

## **Talking Points for H.E. Dr. Talal Abu -Ghazaleh, Co-Chair of the Digital Technologies for Sustainable Urbanization Network at the Launch Ceremony, Barcelona**

**16 November, 2015**

**Excellencies, Distinguished Friends and Participants,**

**I join our leader, Dr. Joan Clos, Executive Director, UN HABITAT and our Co-Chair, in welcoming you all most warmly to this launch event of the Digital Technologies for Sustainable Urbanization Network.**

**We are most grateful to our hosts, the Mayor of Barcelona and the Smart Cities Expo, to the Secretary General of UCLG and the President of the Consortium of Sustainable Urbanization for all their support for this event and to Your Excellencies the Ministers, the Honorable Mayors, Urban Planners ,Designers, Architects, Technology Gurus, Business Leaders and Civil Society Activists who have come from around the world to join us on this important occasion.**

**It is my great honor to co-chair, on behalf of the Business Sector, and together with my leader and friend Dr. Clos, this innovative public- private partnership Network, a first of its kind, which emanated from the Integration Segment of the United Nations Economic and Social Council on 28 May this year.**

**Excellencies, Friends,**

**The world today is poised at a fork where two roads depart:**

**The road that we are currently on: which is headed towards rapid climate change and the degradation and depletion of the environment and our natural resource base, that will soon make our planet uninhabitable for humanity; and**

**Then, there is the alternative road of sustainable development: with full respect for our environment and natural resources, inclusive growth, equitable social progress and respect for human rights that will lead us to the secure and sustainable future we all want for our children.**

**Fortunately, at the United Nations Summit on Sustainable Development held last September in New York, the world community has chosen to take the second road when our Heads of State adopted a transformative and universal new 2030 Agenda with seventeen sustainable development Goals at its core. Goal 11 calls upon the world community " to make cities and human settlements safe, inclusive, resilient and sustainable."**

**Our Global Network is aimed at harnessing the transformative power of digital technologies to advance SDG 11. It will thus contribute directly to the implementation of the urban dimension of the 2030 Agenda.**

**Urbanization has come to be recognized as a major and inexorable trend of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As my friend Dr. Clos reminds us, a majority of the world's people live in cities today and more than two thirds will be urban dwellers in the next few decades. The trend toward urbanization is even more rapid in the developing world. It is in cities that our future and that of our children will be decided. What kind of cities we build is thus critical to the future of our countries and the world.**

**This Global Network brings together high-level policy makers, urban planners, designers and architects, city leaders and mayors, CEOs of technology companies and leaders of civil society to support countries and cities to build capacity to become smart cities.**

**We need to chart a new path towards a New Urban Agenda by modernize urban landscapes, enhancing technological connectivity, creating a better balance between public spaces and private development, by more efficient and more equitable use of land and resources, by creating opportunities for investments in sustainable growth, by creating job opportunities for youth and women, and by making buildings, infra-structure, energy, water, health and education services, business and industry, both smart and environmentally sustainable. The Network will help advance this New Urban Agenda that would be adopted at the UN-HABITAT 3 Conference to be held in Quito in October, 2016.**

**I wish to assure you all that the business community has come to realize, more than ever before, that business cannot flourish and grow in an unsustainable environment. We can do well only if we do well by joining hands with governments and city leaders in this historic task. We are totally committed to make full use of this exceptional opportunity to serve the sustainable urban development objectives of our countries and of the whole world within the framework of the new 2030 Agenda of the United Nations.**

**I call upon all of you to join us in this historic and noble endeavor as the future of all of us and our children depends on our collective success.**

**I thank you.**