

CSU Forum on Sustainable Urbanization

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Message from Talal Abu- Ghazaleh

Founder and Chairman of Talal Abu-Ghazaleh Organization (TAG-Org)

I would like, first of all, to express my admiration and appreciation to you, Mr. Chairman and to CSU for convening this important Forum and to greet the many dignitaries and participants who are helping to make this event an important milestone in our struggle for a better world.

TAG-Org the global Organization for professional services and Education has always been committed to and inspired by the undeniable premise that business cannot succeed in a failing society, nor can society succeed and flourish without the creativity and entrepreneurial contribution of the business sector.

In this spirit, over the past several decades, it has always been my endeavor to bring the business perspective to the United Nations and its agencies in many capacities, among which most recently, as Chair of the UN Global Alliance for ICT and Development, as Co-Chair of the UN ICT Task Force and as Co-Chair of the UN Global Compact.

As the UN embarks on its quest under the theme “***The Future We All Want***”, through a new global agenda for sustainable development, we must all focus on the crucial role of smart sustainable urbanization as a central driving force towards a better future for mankind.

And on this occasion, I commend the Consortium for Sustainable Urbanization for convening this timely Forum to serve that purpose and thank you for bestowing on me the privilege of bringing a business perspective to you.

Distinguished delegates,

Cities are the pulsating heart of human civilization. They are the epicenters of business and wealth creation, economic growth, social advancement and cultural vitality.

As cities grow, so does a country and a society. Today, a majority of the world's people, 54 percent, live in cities and this proportion will grow to 70 percent in the next few decades.

Cities are also the leading and active partners in the rural-urban dynamic.

Indeed, our future is an urban one. A vast majority of our children and grandchildren will live in cities. We want them to live in well-planned, livable cities where life is secure, the traffic flows, there is water in the faucets, the sanitation system works, there are no energy shortages, and where housing, health and education services are affordable and accessible to all, be it in Cairo or Detroit, in London or Nairobi, in Manila or Mumbai.

We do not want cities to be the sources of growing carbon emissions and other greenhouse gases, nor face the threat of floods and storms due to climate change. We want cities to be centers of creativity, innovation and business development. We want cities to ensure safety of life, housing, education and health service for all, enabled by new information and communication technologies. In short, we want smart, sustainable and livable cities that will help secure the future of generations to come.

I am convinced that more creative and widespread applications of information and communication technologies and tools in urban and spatial planning, in urban design and management and in the delivery of social services to all citizens, can be critical for success in building smart, sustainable and livable cities fit for the 21st Century.

This can only happen, if public and private sectors, academia and civil society work together as true partners to bring to bear their complementary strengths for this common cause.

As a business leader with a lifelong dedication to the United Nations principles and causes, I commit my support to such a partnership approach.

Distinguished colleagues,

We need to share best practices in achieving sustainable design in urban areas around the world and I want to discuss deliverables for planning for smart growth.

We need to share knowledge and to bridge the digital divide in the area of sustainable urban design and planning and management and delivery of services.

We need innovative information communication technology models for sustainable urban design.

As a representative of the private sector, I know that we can make a difference, a big difference in securing and building the urban future we want and I choose to support sustainable urbanization.

You can too.

I thank you.