



“It registers a shared concern about the directing of Africa’s urban future and underscores the necessity of working together to chart a way forward. The challenge of Africa’s rapid urbanization is neither a mere statistical preoccupation, nor is it a matter of secondary importance in a continent that is currently considered to be predominantly rural. The predicament of Africa’s urban centers has a tremendous impact on the overall process of national development,” he said.

UN-HABITAT said African Ministers now had a “great opportunity” to take recommendations from the week’s deliberations in Durban to the forthcoming Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD 13) at UN headquarters in New York. It will discuss the theme Water and Sanitation and Human Settlements. A first preparatory meeting for the CSD conference is scheduled in a month’s time.

**African Union tackles the challenge or urbanization**

The afternoon session of the Expert Group Meeting started with a presentation from the Director of Social Affairs, Mr. Kamel Essaighairi of the African Union on *The challenge of urbanization and human settlements in the Framework of the African Union’s Strategic Plan and its NEPAD Programme*. Mr. Essaighairi stressed that while urbanization was an asset making a big contribution to GDP, it is also a liability if urban poverty is not taken into consideration. He noted that in Africa, 200 million out of the 340 million urban dwellers live in slums with little access to clean water and sanitation and many live in a climate of insecurity, suspicion, distrust and discrimination. He regretted that as it entered the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Africa was not well placed to take on the challenges of globalization. “Africa cannot wait until tomorrow. We are determined to offer services and basic goods at an affordable price”.

Mr. Essaighairi highlighted the African Union’s role for harmonizing, coordinating and evaluating the continent’s policies. He outlined elements of the AU’s roadmap for optimizing the use of Africa’s assets through, for instance, the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD). “Africa is at a crossroads and needs renewed hopes,” he said. The AU’s 2005-2007 plan proposes continental integration to create a dynamic force that can compete in the global arena.

**The challenge of slums in Africa**

In a presentation on *The challenge of slums, land, shelter delivery, and the provision of and access to basic services for all*, Mr. Alioune Badiane, UN-HABITAT’s Director of the Regional Office for

Africa and the Arab States, echoed Mr. Essaighairi’s plea to act now to reverse the urbanization of poverty and consistent economic decline in Africa. Sub-Saharan Africa, he said, suffered from high slum populations, lack of access to basic facilities, high incidence of HIV in urban slums and large numbers of street families, with women and children being the most affected.

He said that UN-HABITAT supported the NEPAD City initiative and would continue to work with member states to attain the Millennium Development Goal of improving the lives of 100 million slum dwellers by 2020. He added, though, that in view of the rapid rate of urbanization, the target number of 100 million may need to be reviewed because by 2020, an estimated 1.8 billion people would be living in slums unless immediate action is taken.

**Shelter delivery**

Mr. Farouk Tebbal, who heads UN-HABITAT’s Shelter Branch focused on the *Slum challenge and shelter delivery: meeting the Millennium Development Goals*. He said that with the urban population increasing by 70 million a year, the number of people living in Africa’s slums would continue to grow unless there is a change in policy.

With less than 20 per cent of the continent’s urban population having access to adequate water and sanitation facilities, the burden often lay on young girls to fetch water. Women and girls queued for hours, were deprived of education and were vulnerable to assault, he said.

Mr. Tebbal outlined a number of measures that would need to be taken to improve lives of slum dwellers including adequate poverty reduction, urban, housing and land policies, as well as improving urban governance. He highlighted the importance of security of tenure, housing rights, gender equity and a stop to evictions in stemming the development of more slums.

On the feasibility of meeting the Millennium Development Goal target on slums, Mr. Tebbal, shared positive experiences from a number of countries in Africa where advocacy, research, and legislation review had led to improvements in several cities.

**Land management**

“Though a complex and politically sensitive issue, land is central to successful low income housing strategies, slum upgrading and developing sustainable cities in sub-Saharan Africa,” said Clarissa Augustinus, Chief of UN-HABITAT’s Land and Tenure Section. She cited World Bank studies showing that without land reform and equitable distribution of land, development is limited.

Ms. Augustinus outlined key land issues including the need for comprehensive land reform to address the problem of skewed land distribution, a legacy of colonialism. She noted that land titling only covered a tiny section of land, and said that conventional land systems in Africa did not meet the needs of the majority. She advocated the use of innovative tenure systems such as occupancy rights, family and group rights, national and

local land registration systems and anti-eviction legislation. Ms. Augustinus supported her argument with examples from several countries in Africa from Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Senegal, to Tanzania and Uganda, where such innovative systems had been applied successfully. She added that that dispute resolution, particularly in post conflict areas, and equal rights of women and men in constitutions were key to implementing effective land administration systems.

