



**STATEMENT BY THE REPRESENTATIVE OF AFRICAN UNION  
COMMISSION, ON BEHALF OF ADV. BIENCE GAWANAS,  
COMMISSIONER FOR SOCIAL AFFAIRS, TO THE SPECIAL SESSION OF  
THE AFRICAN MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON HOUSING AND URBAN  
DEVELOPMENT (AMCHUD) AND THE SPECIAL HIGH LEVEL  
MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE, 3-5 APRIL 2006, GIGIRI/NAIROBI, KENYA**

**Honorable Chairperson,**

**Honorable Lindiwe Sisulu, Minister of Housing of the Republic of South  
Africa, and Chairperson of AMCHUD**

**Honorable Mr. Peter Soita Shitanda, Minister of Housing of the Republic  
of Kenya,**

**Your Excellency Dr. Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka, UN-HABITAT Executive  
Director**

**Honourable Ministers of Housing and Urban Development,  
Esteemed Heads of Delegations**

**Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps,**

**Distinguished Invited Guests,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

It gives me great pleasure to address this august gathering and to stand in for H. E., Adv. Bience Gawanas, AU Commissioner for Social Affairs, who, due to an overlap of schedule and prior commitment, could not address you today. She has conveyed her warmest greetings and best wishes for your successful deliberations today and tomorrow. On behalf of the AU Commission, the Commissioner for Social Affairs, and on my own behalf, I

wish to thank the Bureau of the 1<sup>st</sup> Session of the African Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development, particularly the Chairperson, the Hon. Lindwe Sisulu, for organizing this important Conference. I also wish to extend my appreciation to the Government and People of the Republic of Kenya for the excellent hospitality accorded to all the participants. Allow me also to express our gratitude to the UN-Habitat and other UN agencies for their support provided to the Bureau of AMCHUD in organizing this historic event.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Sustainable development of cities and towns has been one of the major priority areas of the African Union since the rate of urbanization and the population in urban areas is increasing at an alarming rate. This rapid and unplanned cities and towns is not matched with the parallel growth of housing, infrastructure and other social service facilities such as health, education, sanitation, etc. Consequently, the majority of African cities and towns are characterized by slums and squatter settlements which are plagued by poverty, diseases due to poor sanitation and lack of access to services, drug abuse, crime, deprivation, exclusion and powerlessness. Women, children and the elderly are the majority of the residents of African slums and form the largest vulnerable groups in these areas.

As you all know, the Millennium Development Goals urge all countries to address the challenges of slums and ensure sustainable development of urban centers. African countries have not only subscribed to the goals and targets of the MDGs, but their leaders recommitted themselves, in 2003 Maputo, when they adopted Decision 29 on the Promotion of Sustainable Cities and Towns in Africa.



**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

In 2005 the AU Commission, in collaboration with the UN-Habitat and the Government of the Republic of South Africa, organized the First African Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development (AMCHUD) which led to the establishment of AMCHUD as channel for regular consultation and advocacy for the promotion of sustainable cities in Africa. The AU Commission, as the Secretariat to AMCHUD, took the Report and Declarations of AMCHUD to the July 2005 Summit of the AU in Sirte, Libya. The Summit adopted the Report and passed a Decision welcoming the establishment of AMCHUD and requesting the AU Commission, the UN-Habitat and other development partners to support the activities of the same.

Next year, AMCHUD will convene its 2<sup>nd</sup> Session and it is imperative that this is done in accordance to the rules and procedures of the African Union, which regard as one of its Ministerial Conferences. In this regard, the African Union Commission will work closely with the Bureau and our partners to prepare this Session. In the process of building its capacity and discharging its responsibilities, the African Union Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development, will need the strong and continued support of its partners. I therefore welcome the continued and consistent assistance and support rendered by UN-Habitat, under the leadership of Dr Anna Tibaijuka, to the implementations of the outcomes of the founding Conference in Durban that took place in February 2005.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I can assure you that the AU Commission is determined to play its leadership role in pushing the agenda of sustainable development and addressing the multidimensional challenges posed by uncontrolled growth of slums and

related social ills. In this regard, the outcomes of this Special Conference of AMCHUD and the High Level Special Ministerial Session will contribute to the elaboration of an African Common Position in the upcoming Vancouver World Summit on cities.

I therefore wish to encourage exploring the challenges, achievements of far in implementing the various continental and international commitments including the MDGs in the sector, and charting out the way forward. Let me also once more thank the Bureau for pushing forward the implementation of the outcomes of the 1<sup>st</sup> Session and wish them renewed strength in leading the African continent in process of urban renewal, slum prevention and upgrading. I wish the Special Session of the Conference successful deliberations,

I thank you for your kind attention.