

Conference News

WORLD URBAN FORUM

The Second World Urban Forum in Barcelona, Spain 13 - 17 September 2004

Thursday 16 September

Sustainable Urbanisation Partnerships for Water

By Todd Hooper

His Worship, Mr. Bola Ahmed Tinubu, Mayor of Lagos, West Africa's biggest city, opened Wednesday's dialogue on sustainable urbanization at the World Urban Forum with a call on national governments to commit more resources to cities so that they can cope with the challenges of globalisation.

Sustainable Urbanization is a dynamic process that includes environmental, socio-economic and political-institutional dimensions. The dialogue examined the challenges confronting local authorities and other partners in achieving social and environmental sustainability through better urban governance.

His Worship, Mr. Tariq Kabbage, Mayor of Agadir, Morocco, cited a direct and important link between the cities and their respective rural areas that must be addressed in any sustainability plan.

On making urban governance more participatory, Mr. Kees van der Ree, Acting Director of Small Enterprise Programme (SEED), said it was disappointing that local citizens were often absent from the decision and planning process.

The Peruvian architect, Ms. Liliana Miranda Sara, suggested that sustainable urban development be environmentally based because planning required the integration of environmental issues.

Mr. Rolf Lindel Director at the Swedish Ministry of Environment referred to a report published by the Ministry report entitled, *From Vision to Action*. Mr. Lindel also promoted a 'bottom-up' approach to urban sustainability, which includes all stakeholders. Within this approach is a dependence on the cooperation of multi-sector and cross-sector partnerships. The goals of these partnerships include good and affordable housing, safe and clean surroundings, and access to jobs, education and public services.

Ms. N. Inthan Azoor, the National Training Coordinator in Sri Lanka for the Sustainable Cities Programme agreed that such partnerships are very important, but difficult to maintain, and therefore should be the focus of urban governments.

Mr. Bakary Kante, Director of the UN Environment Programme Division of Policy Development and Law said environmental issues could not be overlooked in any urban sustainability plan.

"More than 1.2 billion people die each year from unsafe drinking water, 2.4 million of whom are children," Mr. Kante said. He added that cities need to become more aware of the consequences of their impact on their surrounding areas emphasizing the direct link between rural and urban areas.

Mr. Luc-Marie Constant Gnacadja, Minister of Environment, Housing and Urbanism of Benin, closed the session by underscoring the importance of ensuring security before talking about sustainability. He further stressed that this week's forum helps to open an "area where we can bring together social, economic and environmental concerns." This is the forum by which we can effectively plan and develop ideas for urban sustainability.

By Bill Hargett

Wednesday's Thematic Dialogue on Urban Services dealt with the myriad challenges facing water access among the world's poor.

"We are living in a world whose population has just passed 6 billion" said UN-HABITAT Executive Director, Mrs. Anna Tibaijuka. "Aid must be doubled if the Millennium Development Goals are to be reached."

Ms. Buyelwa Sonjica, South African Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry, outlined the needs of the poor with respect to privatization maintaining that transparency and public education were essential tools in educating the public on the outsourcing of services.

She said companies should be made to give back to communities. Countries, nevertheless had take a realistic view and allow the private sector to still make a profit.

Though commercial sector involvement was almost universally accepted as an inevitable tool for urban development, several presenters focused instead on the necessity of research and hard data.

Ms. Penelope Urquhart, Project Coordinator: Preparation Phase, Global Review of Private Sector Participation said that while the panelists seemed to agree on the need for private participation, "the jury is still out" in the world's eyes on water procurement.

There remains a large gap between views of private involvement. Positive responses she cited towards commercialization included increased accessibility, cheaper prices, and overall positive impacts on health. Negative impressions took an opposing tack such as, limited accessibility, increased prices, and lower quality.

Among the panelists was a unanimous concern over corruption and its concurrent effect on privatization. Speakers, such as Mr. Loic Fauchon, President Director General, Eau de Marseille and Vice President of the World Water Council, and Ms. Sonjica encouraged better governance and response to the issues of corruption.

