

“These figures harshly draw our attention to the fact that the majority of city dwellers are widely doomed to live in poverty and also in poor environmental conditions,” Mrs. Tibaijuka said. “Fifty-four percent of the population of Africa is young. This is really worrisome when one considers the fact that Africa supersedes the rest of world in terms of HIV/AIDS infections, which are taking away the lives of many young people. And slums are the places of squalor where HIV/AIDS breeds rapidly. Slums are the places where hunger prevails, and where young people are drawn into anti-social behaviour, including, crime and terrorism, for lack of better alternatives.”

She said women’s rights and land were critical to addressing the issue of maximizing the benefits of urbanization. In Nairobi, a city of some 3 million people, she noted, over 70 percent of the residents occupy less than 10 percent of its residential land. Urban police had to clearly address land distribution, she said, adding that sprawling cities encroach on farming land so that there was an important urban-rural linkage to be addressed.

“To respond to these concerns, UN-HABITAT is setting up a global network of land tool developers. This network is intended to help us assist member States and other stakeholders to implement their land policies, especially to the benefit of the poor and women. Currently the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) is supporting the design of this global network,” she said.

Mrs. Tibaijuka said per capita incomes in Africa south of the Sahara was now back to where it stood in the early 1960s, that food production had slumped forcing food imports to rise on average by 10 per cent per annum. Africa had also been integrated into the world trade system on unfavourable terms, this creating phases of urbanization related in part to the shifting phases of Africa’s position in the world economy.

Mrs. Tibaijuka is one of the 17 members of the Commission for Africa (CFA) constituted by the British Prime Minister, Mr. Tony Blair, to bring African challenges directly to the Group of Eight Industrialized nations. She assured the ministers she would do this and said she would solicit their views and priorities so that the Durban message would be brought onto the G8 agenda.

South Africa’s Deputy President, Mr. Jacob Zuma, in hard-hitting brief remarks said: “The existence of shack inhabitants and slum settlements on the continent remain a constant reminder that we have not fully achieved our goal of restoring the right to human dignity to all our peoples.

“We cannot ignore the indignity suffered by families living in shacks with no ablution facilities and no sanitation, no water, electricity or any other basic services that we take for granted ourselves,” he said.

He said he hoped the ministers meeting in Durban on Thursday and Friday would reflect a common position for Africa on urbanization and housing as well as the Africa’s own agenda.

“The conference paves the political way for African countries to address this challenge and put issues of sustainable urbanization and development at the center of our business as African governments, Mr. Zuma said. “Given our commitment as African governments, within the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), to improve the quality of life of the African peoples, we have to act swiftly to address this question.”

Citing Africa’s wealth, he said there was reason for optimism too. Africa had some of the world’s fastest growing economies. These offered many opportunities, most notably in energy, mining, infrastructure, information technology and tourism. Africa thus had to harness these benefits and use them for development.

“This conference must also provide direction and awareness on for human settlement development on the continent, especially in line with meeting the Millennium Development Goals, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation Targets, and the strategic vision and mission of the AU, NEPAD and UN-HABITAT,” Mr. Zuma said.

South Africa elected Chair of the AMCHUD

In its first order of formal business, the ministers elected South Africa to chair the AMCHUD conference, which diplomats said they hoped would be able to convene again in two years’ time. The ministers were then presented two key documents, the *Activity Report by the African Population Commission* and *The Enhanced Framework of Implementation and Related Outputs*.

Before adopting the reports, several interventions from African ministers made it clear that the Durban deliberations be brought into the AU programme, as well as a series of upcoming UN and other international gatherings like the G8.

Uganda called for “a joining of hands” so that the **African Union** and **UN-HABITAT** would lead the way on urbanization and housing. Uganda also formally asked Mrs. Tibaijuka in her role as a CFA Commissioner, to include concerns of the Durban deliberations in her CFA report. Uganda also suggested that at future such meetings, ministers of planning and finance are also included, as Uganda had done on this occasion.

“Let us integrate all of them – the time has come to integrate all of our ministers. Can you imagine if we turned together with one message to the people trying to help us like the Commission for Africa constituted by Prime Minister Tony Blair of Britain? The AU had to be brought into the process so that the deliberations this week reach the AU Heads of State and Government,” the Ugandan delegate said.

