

# Media Update

31 October 2016

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## UN-Habitat

Press Release

### Government and the United Nations Collaborate to Implement the New Urban Agenda in Pakistan

**Cities of Pakistan require immediate attention to absorb unprecedented levels of urbanization; implementation of the New Urban Agenda becomes the key to prosperity.**

**Islamabad, 31 October 2016** – By 2030, Pakistan’s population is expected to reach 260 million and half of the population will live in urban areas, making cities central to climate action, prosperity, peace, and human rights. On the occasion of World Cities Day 2016 and in light of the recent development of the New Urban Agenda which was adopted at the Habitat III Conference in Quito, Ecuador, on October 20, 2016, high officials from the Ministry of Climate Change and UN-Habitat gathered in Islamabad to discuss prospects of implementing the New Urban Agenda in the country to make Pakistan’s cities habitable and trigger economic prosperity.

Zahid Hamid – Federal Minister for Climate Change, “As the Government of Pakistan’s focal Ministry for urbanization, it is our foremost responsibility to improve the quality of life of residents of the urban areas. Pakistan’s development agenda includes transformation of these areas into creative, eco-friendly, commerce-friendly, sustainable, smart cities through improved city governance, effective urban planning, efficient local mobility infrastructure (mass transit systems) and better security to make urbanization an important driver of growth.”

He further added, “For this purpose, the Ministry of Climate Change and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) in Pakistan have been working closely on various initiatives related to sustainable urbanization and climate change. These include policy formulation and



implementation of climate change vulnerability and adaptation assessments and urban-related initiatives that contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We are now cooperating in preparation of the State of Pakistan Cities Report, which will serve as an important tool for implementation of the New Urban Agenda which was adopted at the Habitat III Conference in Quito, Ecuador, on October 20, 2016. Together, with other Government agencies at federal, provincial and local levels, and all urban actors and partners, we hope to make Pakistan's cities and human settlements 'inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable' as required by SDG 11."

Syed Abu Akif - Secretary for Ministry of Climate Change, "This year around the World Cities Day is focusing on inclusive cities and shared development and as Pakistan is facing a rapid increase in urbanisation caused by population growth, urban migration, and refugee influx, which has resulted in the creation and expansion of under-resourced urban settlements, causing unprecedented levels of economic, spatial, social, and infrastructural challenges, and climate change impacts, it requires the attention and support of all sectors. Cities as engines of economic growth also bring prosperity and positive impact if properly managed. Together with UN-Habitat, the Government of Pakistan is making efforts to improve the quality of life of not just the urban poor but also of the broader population living in urban cities through planned urbanization."

Bella Evidente, Country Programme Manager, UN-Habitat Pakistan – "Within the United Nations system, UN-Habitat is the focal agency for all urbanization and human settlement matters. In Pakistan, the agency emphasizes on improving the lives of the people of by carefully tapping opportunities in harnessing the economic and social potentials of Pakistan's cities for growth and development and in promoting socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities.

In celebration of the World Cities Day\*, UN-Habitat aims to create awareness on the challenges and benefits of sustainable urbanization, promote this year's theme of "*Inclusive Cities, Shared Development*", and highlight the important role of urbanization as a source of global development and social inclusion. Cities and towns have an immense role to play in ending poverty and building inclusive societies that promote participation by all. Their transformation entails better urban governance, planning and design. It also means more investment in adequate and affordable housing, quality

infrastructure and basic services. And it means engaging women and girls in making towns and cities safer and more productive for all.

With continued support from the Government of Pakistan and its people, along with UN-Habitat's excellent partners in development work, I am confident that we contribute to the realization of Sustainable Development Goals and make a better urban future. On World Cities Day, let us renew our resolve to confront urban problems and forge lasting solutions. Together, we can show how success in Pakistan cities inspires change across the world".

*\*\*The United Nations has designated every 31st of October as World Cities Day. The day is expected to greatly promote the international community's interest in global urbanization, push forward cooperation among countries in meeting opportunities and addressing challenges of urbanization, and contributing to sustainable urban development around the world. This year's theme promotes inclusive cities through shared development.*

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## UNICEF

### Press Release

## Pollution: 300 million children breathing toxic air - UNICEF report

### ***UN Children's Fund calls for urgent action at upcoming COP 22***

**NEW YORK 31 October 2016** – Almost one in seven of the world's children, 300 million, live in areas with the most toxic levels of outdoor air pollution – six or more times higher than international guidelines – reveals a new UNICEF report.