Financing was perceived as a critical issue in water development and access. "For a long time it was a free gift. Now we know it is not free" said Mrs. Maria Mutagamba, Minister State of Water, Uganda. She emphasized an unquestionable need for public/private partnerships, reiterating an overall financial concern. "The limiting factor is financing" she stated.

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Thursdays Programme

Please note that the schedule of networking events (HSP/WUF/2/INF/1) in the information kit is incorrect. Please refer to this Journal and the blue programme in the information kit.

Morning Dialogues 10.00 – 13.00

Urban Governance and Urban Disasters - Partners' Dialogue RM 117.

Mr. Olivio Dutra, former Mayor, present Minister of Cities, Brazil

Mr. Ilmaar Reepalu, Mayor of Malmo, Sweden

Urban Disasters and Reconstruction - Thematic Dialogue RM 111 +112

Afternoon Dialogues 15.00 – 18.00

Urban Governance - Partners' Dialogue RM 117

Professor Akin Mabogunje, Chairman, Presidential Technical Committee on Housing and Urban Development, The Presidency, Abuja, Nigeria

Urban Renaissance - Thematic Dialogue RM 111 +112

Morning Networking Events 09.00-13.00

Medcities Seminar on Air Quality and Mobility/Campaigning to Reform International Institutions RM 113

Morning Networking Events 10.00-13.00

Challenges Facing South African Local Government and Policy Responses Agenda 21 for Culture RM 115

Land and Urban Poverty RM 131

Linkages between UN-HABITAT and CSD RM 124

Local Economic Development RM 125

Managing Information for Local Environments (MILES) RM 132

Micro-Credit and Financing of Urban Agriculture RM 116

Public-Private Partnership in Urban Revitalization RM 123

The Community-Led Urban Finance Facility RM 129

The Role of Cities in an Information Age RM 114

Winter Cities RM 130

Youth and Urban Space RM 120-121

Afternoon Networking Events 15.00-18.00

Citizen Participation and Urban Management RM 113

ComHabitat: City-community partnerships in the Commonwealth RM 124

First Global Hip-Hop Summit RM 120-121

Knowledge for Urban Development RM 130

Localizing the Habitat Agenda for Urban Poverty Reduction RM 123

Planning for Long-Term Urban Sustainability RM 132

Rebuilding Iraq RM 114

The Institute@WUF RM 131

The Zero Evictions Campaign RM 115

Tourism, Sustainable Urbanization and Poverty Alleviation RM 116

Values-Based Water Education RM 129

Youth Caucus Meetings..

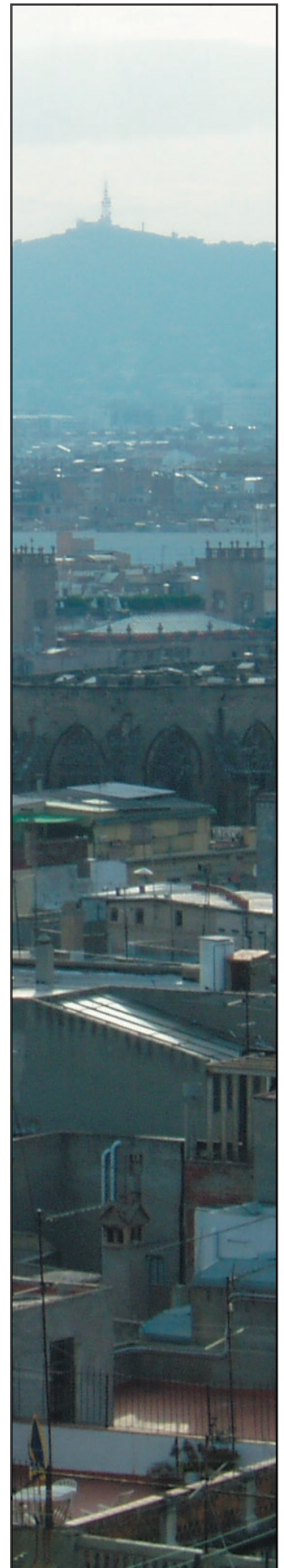
Youth caucus meetings will be held every day from 9- 9.30 in Meeting room 120-121

Women's Caucus meetings

Please note that the Women's Caucus has been moved to room 120-121, from 13.45 to 14.45, for the entire week. Men are most welcome !

