**Director Video Remarks (4 minutes)
Event:** 19th Annual Session of Global Forum on Human Settlements, under the theme of “Invigorating Innovation and Local Leadership in Disaster Risk-Reduced Human Settlements for a Sustainable Urban Future”
**Host:** Global Forum on Human Settlements (GFHS)
**Date:** To be shown on 24 October 2024
**Location:** New York, USA

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Distinguished Delegates,
Colleagues and Friends,

My name is Paola Albrito, Director from the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction and I am pleased to share a message on behalf of the organization for the 19th Annual Session of Global Forum on Human Settlements.

In an era where disasters are increasingly frequent and severe, the need for resilient urban planning has never been more urgent.

From earthquakes and floods to hurricanes and wildfires, and heatwaves across many cities, human settlements face a growing array of threats that challenge our ability to live safely and sustainably.

The solution lies not merely in reactive measures but also in proactive measures that use innovative approaches to disaster risk reduction to achieve sustainable urban resilience.

Innovation lies at the heart of urban resilience. Allow me to highlight three ways we can leverage innovation to build cities that are resilient and sustainable for future generations.

First, innovation in the use of new technologies.

For example, advances in meteorology and satellite technology can detect weather hazards long before they impact communities. Innovations allow us to prepare for disruptions and ensure communities can withstand and recover with compromising public services.

Second, innovation in applying traditional or nature-based solutions to urban challenges

2023 was the warmest year on record with far reaching effects, prompting the Secretary-General’s Call to Action on Extreme Heat. Urban heat management at the local level is not only an environmental imperative but a critical component of reducing disaster risk. Cities must adopt innovative cooling strategies such as green infrastructure, urban forests, and reflective materials to reduce heat risks, and creating spaces that protect communities from heat while enhancing well-being.

For example, green infrastructure, such as permeable pavements and urban wetlands, can help cities manage stormwater and prevent flooding.

The Canadian city of Vancouver uses rain gardens to manage 90% of its annual rainfall runoff. All while generating additional benefits such as increasing the green space for communities and nature.

Third, innovation in rethinking urban planning practices and investment in resilient infrastructure. Implementing risk-sensitive land zoning and promoting the use of building codes that prioritize safety and resilience.

We saw how Mexico City drastically reduced its earthquake fatalities from thousands in 1985 to around 300 in 2017 after it enforced new building codes.

It is about building back better after a disaster and embedding resilience in existing and new infrastructure including roads, bridges, houses and energy systems to secure functionality and continuity of essential services and economic activities.

That said, innovation alone is not enough, there needs to be an empowered local leadership to put these solutions into practice.

That is why we launched with partners the Making Cities Resilient 2030 initiative. The goal of this initiative is to build local capacity and leadership by helping cities progress along a resilience roadmap.

We are proud to report that the initiative now includes over 1,700 cities in 88 countries, representing a population of 558 million people.

The recently adopted Pact for the Future acknowledges the need for innovative, long-term and forward-thinking approaches to safeguard the needs and interests of current and future generations.

As we look to a future that is increasingly urban and at-risk from hazards, let us mark this World Cities Day with a commitment.

A commitment to harness the power of innovation and local leadership to advance disaster risk reduction efforts.

This is key to achieving a resilient and ‘sustainable urban future’ for all.

Thank you.