



STATEMENT BY THE H.E PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA AND COMMANDER-IN- CHIEF OF THE ARMED FORCES HON. MWAI KIBAKI, DURING THE SPECIAL SESSION OF THE AFRICAN MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON HOUSING AND DEVELOPMENT (AMCHUD) ON 3RD APRIL 2006 AT GIGIRI, NAIROBI.

**Hon Ministers,
Executive Director, UN Habitat, Dr. Anna .K. Tibaijuka
Distinguished participants
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am delighted to join you this morning being the first day of the Special Session of the African Ministers Conference on Housing and Urban Development (AMCHUD).

I also welcome you all to our beautiful country of Kenya. Please find time also to visit some interesting parts of our country, sample our rich heritage and enjoy Kenyan hospitality.

I am informed that the principal objective of this conference is to develop a programme of action for the realization of the Millennium Development Goals, particularly with respect to Slum Upgrading and Prevention.

I therefore hope that at the end of this significant conference, you will come up with workable strategies and guidelines that our member countries can implement to attain sustainable human settlements in Africa.

Distinguished Participants, allow me to thank all those whose dedicated efforts resulted in the establishment of African Ministers Conference on Housing and Urban Development, a forum whose objective is to promote discussion, advocacy and lobbying on housing and urban development issues and the relevant Millennium Development Goals and Targets in Africa.

I thank, most sincerely, UN Habitat for accepting to host this conference and for the support they have continued to provide for African nations in their efforts to rid the continent of slums.

Ladies and Gentlemen, among the greatest challenges facing humankind in the new millennium are rapid urbanization and increasing poverty. Since 1950, mankind has experienced its most rapid expansion, from 2.5 billion to 6 billion people. Some 60 per cent of this gain has been in urban areas, in particular in the urban areas of the developing world, where the urban population has increased more than six fold in only 50 years.

Over the next 30 years the global urban population will increase by more than 2 billion, i.e., from 2.9 billion in 2001 to about 4.9 billion in 2030. In percentage terms, the world's urban population will increase from 48 per cent of the total world population in 2001 to about 60 per cent in 2030.

This means that for each of those years the world's urban population will increase by about 70 million people, equivalent to the annual creation of seven new mega cities of 10 million people.

The greatest impact of this increase will be felt in the developing world, especially throughout South and South-east Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Over the next 15 years, many large cities in Asia and Africa will nearly double in population.

For us in Africa, this high rate of urbanization poses challenges far beyond the management capacity of governments, local authorities and other institutions. For instance, 72 per cent of the urban residents in Africa live in slums without equitable access to land, adequate shelter and basic services. These life-threatening conditions in our urban environment require sustainable financing mechanisms for housing and urban development.

In 2001, approximately 924 million people lived in the world's urban slums. This constituted 32 per cent of the total urban population of the world. About 43 per cent of the urban population of all the developing regions as a whole lived in slums, as did around 78 per cent of the urban population in the least developed countries.

To reverse the slum situation in our continent, there is need for decentralization, good governance and the empowerment of national and local authorities. The adoption of inclusive processes of decision making are fundamental to addressing the urbanization and slum challenges in Africa.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Kenya has had its fair share of slums and related challenges. To address this challenge, my Government has established the Kenya Slum Upgrading Programme (KENSUP) in collaboration with UN- HABITAT. This Programme seeks to improve the livelihoods of an estimated 5.4 million urban slum dwellers between 2005-2020 at the cost of Kshs 880 billion (an equivalent of 11 billion US Dollars).

This is in line with the Millennium Development Goal number seven and target eleven of improving the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers worldwide by the year 2020. It is also in line with my Government's development agenda as outlined in the Economic Recovery Strategy for Wealth and Employment Creation 2003-2007.

The Kenya Slum Upgrading Programme, which I am patron and launched during the global observance of the World Habitat Day on 4th October 2004, is designed to upgrade the living environment of slum residents by improving accessibility to basic services such as shelter, water, education, health, security and income generating opportunities.

Kibera, the largest slum in Kenya, has an estimated population of 500,000 residents and covers 235 hectares comprising 12 villages. With upgrading of Kibera, the lives of over one fifth or 20 per cent of Nairobi's population will be improved. As I speak, Works on the Kibera decanting site, estimated at Kshs 480 million (An equivalent of six million USD), have commenced.

Hon Ministers, upgrading of existing slum and informal settlements addresses the backlog of urban neglect, but many cities especially in Africa will face the onslaught of new urban residents over the next several decades. Without significant improvements in the capacities of local government and the private sector to provide services for new residents, many of whom are poor, the problems of current slum and squatter settlements will pale by comparison.

There is, therefore, a need for both nascent and active organizational dynamisms so that we can tap into unrecognized or under-utilized resources. Meeting the future growth in demand for

services will require significant strengthening of urban management and financial performance, coupled with more effective partnerships with the private sector and the communities themselves.

Other proactive policies and programmes that can be adopted include constructing affordable housing units, particularly on rental basis for low and middle-income groups; and promoting development of rural areas through industrialization of these areas.

As we all know, provision of housing and urban services is an expensive venture entailing use of various building materials that constitute 60 per cent of the total cost. Due to high production and transportation costs of such materials, housing projects end up being very costly pushing them beyond the reach of many.

On the other hand, many of our African countries are endowed with abundant natural resources. These resources can be utilized to meet the demand for basic building materials using available surplus labour.

My government is now promoting research, documentation and dissemination of information on alternative locally available building materials and technologies. Already, the government had acquired equipment towards establishment of appropriate building centers in every province. These centers will be used to disseminate information for Kenyans.

Kenya is also promoting labour intensive techniques during the construction of housing and infrastructure. We have laid emphasis on the use of on-site housing materials production methods as opposed to use of factory-assembled components.

In conclusion, we need to re-dedicate ourselves to the realization of the Millennium Development Goals that we set for ourselves in 2000. I am hoping that we will come up with African grown solutions which will address the current housing and urban development challenges that are unique to our continent. This is also in line with the principle objective of this conference of developing a programme of action. By doing this, the lives of the majority of our people will be improved.

It is now my greatest honour to declare the African Ministers Conference on Housing and Urban Development officially open and I wish you all very fruitful deliberations and an enjoyable stay in Kenya.

Thank you.