Please do not forget to complete your Evaluation Questionnaire for the Second World Urban Forum and to drop it in the boxes next to the escalators on the 1st floor

Carlinhos Brown Concert, Marina Stage 22.00



Quote of the Day



"It has been fantastic to meet people, make new contacts and network. I have attended some of the youth networking events and as a result we came up with a decision to always have youth representatives at conferences like this in the future. I also enjoyed the Norwegian Hip Hop performance and the Kenyan dinner last night."

Thomas Olufson
International Association
for Human Values

Global Youth Congress Programme 16-17 September 2004

Thursday 16
10.00 – 13.00 YOUTH AND URBAN SPACE
15.00 – 18.00 INTERNATIONAL GLOBAL
HIP HOP SUMMIT

Friday 18
9.00 – 10.30 GROWING UP IN CITIES
CLOSING CEREMONY

All events take place in Rooms 120/121
unless indicated otherwise.

Today at Speakers' Corner

11.45
**Empowerment and Stress Management
through the Breath - A practical Experi-
ence**
13.30
The Three R's Reduce, Recycle, Reuse
17.00
**The Cities of the Future: Cities in Tran-
sition**
19.00
Resolving Urban Conflicts
20.10
Messengers of Truth

UN-HABITAT and Hip-Hop join forces to empower urban youth

By Nicholas You

Among those least-empowered to face the challenges of the Millennium Development Goals are urban youth. Of the estimated 1 billion slum dwellers worldwide, more than 50 percent are under the age of 25. Without access to adequate education or training, they have no prospects for meaningful employment. They have no say in policies and decisions that affect their livelihoods. They are victims of a vicious cycle of poverty and social exclusion and are particularly vulnerable to crime, drug abuse, prostitution and HIV/AIDS.

In recent years, disenfranchised urban youth have, however, given birth to a powerful voice. This voice is Hip-Hop. Originating from the inner cities of North America, Hip-Hop is becoming the most popular form of expression of urban youth worldwide. A recent study undertaken by UN-HABITAT reveals that Hip-Hop is more than a genre of music or dance. It is a social movement. It is both a product of, and a reaction to globalisation. It represents a strong political statement. The most popular artists and groups are often those who rap about critical social, economic and environmental issues and who play an active role in their respective communities.

Based on these findings, UN-HABITAT decided to take advantage of the first Universal Forum on Cultures to be held in Barcelona 2004 to organise a Global Hip-Hop Summit and Concert. These events are designed to bring socially committed Hip-Hop artists from Africa, Latin America, Europe and the Americas to raise awareness of the Millennium Development Goals.

A special event was held on Tuesday, 14 September at the World Urban Forum. Twelve Hip-Hop artists/groups, Carlinhos Brown from Brazil, Bebo Valdes from Cuba and F. Trueba, the Spanish film director, were appointed UN-Habitat Messengers of Truth by Mrs. Anna Tibaijuka, the Executive Director of the United Nations Programme for Human Settlements. Each of these artists and the film director have agreed to help the United Nations to raise awareness of the MDGs, and to devote their time, their art and energy in support of youth development initiatives in slums and inner cities.

Those appointed as Messengers of Truth include La Haza and Geronación (Spain),

Gidi Gidi Maji Maji Kenya, Godessa (South Africa), Nukke Posse (Greenland), MV Bill of the "City of God" (Brazil), and La Etnia (Colombia). K'naan (Somalia/Canada), Equicez and MADCON (Norway), Kelly Love Jones (USA). They were selected because of their contribution to raising awareness of the Millennium Development Goals of reducing abject poverty and HIV/AIDS, promoting education, health care, gender equality, social inclusion, good governance and improving living conditions in slums and inner cities.

Two independent music labels, Urban United, and the Urban Sanctuary Group will also present their commitment to the Messengers of Truth Project by donating a portion of their profits to realising the MDGs through youth development initiatives.

The concert on Wednesday at the Universal Forum on Cultures on the Barcelona waterfront was an occasion for Hip-Hop artists to "tell their stories" at a party with a purpose.

