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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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**MESSAGE TO THE WORLD URBAN FORUM
Naples, 1 September 2012**

I am pleased to send greetings to all participants at the sixth session of the World Urban Forum. I thank the Government of Italy and the City of Naples for hosting this milestone on the road to a more sustainable future.

I especially welcome your focus on the urban future of our world. In just over a generation, two-thirds of all people will live in urban areas. Megacities are becoming more common as populations grow more concentrated.

Urban areas will be crucial battlegrounds to win the fights against climate change, energy inefficiency and pollution. Cities will also provide fertile ground for launching the green economy.

At the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio+20, world leaders placed the urban challenge high on the global agenda. They recognized that we must strengthen cooperation, partnerships and agreements to carry out the Habitat Agenda for sustainable urban development.

We can usher in the future we want by heeding the Rio+20 call for an integrated approach to sustainable cities that better supports local authorities and involves the public, especially the poor, in decision-making.

As experts, you are well-versed in responding to the problems facing cities and optimizing their potential opportunities. Your work has even more impact as you focus not only on systems but people – the children who travel to school, the elderly who navigate various challenges, the mothers and fathers struggling against poverty and others who make up the fabric of city life. They need affordable and sustainable transport and energy. They need safe and green urban spaces. They deserve decent shelter, drinking water and sanitation. When you work for healthy air quality, job creation, improved urban planning and better waste management, you are working for better living conditions for millions of people.

While you help the individual, I encourage you to continue to encompass the international. We look forward to forging new partnerships together so that we can share knowledge to find solutions to our common challenges.

In that spirit, please accept my best wishes for a successful conference.