Ms. Augustinus said that political will, lasting for at least a decade, was necessary to deliver tangible results. She left the audience with a number of thought provoking questions: “How can stakeholders such as government, NGOs and communities learn to work together and trust each other for long time periods? How do we manage risk during elections when land is such an emotive issue? How can we build a corruption-free and transparent system when we know that land and power and money are so closely connected in many of our governments?”

**Good governance as catalyst for positive change**

Mr. Mohamed Halfani, Chief of UN-HABITAT’s Urban Governance Section, said that governance was often treated as an academic subject, political process or administrative exercise. Urbanization, he said, was not just a demographic experience, it involves and affects the lives of Africans. Through its Global Campaign for Urban Governance, UN-HABITAT involves the community because “Cities can be centers of growth if they organically link into the dynamics of the real people that live in them.”

He outlined three initiatives for facilitating community participation: Decentralization reforms to transfer functions, authority and resources to the local level close to the beneficiaries, local government reforms, and sector reforms such as land, health and education. He added that although such reforms were being implemented in Africa, they focused more on enhancing managerial capacity of local authorities and making efficiency gains rather than making tangible improvements in the livelihoods of the poor.

“UN-HABITAT’s Governance Campaign, currently being implemented in 16 countries, brings together communities, civil society, central and local government in an inclusive organic manner to effect changes that respond to people’s needs” he concluded.

**Financing housing and urban development**

Mr. Donatus Okpala, UN-HABITAT’s Director of the Monitoring and Research Division, stressed that the issue of financing housing and urban development is a domestic one. “National and local

capital is the key. Foreign technical and financial assistance should be complementary not a substitute”. The potential for generating resources for housing and urban development existed locally in Africa in the form of urban property tax based on property value, borrowing and central government support. To achieve sustainable financing, there was a need to revitalize institutions that underpin housing and urban development in countries including regulatory, legal and other organizations, he said.

**Interventions**

When delegates were asked to comment on the presentations by UN-HABITAT officials, **South Africa** was at pains to say that it was trying to deal with urban land as a tool of poverty alleviation.

“I suggest that in NEPAD we take up this issue. One of the challenges we have to tackle head on is the extent to which women get the right to land ownership. When we (South Africa’s first democratically elected government) assumed office 10 years ago, women had no right to own land. We have changed that, and we know in some other countries you still have that problem,” said the South African delegate, Mr. Jabulane Mahlangu, MEC for Housing for Mpumalanga Province.

“Corruption and patronage is undermining efforts, and we need a response to this challenge.”

**Senegal** said that culture, religion and traditions in West African societies were “so deeply entrenched” that land problems were virtually intractable. “Take our mothers – they are so scared of asserting new rights we may advocate because they run contrary to tradition. We have to bear these traditions, and the mindset in mind, and the fact that women are simply not accorded sufficient responsibilities that we may consider their legal rights,” he said.

**Tanzania** said it too found land “a rather sensitive issue”. The Tanzanian government had introduced new land legislation that addressed “cultural and religious barriers especially so far as women are concerned. We now have equal access to land for all people in Tanzania.”

The **African Union** delegate stressed that most African governments had recognized the need for improving responses to urban challenges, especially that of urban poverty, and had actively participated at the two UN global conferences in Vancouver in 1976 (as the Organization of African Unity) and at the Habitat II City Summit in Istanbul 20 years later.

“It is important to recognize that following current trends, most of sub-Saharan Africa’s future growth will occur in cities,” the AU said.

In response, Ms. Mariam Yunusa, the senior official in charge of UN-HABITAT’s NEPAD portfolio, recalled that the African Union had endorsed the urban agenda at its Maputo Summit. The attraction of the NEPAD Cities Programme, she said, was that it provided a means of “grounding what is perceived as a government concern” enabling it to “come down to the municipal level”.

To jump -start the programme, she said seven cities – one from each region with representative local government –

had been chosen. The cities are Bamako, Mali; Douala, Cameroon; Durban, South Africa; Lagos, Nigeria; Lusaka, Zambia; and Nairobi, Kenya.

In a final presentation on Monday, Graham Alabaster of UN-HABITAT's water and sanitation programme, said recalled that water and sanitation in human settlements was of prime importance: "We need to take a more integrated approach on water and sanitation," he said. "The death toll by waterborne diseases represent 186 billion dollars. Meeting the sanitation target by 2015 could gain in the order of 63 billion dollars annually. An investment of 11 billion dollars equals a six fold return on investment."

#### **Further information**

*Detailed further information is available on UN-HABITAT's website, [www.unhabitat.org](http://www.unhabitat.org). Additionally, you can contact the following people for information on:*

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