On Thursday 16 September, UN-HABITAT, a coalition of leading Hip-Hop artists and recording industry executives committed to combating poverty, social exclusion and injustice will be at hand for the first Global Hip-Hop Summit. It is scheduled today at 3:00 p.m. in room 120-121. This summit is expected to produce a "Declaration of Principles and Call for Action" to empower youth living slums and inner cities worldwide.

Nicholas You is Chief of UN-HABITAT's Best Practices and Local Leadersip Programme

Films on show

Film booth is located in the exhibition area

- The Millenium Development Goals: Dream or Reality
- Land Rites
- City Life
- Paradise Precarious
- Waste Not Want Not
- Unheard Voices of Women
- Urban Agriculture
- Rosario Cultivates
- Appropriate Technology and fair
- Working Conditions
- Local Economic development
- Playing to Local Strengths
- Las Dos Semanas en las qe se recuperó el Centro Histórico de Quito
- Recuperacion del Centro Histórico Quite 2003
- Reclaiming Public Spaces!

BACKGROUND TO TODAY'S DIALOGUES

Building a new local administration in a war-ravaged society: The Somali experience

By Roman Rollnick

WHEN Justus Mika arrived in the Somali port city of Berbera late in 2000 on assignment for UN-HABITAT, he could not believe the situation that confronted him after years of conflict and unrest in the northeast African nation.

As people streamed back to their home town, he found a municipality without records, rules, street maps, organisational charts, a formal taxation system, and also without any mechanical or electronic aids. The municipality did not even have figures on the number of its own employees. Yet people were being paid, in cash – and money was being collected, in cash.

Mr. Mika, the City Treasurer of Zimbabwe's third largest city, Gweru, was awed. He had been briefed by UN-HABITAT's Regional Office for Africa and Arab States (ROAAS) to help set up a functioning municipality in the northern Somali port of Berbera on the Gulf of Aden.

"The interventions in Somaliland are dealing with the harsh realities of devastation, trauma and dereliction of a post-war situation," he said. "The long civil conflict is evident in damaged, bullet-ridden buildings and pot-holed highways. Government institutions were destroyed, including vital land ownership records culminating in institutional loss of memory, systems and regulations."

Skilled people had long since emigrated. Normal life had been disrupted, leaving abject poverty. As peace slowly returned and people came home, returnees grabbed property, including government and local authority buildings, as well as land.

Today, this northern sector of Somalia which is known as Somaliland, has one of the greatest urban population growth rates in the world estimated at 7 percent per annum – a figure he says can be used as the rate of poverty growth in its cities because it represents mainly people moving into urban slums. Its problems are compounded by the fact that because the international community does not recognise Somaliland's claim to independence from Somalia, central and local authorities cannot enter into formal trade agreements with other nations or seek help from the international lending agencies.

The region has a population of some 3.5 million who depend mainly on livestock exports to neighbouring Gulf states. Eighty-seven per cent of the population, according to a UN-HABITAT survey, live on less than one US dollar a day. Life expectancy is put at 47 years, while the adult literacy rate is 17 per cent.

Naturally, people felt insecure. "Families slept with two or three AK-47 automatic rifles under their beds, and we found ourselves starting with a series of consultations with religious leaders, clan elders, retail and business leaders." The idea was to devise an intervention for UN-HABITAT interlinked with strategic planning.

And the UN-HABITAT team discovered was a web of administrative chaos. "Assets of the municipality were unknown and the local authorities had no balance sheets," he said. "There were no land records, cadastral maps, or street plans. The number of properties was unknown."

With people returning and claiming land and buildings on an ad-hoc basis, the intervention found itself dealing with

reconstruction in what Mr. Mika called a "potentially explosive environment."

"Debtors were never recorded, and debt collection procedures non-existent," he said. "Furthermore, the absence of a bank, meant keeping large amounts of cash," he said. Neither were there any expenditure and procurement controls, while central government audits were not comprehensive. In the past four years since the UN-HABITAT intervention started, the situation has been transformed from one of no governance, to a system of proper governance which Mr. Mika has helped oversee during regular stays in Berbera.