Zambia agreed: “There is a need to adjust AU structures to meet urbanization and shelter challenges so that it can focus on these more closely. I hope it will come up with

clear modalities. We need to formalize this body (AMCHUD) within both the AU and UN-HABITAT.

The delegate from **Angola** said although it was a rich country, it needed to be wiser putting the outcomes of such meetings into practice, so that “we talk the same language as yourselves”.

South Africa cited three areas of note – the achievement Johannesburg Plan of Implementation Targets on the MDGs; that growth must include elements of debt relief and implementation of the 2003 Monterrey commitments on financing for development. “We generally accept that African cities struggle to perform the functions with which they have been charged.

“We believe this enhanced framework does set out very clearly the way of achieving the targets set out in the MDGs, and that the establishment of a coherent framework here will provide us a mapped out guideline to achieve sustainable human settlements we can truly call home. We need to encourage individual countries to work in an integrated manner within their own governments, and thus minimize the costs of convening meetings such as these. We need a single voice as governments, as regions and as a continent.”

Algeria congratulated UN-HABITAT for its “wonderful” coordination of the meeting, and South Africa for hosting it. “We must make judicious choices here and express ourselves in concrete terms so that low income households can derive maximum benefits,” the Algerian delegate said. “Algeria has taken every possible initiative setting up a process of consultation with the population to be able to change the system of precarious dwellings for the harmonious revitalization of our towns. The *Enhanced Framework of Implementation and Related Outputs* is an excellent way forward.”

Kenya concurred with South Africa on the Monterrey commitments, saying the developed countries had agreed in Mexico to 0.7 percent of GDP for this, but so far Norway remained the only country which had stuck to its word in Monterrey. Other donor nations like the United States were still lagging. Kenya invited delegates present to the next meeting of the Africities summit of mayors in Nairobi next year.

Senegal thanked South Africa, the AU and UN-HABITAT for taking the initiative to convene the AMCHUD meeting, and praised the urban initiatives of NEPAD.

“Unbridled urbanization is disastrous and is creating many problems for Africa. I have gone from one conference to another for the past 20 years, but we still need to create awareness, and work harder with local authorities to advocate more strongly for the urban agenda and the eradication of slums,” the Senegalese delegate said.

In a separate intervention, **Uganda’s** minister of finance and planning said slum creation was always ahead of government-planned initiatives. “The government chases the slums. What is it in this paper you are advising governments to do to ensure that they can stay ahead? Why is it that even where UN-HABITAT or someone helps upgrade a slum, we find new people there? What about advocacy, or monitoring being mentioned here? I would want to see something about research ensuring we have affordable materials that are environmentally friendly for housing construction. I am surprised I have not seen anyone from the World Bank here”.

The Ugandan finance minister referred to systems such as Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers. (PRSPs) which had “never” constituted a comprehensive, integrated development plan. “The world Bank and other institutions have “expressly discouraged African countries from integrated planning, from looking at developing strategies beyond the medium term expenditure framework. We need to look beyond the PRSPs, and strive for a more comprehensive development mechanism,” he said.

Rwanda said the AMCHUD forum should be institutionalized. She added, “We cannot fragment *land* in terms of policies” in this document. Agricultural practices have an impact on rural land, just as towns have an impact on nearby land.

Lesotho said the Durban conference had to come up with a strong message, a way forward, and so far conference papers carried no concrete recommendations. “I ask Mrs. Tibaijuka and Advocate Gawanas what they are going to report to African Heads of State,” she said.

Eritrea recommended the conference focus on the integration of all policies in the struggle for human security and poverty alleviation. A shift in macro-economic policy was required to reduce rural-urban migration, and promote more affordable materials and technology while giving more support to rural communities.

Although it would vote to adopt the conference report, **Chad** cited a need to reduce legal gaps. “We are lagging in laws on land and shelter. We could have a body of laws and regulations for African countries so that we can all draw on the experience of one another.”

After several hours, the deliberations adjourned in the early evening.

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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