*Clear the Air for Children* uses satellite imagery to show for the first time how many children are exposed to outdoor pollution that exceeds global guidelines set by the World Health Organization (WHO), and where they live across the globe.

The findings come a week ahead of the COP 22 in Marrakesh, Morocco, where UNICEF is calling on world leaders to take urgent action to cut air pollution in their countries.



“Air pollution is a major contributing factor in the deaths of around 600,000 children under five every year – and it threatens the lives and futures of millions more every day,” said UNICEF Executive Director Anthony Lake. “Pollutants don’t only harm children’s developing lungs – they can actually cross the blood-brain barrier and permanently damage their developing brains – and, thus, their futures. No society can afford to ignore air pollution.”

The satellite imagery confirms that around 2 billion children live in areas where outdoor air pollution, caused by factors such as vehicle emissions, heavy use of fossil fuels, dust and burning of waste, exceeds minimum air quality guidelines set by the World Health Organization. South Asia has the largest number of children living in these areas, at 620 million, with Africa following at 520 million children. The East Asia and Pacific region has 450 million children living in areas that exceed guideline limits.

The study also examines the heavy toll of indoor pollution, commonly caused by use of fuels like coal and wood for cooking and heating, which mostly affects children in low-income, rural areas.

Together, outdoor and indoor air pollution are directly linked to pneumonia and other respiratory diseases that account for almost one in 10 under-five deaths, making air pollution one of the leading dangers to children's health.

Children are more susceptible than adults to both indoor and outdoor air pollution as their lungs, brains and immune systems are still developing and their respiratory tracks are more permeable. Young children also breathe faster than adults, and take in more air relative to their body weight. The most disadvantaged, who already tend to have poorer health and inadequate access to health services, are the most vulnerable to the illnesses caused by polluted air.

UNICEF is asking world leaders attending COP 22 to take four urgent steps in their countries to protect children from air pollution.

- **Reduce pollution:** All countries should work to meet WHO global air quality guidelines to enhance the safety and wellbeing of children. To achieve this, governments should adopt such measures as cutting back on fossil fuel combustion and investing in energy efficiency and renewable energy sources.
- **Increase children’s access to healthcare:** Investing in children’s overall healthcare – including immunisation campaigns and

improving knowledge, community management and numbers seeking care for pneumonia (a leading killer of children under five) - will improve their resilience to air pollution and their ability to recover from diseases and conditions linked to it.

- **Minimize children's exposure:** Sources of pollution such as factories should not be located within the vicinity of schools and playgrounds. Better waste management can reduce the amount of waste that is burned within communities. Cleaner cookstoves can help improve air quality within homes. Reducing air pollution overall can help lower children's exposure.
- **Monitor air pollution:** Better monitoring has been proven to help children, youth, families and communities to reduce their exposure to air pollution, become more informed about its causes, and advocate for changes that make the air safer to breathe.

"We protect our children when we protect the quality of our air. Both are central to our future," Lake said.

UNICEF is advocating for lower levels of air pollution, while also working on the ground to protect children from its effects. Each year during Mother and Child Week in Pakistan, millions of mothers, women, adolescent girls and children are reached through the health education sessions conducted in communities and messages regarding prevention of indoor pollution to prevent Acute Respiratory Infections, are communicated. In other countries, the children's organisation backs the development, distribution and use of cleaner cookstoves, and works through some of its country programmes to reduce the impact of outdoor air pollution on children's health. It also supports programmes to increase children's access to quality healthcare and to vaccinate them against conditions like pneumonia.

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**Notes to editors:**

**Interviews are available**

**For further information, please contact:**

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**About UNICEF**

UNICEF promotes the rights and wellbeing of every child, in everything we do. Together with our partners, we work in 190 countries and territories to translate that commitment into practical action, focusing special effort on reaching the most vulnerable and excluded children,





to the benefit of all children, everywhere. For more information about UNICEF and its work visit: [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org) Follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#)



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