From key functions, an organisational chart was produced and adopted, as were systems for financial regulations, job effectiveness descriptions, and assets registers. Accounts were classified and coded in preparation for eventual computerisation. System controls were put in place to enhance the audit trail.

Mr. Mika has also helped prepare training manuals. With the help of an interpreter, he conducted courses on Participatory Budgeting, Transparent Accounting, Auditing and Control, Management Information Systems and the use of computers. So keen were his students, that classes often went on late into the night. To make the programme sustainable, a Training of Trainers Manual was developed and local trainers were educated.

"Now they are doing the training. The double entry accounting system and new participatory budgets were implemented at the end of 2002," he said.

In two years, the UN-HABITAT interventions saw the city's revenues soar by 57 percent, to the equivalent of US\$ 1 million in the 2003 budget. Most of these resources were spent on security mediations, grants to the poor and manpower costs with very little going to provision of other services like sanitation.

Today, this body of work represents the first stage of a successful, but painstakingly difficult example of a long-term intervention by UN-HABITAT in a place recovering from war and conflict that once made headlines around the world. There are similar stories in Kosovo, Afghanistan, or Rwanda, to name a few of the places where the agency works to transform the disasters of yesterday into sustainable success for the future. Many of these techniques will be discussed at today's dialogue in Barcelona on urban disasters at 10am in room 111-112.

Roman Rollnick is Editor of UN-HABITAT's quarterly magazine, Habitat Debate

BACKGROUND TO TODAY'S DIALOGUES

Urban renaissance

By Anantha Krishnan

As we enter the 21st century – the urban century – all the warning signs are there: around the world, our towns and cities are witnessing growing corruption and poverty despite the many positive impacts of globalisation. Failure to address these problems will not only undermine our future, but it will lead to further social conflict.

This is why at UN-HABITAT as we study these trends, it clear that we need an *urban renaissance*, a new clarion call for decentralisation so that local authorities can play a stronger role to meet the socio-economic and cultural aspirations of their communities. And they can only do that with the backing of their governments, both financial and political.

As delegates meet to discuss this in Barcelona today, they will be reminded that for the first time in history, the majority of the world's population will soon be living in what are defined as urban areas. Today, 40 per cent of the population of developing countries already lives in cities. By 2020, this is expected to rise to over 50 per cent.

Africa and Asia, where major demographic change is expected, will pose the biggest challenge. By 2015, 153 of the world's 358 cities with more than one million inhabitants will be in Asia. Of the 27 mega-cities with more than 10 million inhabitants, 15 will also be in Asia. We are talking here of huge metropolitan zones each home to 20 to 30 million inhabitants – larger than any in history.

The globalisation that started in the 20th century with modern road, rail and air travel, with trade standards and trends, with television and fast, cheap computer and telephone communications means that while one can drive a German car in Japan, watch French television live in a remote African village, eat Vietnamese food in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire, or use international covenants to assert one's rights, there are many negative aspects as well. To the urban poor these are mostly unattainable, unthinkable wonders of modern life. Negative globalisation sees the same types of weapons used in different wars on many continents, street protests or terrorist attacks in one city half a world away from the crisis in another, not to forget the syndicates that lord it over vast regions of the world, perverting the course of justice and entrenching of corruption.

To redress this, we are striving to bring some of the unattainable benefits of globalisation to the urban poor through a system we call *glocalisation*. It is a way of encouraging global powers better to respect local powers and cultural diversity, to help make civil order both more global and locally focussed at the same time, to bring the enshrined rights and other benefits wealthier people take for granted to the poorest of the poor as our key partners through good, decentralised local governance.

To make glocalisation workable, a covenant, or a set of internationally accepted guidelines incorporating the principles of subsidiarity, public participation and financial autonomy is necessary. The panelists include mayors from all the regions and experts on decentralisation. The dialogue

is being organised in close cooperation with the new international association of local authorities, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG).

After all, why should a slum dweller pay more for a litre of water than a millionaire living nearby in a high-rise penthouse apartment? If we can solve just that issue, we will be making a great stride towards a new trend-setting urban renaissance.

Anantha Krishnan is the Chief of UN-HABITAT's Partners and Youth Section.

