

## Addis Ababa, Ethiopia hosts Urban October, Global Forum on Human Settlements

Frederick Wakisi  
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Addis Ababa, Ethiopia -- As one of the most important global congresses on the urban agenda, sustainable cities and human settlements, as well as an observance of Urban October, the Global Forum on Human Settlements (GFHS) 2019 was successfully held at the headquarters of the UN Economic Commission for Africa. Hosted by the UN Conference Center, the overall theme of the conference was "Sustainable Development of Cities and Human Settlements in the Digital Era."

Dr. Seleshi Bekele, Minister of Water, Irrigation and Energy of Ethiopia; Hon. Raila Odinga, former Prime Minister of Kenya and high representative for Infrastructure Development at the African Union Commission; and Mr. Oliver Chinganya, director of the African Centre for Statistics and officer-in-charge of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) attended and addressed the forum.



The forum was co-organized by GFHS, UNECA, the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), the World Urban Campaign (WUC) in cooperation with the Universal Peace Federation (UPF), the Global One Belt One Road Association (GOBA), the Global Blockchain Alliance (GBA), the World Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (WANGO), the Belt and Road African Studies Alliance, the Silk Sustainable Development Institution and concerned Ethiopian government agencies.

Approximately 500 major stakeholders from more than 50 countries joined ministers, mayors, well-known experts, and business and social leaders in working out innovative solutions and fostering partnerships. Some of the distinguished guests include the following:

Raila Odinga: Former Prime Minister, Kenya, and High Representative for Infrastructure Development at the African Union Commission.

Mesfin Assefa: State Minister, Ministry of Urban Development and Housing, Ethiopia

Jenipher Kacha Namuyangu: Minister of State for Local Government, Uganda

Roi Chiti: Project leader, World Urban Campaign

Oudom Wang: Chairman, Global One Belt One Road Association

Taj Hamad: Vice Chairman, Global Forum on Human Settlements

Vicente Guallart: Founder, Institute for Advanced Architecture of Catalonia

Serge Salat: Former Chief Architect of Barcelona City Council, Member of International Resource Panel

Kivutha Kibwana: Governor of Makeni, Kenya

Paul Chepkwony: Governor of Kericho, Kenya

E. Peter Lotethiro: Deputy Governor of Turkana, Kenya

E. Martin Moshisho: Deputy Governor of Kajiado, Kenya

Bishop Joseph Kanuku: Bishop Emeritus, Anglican Church of Kenya

Frederick Wakhisi: Executive Director, UPF-Kenya

Dharam Chaggar: Chairman, UPF-Kenya.

The Universal Peace Federation mobilized over 150 participants, including government ministers, governors, members of parliament, religious/spiritual leaders and academicians drawn from across Eastern Africa. UPF presided over Session 6: "Family Values and Happiness in Cities." It was reaffirmed that there is no settlement without functional families. What follows is an outline of the main topics presented in the session.



### **Family Values**

In human settlements today, because we love our "own things", we are closer together physically, but we are not our brothers' keeper.

### **Importance of the Family**

The family is the nucleus of any society. It is the first school of love. Functional families are the foundation of healthy human settlements in this digital era. Functional families have values that contribute to happy co-existence in human settlements.

Family values taught in the first school include social cognitive learning, love, empathy, loyalty, integrity, knowledge, optimism, rules, boundaries, roles, faith and hope.

### **Happiness**

Happiness means different things to different people/cultures. For some, it means knowledge, peace, finances, beauty, good conscience, wealth, children, jobs or good health.

Happiness is a journey not a destination. The time to be happy is now. Happiness is both contagious and infectious. However, always remember, you cannot give what you do not have.

### **Technology: A Double-Edged Sword**

On the positive side, technology is an asset, and it is here to stay as it facilitates communication, virtual presence with all family members, online education and updated information on everything. Technology as a family asset facilitates location tracking, parent–teacher communication and parenting information forums.

Conversely, technology facilitates learning the bad and the ugly, compromises quality time, deprives face-to-face interaction and listening (body, paralinguistic and verbal), and encourages sedentary lifestyles and hence compromised health, little or no human touch, addiction, solitary life and immoral influences (pornography).

### **Challenges in Human Settlement in This Era**

The challenges include stress, which contributes to up to 70% of ailments; depression, standing at 300 million worldwide currently; rising suicide rates (800,000 annually), alcohol, drug and substance abuse (3.3 million deaths from alcohol, 31 million from drug related disorders with 11 million from injecting drugs).

There are the ever-increasing cases of broken homes, separation and divorce.

The rise of terrorism has been coupled with corruption.

Environmental degradation is rising, leading to poverty and disease.

Strategies for Enhancement of Family Values/Happiness

Strengthening and enhancing healthy families through leadership, teamwork, modelling, mentoring.

Creating quality time, thinking together, doing together, living together.

Encouraging face-to-face communication through physical presence in families.

Promoting institutional interventions such as maternity/paternity leave, laws enhancing family values.

Revitalizing discipline in love/tough love.

Establishing deliberate forums for stress management and laughter.

The recipe for happy human settlements lies in embracing digitization with values entrenched in true love, brotherhood, charity, inclusivity, empathy and warmth.

### **The closing address was given by Hon. Raila Odinga.**

We at UPF had the opportunity to bring up several issues with Honorable Odinga. He tentatively agreed to attend our conference in Korea next February. Furthermore, he requested an annual schedule of our events to be more involved. We raised the matter of inviting Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon to Kenya. Hon. Odinga requested that we do a write-up and set up follow-up meetings to that effect. He expressed much interest in our programs and activities.