



Journal

Thursday, 3 February 2005

Thursday’s Programme HIGH LEVEL MINISTERIAL MEETING, 3 -4 FEBRUARY 2005

10:00-11:30	OPENING CEREMONY <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Welcoming address by the Mayor of Durban• Statement by the Commissioner for Social Affairs, African Union• Statement by the Executive Director, UN-HABITAT• Statement by the Minister of Housing, Republic of South Africa• Statement by the Guest of Honour
11:30-11:35	Departure of Guest of Honour
11:35-12:00	Organizational Matters: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Election of the Bureau• Adoption of the Agenda• Adoption of the Work Programme
12:00-13:00	PRESENTATION AND CONSIDERATION OF: Outputs of the APC General Assembly/Expert Group Meeting
13:00 -14.30	LUNCH BREAK
14:30-16:30	DISCUSSION OF THE DRAFT ENHANCED FRAMEWORK OF IMPLEMENTATION IN PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND TOWNS IN AFRICA
16:30 -16:45	TEA/COFFEE BREAK
16:45-18:30	DISCUSSION OF THE DRAFT ENHANCED FRAMEWORK OF IMPLEMENTATION IN PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND TOWNS IN AFRICA

High-level talks begin

Ministers and senior officials from more than 40 African countries meet on Thursday at the First African Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development (AMCHUD) to thrash out ways of tackling growing urbanization in a continent where, south of the Sahara, over 70 percent of urban dwellers live in slums.

The meeting which started with experts on 31 February will wind up on Friday after two-days of high-level talks on an Enhanced Framework of Implementation aimed not only at dealing with acute urban poverty, but aimed at pushing the Millennium Development Goals a step further than originally intended.

The eight goals for reducing poverty improving health, the environment, education, access to clean water and sanitation and other areas, such as urban slums, deemed of critical importance were agreed by world leaders in 2000.

In the build-up to the ministerial segment of the talks this week, representatives of several countries stressed that Africa had to push particularly hard on the MDGs, whatever the financial cost because failure here would carry a heavier price in the longer term, both financial and social.

The toll

Figures carried in the enhanced framework document showed that in sub-Sahara Africa it is estimated that 71 percent of the population live in poverty; that two out of five live in extreme poverty on less than one US dollar a day; that 31 African countries life expectancy is only 46 years, and the per capita GDP just 469 US dollars. Africa is also the region most heavily afflicted in the world by HIV/AIDS with 25.4 million sufferers in 2004 – a year when 2.3 million Africans succumbed to the disease.

The eight-page document negotiated over three days of painstaking talks on the urbanization of poverty on a continent where 20 million refugees have fled their countries, and where conflict has displaced a further 25 million people within their countries, is intended to enable Africa to harness its resources and take the initiative in bringing relief and hope to the poorest of the poor.

It covers virtually every aspect of poverty reduction from improving the lives of 100 million slum dwellers (Target 11, Goal 7), women’s rights, water and sanitation, governance, security of tenure, utilities, health and education to capacity building, international cooperation, conflict resolution, integrated urban planning and strategic thinking.

The key message

Ms. Bience Gawanas, the African Union Commission for Social Affairs, told the assembly experts on the eve of the ministerial talks that this week’s meeting in Durban was about human dignity.

“The biggest challenge is not so much how you prepare, but how you implement – so the enhanced framework should be a framework of action. The ministers should be able to leave these shores and go home saying they are ready for action,” she said noting the occasion marked the first time the African population commission had met as experts.

She cited the importance of bringing women's concerns into every aspect of the deliberations, and added: "My message to all of us Africans is: let us create an image of Africa of which let us create an image of Africa of which we can all be proud."

Her remarks reflected concerns by South Africa, the AU and UN-HABITAT, which are hosting the conference, that Africa speak with one voice and make itself heard on the world stage at a series of forthcoming UN and other international meetings.

These meetings include the preparatory meeting next month of the Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD13) at UN headquarters in New York, the 20th Governing Council of UN-HABITAT in Nairobi at which governments will set the agency's work programme, priorities and budget for the next two years, and the review meeting in New York next September of the UN Millennium Declaration that set the MDGs.

Indeed, UN-HABITAT's Executive Director, Mrs. Anna Tibaijuka, who arrived in Durban on Wednesday to deliver a keynote address on urban poverty to the ministers, will also be reporting their views back to the Commission for Africa set up by Prime Minister Tony Blair to bring African concerns to the fore of the agenda of the Group of Eight industrialized nations.

"The African Union is on course, it your organization," said Ms. Gawanas. "It is what you make of the African Union that will respond to the plight of the poor, the marginalized and the vulnerable of this continent."

The draft document

Officials deliberated late into the night on Wednesday to hone the enhanced framework into a working document which Ms. Gawanas said ministers would be able to take home as something new and innovative for Africa.

The document will be available in French and English on Thursday. The following is a broad summary:

Overview

In Africa, rapid population growth has been accompanied by rapid urbanization. The pace of socio-economic development in urban centers has not been matched by parallel development of infrastructures and social service facilities. In some cities, the population living in slum areas reaches more than 60 per cent. Consequently the majority of the population in some of the major African cities lives in abject poverty, illiteracy, and in unlivable housing conditions.

The draft cited at least 10 of national and regional and continental conventions on urban poverty alleviation related to the theme of the Durban conference,

Urbanization challenges and opportunities

It said that in the next 30 years Africa's population would double from 888 million in 2005, to 1.77 billion. During the same period the urban population will increase from 353 million, which is 39.7 percent to 748 million inhabitants at the rate of 4 to 5 percent per annum. In the next 25 years, roughly 400 million people will be added to the urban population. As highlighted in the 1994 Cairo International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), the process of urbanization is intrinsic to economic and social development.

In 2001, about 61 percent of all African urban residents lived in slums, with 54 percent of these in sub-Saharan Africa and 7 percent in Northern Africa. Even more notable is the slum incidence in sub-Saharan Africa, where 71.9 percent of the urban population currently lives in informal settlements. In addition to the situation above, 57 percent requires access to improved sanitation and 43 percent to improved sources of water.

It is estimated that 71 percent of the population live in poverty with two out of five living in extreme poverty (less than a dollar a day).

It said that urban areas had become a refuge for people driven from their homes by conflict. Refugee camps had become permanent features in the towns of the Great Lakes Region, in Central Africa and several west African countries.

"In a rapidly urbanizing Africa, the promotion of sustainable urbanization, requires more than ever before, strategic, integrated planning, consensus building, gender mainstreaming, capacity building, international co-operation, south-south co-operation and conflict resolution systems.

"Notwithstanding the above, urbanization is a positive development process. However, without equitable access to land, adequate shelter and basic services, urban environments can be among the most life threatening," the draft said. "Political will, decentralization, good governance and the empowerment of national and local authorities as well as the adoption of inclusive processes of mobilizing local resources, judicious resource allocation and decision-making are fundamental to addressing the urbanization challenge in Africa."

It said the new framework aims to highlight measures for better urban development policies and strategies, so that the governed and those who govern will have a new urban vision for the future.

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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