Housing for the poor and disaster reconstruction - a new agreement between Habitat for Humanity International and UN-HABITAT

Habitat for Humanity International and UN-HABITAT on Wednesday signed a cooperation agreement to strengthen the fight against urban poverty and improve disaster relief.

The two organisations said the idea was to pool their experience and expertise in providing shelter, services to people living in poverty stricken urban areas and countries ravaged by conflict or natural disasters.

"This collaboration is an important step towards the meeting the Millennium Development Goals of halving the number of poor by 2015 and in improving living conditions among slum dwellers," said UN-HABITAT's Executive Director, Mrs. Anna Tibaijuka. "From policy-level decisions to the implementation of strategies, the combined experience of UN-HABITAT and Habitat for Humanity International will be a powerful force to meet the challenges of slum upgrading and providing decent housing in cities all over the world."

Tom Jones, Vice-President of Habitat for Humanity International who signed the agreement with Mrs. Tibaijuka on Wednesday said: "This agreement not only brings together organisations that have the capacity to help improve living conditions among the poor, but it will have a huge impact on international housing policy. Working together, we aim to place housing for low income people at the centre of the international development agenda by addressing issues that perpetuate the cycle of poverty housing."

NETWORKING REPORTS

TUESDAY

Gendering governance through local to local dialogues
Ms. Nasreen M. Siddeek Berwari, the Iraqi Minister for Municipalities and public Works, stressed the need for gender mainstreaming in municipal planning and development. She also highlighted the importance of involving women's grassroots organisations and NGOs as partners at all levels of decision-making and in the delivery of basic services. The event also saw the launch of a new *Toolkit on local-to-local Dialogue* produced by the Huairou Commission and UN-HABITAT.

WEDNESDAY

Civil or Civic Defence – the role of national and local governments in peace building

Delegates from three countries recently ravaged conflict agreed unanimously on Wednesday that one good direction to turn to for help and development is to the local people.

In a meeting discussing the role of local authorities in development and peace building, local authority officials from the battle-scarred areas of the Philippines, Iraq, and Palestine all stressed recovery and development depended heavily on decentralization.

"For us the democratization process is decentralization," said Ms. Nesreen M. Siddeek Berwari, the Iraqi Minister for Municipalities and Public Works. "It is a process of getting closer to the people."

She said the previous administration was highly centralized and discouraged local initiatives, but "We are giving more power to representative bodies, bodies that are elected, not appointed. She said her 2005 budget, already written, depended completely on local council input.

His Worship, Abubakar P. Paglas, Mayor of Datu Paglas in war-scarred Maguindanao Province in the Philippines, said the area's recovery depended on high participation of the local people in the process; and Mr. Hussein Al Araj, Deputy Minister of Local Government in Palestine, said the first order of business when the Palestine Authority received some control was to "dilute authority" through decentralization, including decentralized fiscal control.

Access to Basic Services for All

This session provided an open forum to discuss the newly revised paper *Access to Basic Services for All* prepared by UN-HABITAT and UNITAR to ensure basic services, such as clean water, sanitation, shelter and energy, for all. Mr. Marcel A. Boisard, Executive Director of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), summarized the paper and a new draft declaration.

Ms. Lindiwe Sisulu, South African Minister of Housing, emphatically stated that the South African government endorsed the idea of a new declaration ensuring access to basic services for all. She urged other governments to endorse it too. Representatives from various governments, NGOs and private organizations from around the world, including Brazil, France, the Philippines, Tanzania, Colombia and Madagascar, all stood to express their support.

Ms. Elisabeth Gateau, Secretary-General of United Cities & Local Governments, facilitated the discussion of elements that ought to be included in the Declaration. A central theme was that it was critical to involve the local governments and provide them

necessary tools to bring basic services to all.

Ms. Sisulu concluded the event by asking the attendees to ensure that the poorest of the poor are recognized and to review and consider the document. She stated, "We have the opportunity to do this right. Please, I urge you, to take this forward to your governments."

Agenda 21 for Culture

Delegates in Barcelona on Wednesday adopted the Agenda 21 for Culture programme to ensure that cultural development comes hand in hand with social inclusion.

His Worship, Joan Clos, Mayor of Barcelona, said that the new programme was important for the protection of local languages, and ensures the social and cultural inclusion of all groups.

