

# WUF9 SPOTLIGHTS GRASSROOTS VOICES



**Shivtuse:** Emphasised the need for stronger partnerships and empowerment of grassroots women in the field of business.



**Taking the stage:** Halimah (left) speaking during a WUF9 session on affordable housing at Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre.

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**KUALA LUMPUR:** It has always been a platform to share ideas and views on the topic of urbanisation, but the ninth session of the World Urban Forum (WUF9) held here was the first to provide grassroots organisations with an avenue to give their input.

Called the Grassroots Assembly, it offered a space for grassroots leaders from all over the world to share their experiences in advocating the New Urban Agenda (NUA) in their cities and communities.

Urban Wellbeing, Housing and Local Government Minister Tan Sri Noh Omar said the purpose of the Grassroots Assembly was to give local leaders a chance to share their experiences and trade ideas on sustainable urbanisation with stakeholders from other countries.

"WUF9 brings together thousands of stakeholders to share practices and knowledge on how cities are built, planned and managed."

"This is the place to discuss and present commitments, strategies and innovations, identify institutional roles, as well as pursue partnerships in the implementation of the NUA," Noh said during the joint opening of the WUF9 assemblies for Women, Business, Children and Youth at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre on Feb 7.

Grassroots leaders who spoke at the Assembly were Kenya's Huairou Commission Chair of Governing Council Violet Shivtuse and Peru's National Confederation of Women Organised for Life and Integrated Development president Relinda Sosa.

Shivtuse spoke of the need for stronger partnerships and empowerment of grassroots women in the field of business.

Sosa, who spoke on behalf of Latin American grassroots organisations, emphasised the importance of alliances among grassroots organisations and strengthening ties for an effective decision-making process.

Apart from the Grassroots Assembly, other assemblies were also held at WUF9 such as the Women's Assembly, Business Assembly, World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments, and the Children and Youth Assembly.

UN-Habitat head Datuk Maimunah Mohd Sharif was among those at the Women's Assembly. A former



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mayor of the Penang Island City Council, she talked about Penang's introduction of gender-responsive and participatory budgeting during her term as mayor.

She also addressed the urgent need to acquire data on women's unique challenges, such as their safety on public transport, to make cities more women-friendly.

Discussions during the Business Assembly focused on the role of businesses in creating sustainable and inclusive urbanisation, as well as their role in the NUA.

International Real Estate Federation president Farook Mahmood called for creative solutions to increase land affordability and improvements in building techniques and materials.

He also suggested that participants share smart affordable housing examples from around the world through the federation's website so that the information could be accessed by all.

The World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments focused on the experiences and challenges faced by local and regional governments in implementing the NUA.

World Assembly of Youth president, Malaysia's own Datuk Seri Idris Haron, was a speaker at the Youth Assembly. The Melaka Chief Minister called for the inclusion of youth in urban development.

## Minister's Roundtable

During WUF9, Noh also attended



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a Minister's Roundtable, which saw the participation of ministers from countries such as China, Indonesia, Algeria, Paraguay and the United States.

Noh was on hand to welcome the 61 ministers from various countries to the Minister's Roundtable and briefed them on his ministry's efforts to encourage inclusive sustainable development.

He updated them on the Government's efforts to provide affordable housing for Malaysians, especially those in the urban areas and those from the bottom 40% household income group (B40).

"The Malaysian Government has introduced the Public Housing Programme (PPH) to address the housing needs of those in the B40 category," he told the ministers.

He added that the PPR units, which are normally rented out at RM124 per month to families with monthly incomes of less than RM3,000, has benefited 75,405 households as of January 2018.

He also spoke about the Rent to Own Scheme, where PPR units are sold at subsidised rates to those who are unable to secure loans or financial assistance from private banking institutions.

Ministers from other countries shared their own experiences and challenges in implementing the NUA and moving towards sustainable and inclusive urbanisation.

The US representative spoke about the importance of data mining in devising policies against

homelessness, while Indonesia shared its work to reduce informal settlements.

China highlighted its commitment to sustainable urbanisation in line with the theme of the Shanghai 2010 World Expo: Better City, Better Life.

Japan highlighted the importance of knowledge sharing between different stakeholders in moving towards sustainable urbanisation.

## High-level Roundtables

Apart from the Minister's Roundtable, several high-level roundtables were also included in WUF9's programmes to discuss issues such as the increasing inclusiveness of urban spaces, maximising cities' contributions to national development and urban governance.

Public Service Department director-general Tan Sri Zainal Rahim Seman was one of the panelists at WUF9 during the Transformative Partnerships in Urban Management dialogue.

He talked about the challenges facing local governments around the world in implementing the NUA and Malaysia's experiences with transformative partnerships.

"In my opinion, quality urban management cannot be handled in silo. Each local government or urban manager must find suitable partners to collaborate with to offer the best quality services to their urban population," he said.

He mentioned public-private partnerships at the local govern-

ment level as being among the transformative partnerships towards sustainable and inclusive urbanisation, giving the example of Medini City, which was borne out of a partnership between Iskandar Puteri City Council and Medini Incorporated Malaysia Sdn Bhd.

"This partnership has generated economic growth in the city and its surroundings."

"It has also increased the local government's capacity to manage and sustain the city as a distinctive, vibrant, connected, sustainable and beautiful," he said.

Deputy Urban Wellbeing, Housing and Local Government Minister Datuk Halimah Mohd Sadique also spoke at a special session during WUF9 on the importance of affordable housing.

"Housing is a basic necessity for individuals and an important component when discussing human habitats."

"Under UN-Habitat's definition, housing is not limited to shelter for individuals. A proper house should provide shelter from the elements of nature and offer security, adequate privacy and space with proper transportation facilities and access to adequate basic amenities."

"For me, it is very important that all governments should meet the people's housing needs because by owning a house, they will have a sense of belonging and ownership."

"Quality housing contributes to a person's well-being and quality of life," Halimah said.