pollution was displayed. It shows on one hand that GFHS has been focused on combating environmental pollution and safeguarding ecosystem services, and on the other hand it helps raise the public awareness and urge all relevant stakeholders to play a part.

To be continued.....

About Global Forum on Human Settlements (GFHS)

Global Forum on Human Settlements (GFHS) is a 501(c) (3) not-for-profit international organization, with Special Consultative Status with ECOSOC. GFHS is committed to sustainable cities and human settlements for all, and acts as a world platform for dialogue on sustainable cities and human settlements. GFHS has successfully conducted various cooperation with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the United Nations Environment Programme, and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme. The annual conference of Global Forum on Human Settlements has been successfully held in China, the United States, Brazil, Germany, Colombia, Ecuador and Thailand for 13 consecutive years. Around 14,000 representatives from all sectors of society have attended the Forums which provides a high-level platform for dialogue among governments, non-governmental organizations, corporates, and academic institutes. GFHS has made significant contribution to the promotion and implementation of United Nations Millennium Development Goals, the Habitat Agenda, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the New Urban Agenda.