For example, schooling in Catalunya, Spain, he said is conducted in Catalan. Agenda 21 is pertinent in ensuring that every individual has the right to be educated in his or her language.

Rental Housing: An essential Option for the Urban Poor

Few countries in the world have a policy for rental housing and the networking event addressed why this had fallen off the housing agenda. The problem was particularly serious in many less developed countries where a majority of urban dwellers often rented poor accommodation and yet the government had failed to address the issue adequately. The participants, representing a number of stakeholders including NGOs and governments, agreed that rental housing had first to be placed on the housing agenda before any progress could be made.

Many participants wanted answers to difficult questions: how to handle poor quality accommodation, how to deal with rapacious landlords, how to address non-payment problems in public housing, whether governments should give rental housing subsidies, and so on? Unfortunately, housing markets are highly variable and there are no universal answers. What is appropriate in Eastern Europe is unlikely to work very well in many parts of Africa

Fighting Forced Evictions

In this mist of over 200 participants from a wide cross section representing civil society, community organizations and other stakeholders, the Minister of Housing, Kenya Honorable Amos Kimunya reiterated the Kenya government's commitment to improve the lives of the Kenyan people. The audience welcomed the news from the Minister that moratorium has been placed on evictions in Nairobi, and that the government is working with the community to find alternative solutions. The same sentiments were expressed when the Mayor of Accra, Honorable Blankson committed to working with the community in Old Fadama in Accra Ghana in finding alternative solutions.

The Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing, Miloon Kothari highlighted the fact that there isn't enough recognition of the human right to housing by governments and local authorities, and that women's right to housing and inheritance were not being addressed due to the culture of silence

"Why are people planning on our behalf without our involvement?" says a slum dweller from Kenya underscoring the need to consult with community in finding solutions to the issue of slums. Slum dwellers are saying, "governments need to know that they do not have to solve all the problems". The community can and is willing to work with governments to address the issue of forced evictions.

PARALLER EVENTS

Strengthening local authorities

By Alain Kanyinda

The Advisory Group of Experts on Decentralization (AGRED) held a special meeting on Tuesday in Barcelona to follow up its inaugural meeting held in Gatineau, Canada, in March 2004.

The meeting was chaired by His Worship, Mayor Yves Ducharme of Gatineau, who hosted the inaugural meeting of AGRED on behalf of the United Nations Advisory Committee of Local Authorities, UNACLA, of which AGRED is a sub-committee.

UN-HABITAT's efforts in recent years have focused on decentralization as a mean of strengthening the role and status of local authorities in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda and the Millennium Development Goals.

In his welcoming address, Mayor Ducharme expressed his gratitude to AGRED's experts for attending the meeting. He informed participants that the proposed guidelines on decentralization tabled by the secretariat for discussion were reviewed by the Canadian delegation and were considered "practical, clear, open and easy to use by local authorities", except for some minor semantic amendments. The guidelines, he said, provided local authorities with a high standard of principles on decentralization. However, the question was still to know to what extent they could be used.

Mayor Ducharme believed that it was important also to capture the concept of sustainability in the final version of the guidelines.

Mr. Daniel Biau on behalf of the Executive Director of UN-HABITAT, welcomed the participants to the meeting and took the opportunity to clarify the AGRED mandate. The main objective of this second meeting, coinciding with the World Urban Forum in Barcelona, was to finalise the proposed guidelines and agree on the format of the compendium of best practices being drafted by the AGRED experts.

Participants referred to the 28 cases studies commissioned by UN-HABITAT

during the first session of the World Urban Forum in 2002. It was stressed that the review exercise was meant to harmonise the formats of both the guidelines and the compendium of best practices, which should be finalised before the end of this year for consideration by the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) of UN-HABITAT prior to the next session of the Governing Council.

Mr. Biau said country members of the CPR should be convinced that the guidelines are not just conceptual models, but they can be implemented. In fact some member countries had already started implementing them.

At the 10th meeting of UNACLA held on 12 September 2004, also in Barcelona, delegates had expressed their satisfaction on the proposed guidelines with the request to the secretariat to try and harmonise their language and avoid ambiguous vague concepts such "local autonomy", "high level of responsibility", "low level of responsibility" etc.

