



## Urbanisation: an urgent challenge and massive opportunity for Africa, says Mo Ibrahim

*Accra, 22 November 2015* – Urbanisation is both an urgent challenge and a massive opportunity for Africa, with the potential to transform the daily lives off millions of people, according to Mo Ibrahim.

Dr. Ibrahim was speaking at the 2015 Ibrahim Forum in Accra, Ghana, which focused on Africa's growing cities and the challenges and opportunities presented by urbanisation on the continent.

According to a new report from the Mo Ibrahim Foundation - *2015 Facts & Figures: African Urban Dynamics* - launched at the Forum, the continent's urban population will grow by almost 900 million by 2050.

Over 100 leaders from business, government, international organisations and academia across the continent gathered at the special one-day conference at the Accra International Conference Centre.

Across four interactive sessions, the Forum explored the trends and dynamics of Africa's evolving urban landscape. There was particular focus on the critical roles of leadership and governance in ensuring that urbanisation supports development and creates opportunities for Africans.

**Hanna Tetteh, Ghana's Minister for Foreign Affairs**, said: “We need to think much more creatively about the way we plan our cities, so that they are inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. We are the fastest urbanising continent and we've got an opportunity to do things differently.”

**Kumi Naidoo, International Executive Director, Greenpeace International**, said: “The Mo Ibrahim Foundation’s report warns us about the intergenerational conflict that we are heading towards. Our cities are tinderboxes and powder-kegs waiting to explode. We need a fundamental re-thinking of how we see governance at the local level.”

**Akinwumi Adesina, President, African Development Bank Group**, said: “Africa is not a poor continent by any sense of the word, we just have a lot of poor people. We have to find better ways for municipalities to finance themselves, including accessing capital markets. But note: if Africa managed its natural resources better, actually we could finance our cities and infrastructure ourselves.”

**James Mwangi, Executive Director, Dalberg**, said: “We have the opportunity to shape our urban areas so that they don’t recreate the mistakes of the past. But we currently lack the capacity to do that. We need to build African cities that reflect the needs and desires of the people living in them, not by importing ideas from outside.”

**Paul Collier, Professor of Economics, Oxford University**, said: “Africa needs to embrace urbanisation. Cities are vital - they are an engine that can lift people out of poverty, by making scale and specialisation possible through connectivity.”



**Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, former Managing Director, World Bank**, said: “Accountability, transparency and good governance at the local government level are critical. In Nigeria, for example, we have one of the most fiscally decentralised economies in the world. We need proper accounting of resources at a local level for the sustainable building of African cities.”

**Carlos Lopes, Executive Director, UN Economic Commission for Africa**, said: “The advantage of the late comer is that he can rise very fast. Africa can innovate with technology and lead in a different way. We can leapfrog and pursue green industrialisation. Demographics play in our favour and we have a chance to make it. But we have to move very fast, as our cities are growing 1.7 times faster than the rest of the world.”

**Moïse Katumbi, former Governor, Katanga Province**, said: “You can’t manage urbanisation properly if you don’t make the effort to go to the people and find out what they actually want. In fact, as we showed in Katanga, African citizens are ready to pay taxes if they see that change is happening and services are being delivered.”

**Khalifa Sall, Mayor of Dakar**, said: “Citizens should drive the policies of the municipalities. We must build cities for the people and by the people. When we need to build new infrastructure - schools, roads, cities - citizens know best where they are needed.”

The Forum concluded with a Q&A session involving mayors from four African cities: Cape Town, Dakar, Johannesburg and Kigali.

The Ibrahim Forum also featured *Snapping Cities*, an exhibition of photography from across Africa. The images displayed in the foyer of the Accra International Conference Centre were the winning entries in a competition organised by the Mo Ibrahim Foundation. People across Africa were invited to capture, through their own lenses, urban life in Africa.

Held annually since 2010, the Ibrahim Forum aims to tackle specific issues of critical importance to Africa. The Forum goes beyond stating issues and renewing commitments to define pragmatic strategies, operational actions points and shared responsibilities.

The Ibrahim Forum was part of the 2015 Governance Weekend, a series of events and debates hosted by the Mo Ibrahim Foundation. On Friday 20 November, the Ibrahim Prize for Achievement in African Leadership was presented to Hifikepunye Pohamba, the former President of Namibia. On Saturday evening, there was a free concert in Accra’s Independence Square involving Angelique Kidjo, Sarkodie, Stonebwoy, Youssou N’Dour and other musicians. On Sunday 22 November, TP Mazembe from Democratic Republic of Congo will compete against the Ghana Dream Team for the 2015 Ibrahim Governance Cup in a special football match at Accra Stadium.

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### **Notes to Editors**

#### **Mo Ibrahim Foundation**

The Mo Ibrahim Foundation was established in 2006 with a focus on the critical importance of leadership and governance in Africa. By providing tools to support progress in leadership and governance, the Foundation aims to promote meaningful change on the continent.

The Foundation, which is a non-grant making organisation, focuses on defining, assessing and enhancing governance and leadership in Africa through four main initiatives:

- Ibrahim Index of African Governance
- Ibrahim Prize for Achievement in African Leadership
- Ibrahim Forum
- Ibrahim Fellowships and Scholarships

#### **Ibrahim Forum**

Established in 2010, the Ibrahim Forum is an annual high-level discussion forum tackling issues of critical importance to Africa. The Forum convenes prominent African political and business leaders, representatives from civil society, multilateral and regional institutions as well as Africa's major international partners to identify specific policy challenges and priorities for action. Previous Forums have dealt with: Africa in the next 50 years (2013), African Youth (2012), African Agriculture (2011) and African Regional Economic Integration (2010). Data and research on Forum issues are compiled by the Foundation as the basis for informed and constructive debate.

#### **Ibrahim Prize**

The Ibrahim Prize celebrates excellence in African leadership. It is awarded to a former Executive Head of State or Government by an independent Prize Committee. Previous Laureates: Presidents Joaquim Chissano (2007, Mozambique), Festus Mogae (2008, Botswana) and Pedro Pires (2011, Cabo Verde. The 2007 Honorary Ibrahim Laureate was President Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela.