

## **Opening Speech at Sustainable Cities And Human Settlements Awards Ceremony 2020**

**by Arab Hoballah, Selection Committee Member of the Sustainable  
Cities And Human Settlements Awards; Senior Sustainability Expert,  
former Chief, Sustainable Consumption and Production, UNEP**

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Colleagues,

After two days of a very intensive agenda, with an impressive set of high-level speakers and highly qualified experts, it is time to relax a bit while recognising outstanding sustainable cities related achievements. This is the night of the awardees of the 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Session of the Global Forum on Human Settlements. Since 2005, the GFHS has been actively promoting green cities and sustainable human settlements, not just through conferences, debates and publications, but also but praising a limited number of outstanding achievements, to serve as examples to others in their fight against destruction of natural resources and production of waste, while pursuing their journey towards sustainability.

Resource efficient and resilient Cities are essential for a Healthy Planet, while at the same time a Healthy Planet provides the necessary foundations for green and sustainable cities, assuming that leaders and citizens behave in a responsible manner; which is generally not the case unfortunately, while some, such as our Awardees this evening, show the way for responsible greener actions in trying to provide solutions to our unsustainable consumption and production patterns.

If we are all gathered here this evening, it is because we all believe that cities and communities are the right place and right level for action towards sustainability, where needed transformative approach can happen, notably to prevent and combat health crises such as the pandemic that is now shaking up the world.

Nature-based solutions are essential as drivers to a healthy planet with resilient cities. Meanwhile, we regretfully keep on undermining the basis and foundations for such a healthy planet. Some say, “we must, and we can”, yes, but what about the necessary means, the enabling capacity and the needed capable governance system, without there will be no implementation, just wishful thinking. All failing, all short, still there is hope out there, notably thanks to our Awardees, the reason of our gathering this evening.

Using the IGMCI, International Green Model City Initiative: for inclusive, resilient, and smart cities, as guiding framework, few candidates were selected, among many others; it is important to recognise that almost submissions deserve to be recognised with an award this evening. But the conditions of the selection process require that only a few are selected.

Seven categories have been considering covering a large spectrum of issues related to sustainable cities and human settlements; these include green city category, the low-carbon destination, the green technology, planning & design, green building category and for outstanding contribution;

Without any further due, let the party start, the SCASHA ceremony, with our congratulations to our champions.