AGRED's experts reviewed the entire guidelines and submitted additional comments, which will be used by the secretariat to update the text to update the wording on the basis of the agreed language.

As for the proposed format for the compendium of best practices on

decentralization, it was suggested that each expert present a brief case study to the secretariat based on their national experience.

In the general context of WUF II dialogues, UN-HABITAT is organising a special dialogue entitled: "Urban Renaissance", which directly refer to the current work of AGRED members.

One of most active AGRED's experts, Dr. Teodor Antic has been invited to participate as a panelist in this dialogue session. He will be brief the participants on the outcome of the AGRED's deliberations this week.

Alain Kanyinda is Executive Officer of UN-HABITAT's Local Authorities Coordinating Group.



Mayor Joan Clos of barcelona addressing delegates. ©Alain Kanyinda

Information for Delegates

Where to find documents

In your information pack, you will find a book each on Dialogues and Networking Events, a folder with information on organizational aspects, special events, the exhibition and other general conference matters, and brochures on Barcelona and the Universal Forum of Cultures.

You will also find:

- additional papers on particular dialogues and networking events will be placed on tables inside the meeting rooms
- a daily copy of this journal, Conference News, on the first floor of the Convention Centre, at the entrance of the networking event rooms. The paper will highlight the key events of each day and report on the previous day's proceedings
- information for specific delegations, e.g., invitations to closed meetings or receptions, in the pigeon holes on the ground floor of the Convention Centre opposite the Information Desk and Exhibition Room.

Distribute your documents

If you have documents to distribute for a particular networking event, please contact the staff at the information desk on the first floor or contact Ramadhan Indiya at the mobile number 627 118 861. You will need to provide enough copies for participants of your meeting at least 30 minutes before the meeting starts. Only meeting-specific documents are allowed in the meeting rooms.

Exhibition and Publications

Visit the Exhibition Room on the ground floor of the Convention Centre where many participants are showing their work. Some of the stalls, including the UN-HABITAT stand also have publications on a wide range of human settlement issues. The huge exhibition area also houses a business centre, café, and cinema in addition to the many exhibition stands.

Business Centre/ Informal Meeting Area

A business center with five Internet enabled computers and a printer is located in the Exhibition Room on the ground floor of the Convention Centre. The business center also offers an informal meeting area. Another ten Internet computers can be found in the main lobby of the Convention Centre.

Café

Also located in the Exhibition Room is a refreshments area with hot and cold drinks for sale.

Facilities for Panelists

Panelists for the Dialogue and Networking Event have access to facilities in the Speakers' Room 118 to prepare for their meeting. Facilities include computers, a printer and a photocopier. If you plan to show a film or Powerpoint presentation at your meeting, please give your tape VHS (PAL format), DVD (Region 2 format), CD or diskette to the Forum personnel in the Speaker's room as far in advance as possible and let them know the date, time and room of the presentations.

Show your film

A small cinema has been set up in the Exhibition Room to show films from our partners. If you have an interesting short film (20 minutes or less), VHS (any format) or DVD, please contact Irene Juma at the UN-HABITAT exhibition stand or call mobile number 699 895 033. The daily Conference News will show the film programme for each day.

Organise a press conference

If you have a newsworthy event, please contact the Head of our Press and Media Relations, Sharad Shankardass, who coordinates all the press conferences. His mobile number is 660 524 702 or email him at Sharad.Shankardass@unhabitat.org.

Organise a reception

Some delegations have requested facilities for holding private meetings or receptions. The company TILES A can assist with this. Please contact TILES A at telephone number 934 537 389. If you need help in distributing invitations to particular delegations, contact the staff at the pigeon holes on the ground floor of the Convention Centre or call Ramadhan Indiya on mobile number 627 118 861.

Gift Centre

Visit the UN-HABITAT stand in the Exhibition Room where a few promotional items are available for those who want a memento of their time in Barcelona at the World Urban Forum!

First Aid

A First Aid center is available on the Forum site. Please speak to the staff at the information booth just outside the Convention Center.

Map of the Forum building

