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**EXTRACT OF THE DRAFT REPORT OF THE  
SECOND SESSION OF  
THE WORLD URBAN FORUM**

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# **REPORT ON URBAN POOR - IMPROVING THE LIVES OF SLUM-DWELLERS**

Tuesday, 14 September 2004, p.m.

## Panelists:

### **Morning session:**

1. Professor Jeffrey Sachs, Special Advisor to the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the Millennium Development Goals (Opening remarks)
2. Mr. Mark Hildebrand, Programme Manager, Cities Alliance (Chair)
3. Mr. Robert Johnston, United Nations Statistical Division
4. Ms. Christine Kessides, Senior Urban Advisor, The World Bank
5. Mr. Jesus Tamayo, Secretary-General for Urban Development and Ordinance, Ministry for Social Development
6. Mayor Mr. Mann Chibli, Aleppo, Syria
7. Nefise Bazoglu, Chief, Monitoring Systems Branch, UN-HABITAT

### **Afternoon session:**

1. Pietro Garau, Coordinator of the United Nations Millennium Project Task Force on Improving the lives of Slum Dwellers (Chair)
2. Jockin Arputham, Slum Dwellers International and National Federation of Slum Dwellers of India
3. H.E. Lindiwe Sisulu, Minister of Housing, South Africa
4. Marisol Dalmazzo, Coordinator Habitat International Coalition
5. Raquel Rolnik, Ministry of Cities Brazil
6. Alfredo Stein, Sweden Ministry for International Development
7. Dr. Nie Meisheng, President of the China Housing Industry Association

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## 1. ISSUES

The dialogue was organized as a panel discussion around keynote presentations and open discussions with questions and answers. It provided opportunities for all stakeholders to discuss the target on slums, through its policy, operational, and monitoring dimensions.

The main objective of the event was to provide an opportunity for stakeholders to engage for the first time at this level since the Millennium Declaration in an open dialogue on this target and assess progress made, shortcomings, and explore further perspectives. The afternoon session attempted to address the question “Improving the lives of slum dwellers: Are we on the right track?” The session discussed among others the challenges of the Millennium Development Goals at global, regional and local levels, as perceived by different actors; and the assessment of the ongoing policies and programmes.

## 2. DEBATE

### **Morning session:**

In the opening remarks, Professor Jeffrey Sachs highlighted the urgent need to identify practical, innovative solutions to stemming the growth of slums that worked *at scale*.

While there are several examples of pilot projects worldwide demonstrating the impact of local policies and programmes on reducing urban poverty, the challenge facing the development community was to find solutions that worked at nation- and citywide scales.

It was noted that several countries have almost achieved the Cities without Slums goal based on such scaled-up approaches, while other countries are making good progress following the launch of major interventions. In Mexico, the Ministry for Social Development is implementing a major initiative, “Programa Habitat”, targeting deprived areas in 364 cities and towns across the country. A good example of scaling-up at citywide level is the City of Aleppo in Syria where the city government is developing a citywide upgrading programme targeting one million residents.

Indicators play an important role in the design and monitoring of these poverty reduction strategies. In both Mexico and Aleppo, Local Urban Observatories have been set up, helping cities to target resources and monitor progress of their policies. In Thailand, data were used to identify the urban poor who faced tenure problems – this information was collected by the slum dwellers themselves.

One speaker highlighted the need to go beyond the Cities without Slums goal and apply all the MDG targets in cities. UN-HABITAT and the World Bank described their respective strategies for monitoring MDG Target 11 and progress to date. The World Bank is planning to compile statistics from national censuses and incorporate them in the next round of World Development Indicators. The Bank is also strengthening city level monitoring through a new research project aimed at gathering key data in 120 cities worldwide. UN-HABITAT’s latest results demonstrate how countries have made progress against Target 11 over the last decade. It was evident that those countries committed to scaled-up, pro-poor policies had made good progress in achieving Target 11 and improving the lives of slum dwellers, e.g. Mexico, Brazil, Thailand.

### **Afternoon session:**

In his opening statement, the President of Slum Dwellers International, stressed that governments cannot deliver on Target 11 and that the process has to be driven by the people. In the course of the discussion some participants expressed about the most appropriate wording for the insertion in the Millennium Development Goals on slum dwellers is the need to plan for the future of cities with the view to preventing slum formation. It was clarified that the language to be used in the final recommendation of the Task Force 8 would allude, rather than representing informal settlements, to the identification of alternative approaches to slum formation. In this connection, the requirement for affordable and appropriately located land for new settlements was stressed.

Statements from panelist showed the importance of appropriate government policies to implement slum upgrading and housing programmes suited to the global social economic circumstances of the urban poor. Emphasis was placed on in-situ upgrading while limiting relocation of slum dwellers in exceptional circumstances linked primarily to hazardous locations.

Participants stressed the importance of gender equity. It was pointed out that even in cities where enabling legislation for gender equity existed, social and cultural circumstances prevented them from full and equal and in particular access to land, housing and property. Women are systematically suffering more from poverty and violence and their rights are more often ignored.

There was ample evidence to demonstrate the value of the innovative approaches and mobilizing potential of the local and international organizations of the urban poor and slum dwellers. The central importance of local government cooperation with other stakeholders was also stressed. In particular, the new organization of United Cities and Local Governments had adopted a commitment to launch an action oriented campaign for the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals at local level and are looking forward towards the “millennium cities initiative” in cooperation with international and civil society partners.

It was pointed out by several participants that several middle income developing countries were faced with restrictions placed by the international financial institutions against the utilization of available resources earmarked for large scale social programmes and in particular the upgrading of infrastructure and services in existing urban informal settlements. With respect to cost recovery, it was noted that there were limits to cost recovery policies as the poor could not be forced to repay the full cost of the basic infrastructure required for achieving decent living conditions.

In relation to the role of the state, it was observed that the weakening of the state was irreconcilable with the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals. Stronger government was needed but one whose policies would be legitimised by the people based on participatory mechanism at all levels of government. It was further stressed that participation applied to all spheres of government action including urban planning which remained a crucial task. The concept of solidarity was also underlined not only as a general principle but also in connection with individual cities to avoid competing against each other.

Concern was expressed about the persistently low level of funding and attention given by bilateral aid agencies to the urban sector. This was compounded by the tendency in some cases to achieve quick results.

Finally it was pointed out that one of the greatest and most exciting challenges was that of scaling up and far wider application of successful experiences based on the involvement and participation of the urban poor themselves.

### 3. EMERGING ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

- The collection and dissemination of reliable data about slum dwellers (their numbers, geographical distribution, living conditions) is an important way of “putting the urban poor on the map” in international and national development dialogues.
- There was general consensus that considerable progress has been made in improving the lives of slum dwellers, however more needs to be made
- Efforts should be focused on looking for local solutions.
- Best policies are needed rather than more pilot projects and best practices.
- Legislation and affirmative actions need to be actually implemented to ensure that women are benefiting of recognized rights and that current disparities are effectively combated.
- The urban poor should be recognized as active agents and not passive beneficiaries.
- In-situ upgrading should be the norm and relocation to be used only in exceptional circumstances such as hazardous locations
- International community should agree that investments targeted at intervention on reaching the MDGs should not be counted as part of the debt of developing countries.