

*Min. Naokazu Takemoto - Japan*

**Remarks by The Honorable Naokazu Takemoto,  
Secretary-General of the Japan Parliamentarians on HABITAT  
At the UN-HABITAT 3rd World Urban Forum  
(Vancouver, June 19th, 2006)**

Mesdames Chairpersons,  
Commissioner General of the Government of Canada,  
Mayor of the City of Vancouver,  
Premier of the Province of British Columbia,  
Executive Director of UN-HABITAT,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation and sense of honor to participate in the UN-HABITAT 3rd World Urban Forum and to make a speech in this opening ceremony. In my capacity of the Secretary-General of the Japan Parliamentarians on HABITAT and Deputy-Chairman for the Asia Regional Forum of the Global Parliamentarians on HABITAT, I

have long been very much interested and involved in the activities of the UN-HABITAT in various contexts. Therefore, it is my greatest pleasure to exchange views with the representatives of national and local authorities, NGOs, civil society or academic circles who assemble here, in the City of Vancouver, where the UN-HABITAT was launched 30 years ago. I also extend my sincerest appreciation to the host government of Canada for the generous hospitality extended to us.

Mesdames Chairpersons,

This Forum is very opportune for us to review the progress made and challenges ahead to harness global partnership for development, in particular in the field of housing and urban development. World leaders met in New York last September and reaffirmed their commitment to eradicate poverty and promote sustained economic growth, sustainable development and global prosperity for all. Social and economic

development in a nation cannot be achieved without robust and effective progress towards urban development, because cities provide a solid platform for efficient production and equitable consumption.

The problem of urban slum is, however, rather getting more serious than ever in spite of the urgency of strategic approaches to curb slum expansion. It is said that more than one hundred million people are homeless, and more than one billion people live in unhealthy settlements without clean water, sanitation and electricity. According to the UN estimate, the world's population will have reached 8 billion by 2030. Among them, 60% are estimated to live in urban area, and 80% are estimated to live in developing countries. The number of slum dwellers, now standing at one billion, will multiply threefold to 3 billion by the year 2050, unless the problem will properly be tackled. Faced with this alarming projection, we must act swiftly to create secure, safe, environmentally friendly, and sustainable cities. Here I wish to call upon the international

community to redouble efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, which advocates to improve lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020, and the UN-HABITAT to enhance its role to galvanize those efforts for meeting this goal.

Mesdames Chairpersons,

Against this background, now let me touch upon the relevance of the concept of human security in the consideration on how to realize 'sustainable cities' at community level. As the Japanese Government places 'human security' as one of the pillars in its foreign policy and takes concrete measures for that purpose, I would point out that securing human security on the community basis, no doubt, provides an important dimension to address urban poverty and slum-upgrading. Human security is interlinked to all the issues pertaining to urbanization, including water and sanitation, safety and security, and economic security

and stability, which are indispensable for people's lives, especially slum dwellers. I expect various discussions from the aspect of human security in this Forum.

Mesdames Chairpersons,

I would like to use this opportunity to refer to the on-going process for United Nations reform which is somehow related to the activities of the UN-HABITAT. Last September, world leaders also reaffirmed the need for the United Nations system to play a fundamental role in promoting international cooperation for development and coherence, coordination and implementations of development goals and actions.

In this connection, "High Level Panel on UN System-wide Coherence in the Areas of Development, Humanitarian Assistance and Environment" was established by the initiative of the Secretary-General, Kofi Annan. Together with 14 distinguished opinion leaders, my most respectable colleague Mr. Keizo

TAKEMI from Japan joins this panel. I certainly expect that the recommendations to be submitted in the coming months would be very meaningful in elaborating coherent approach and coordinated action by the UN System. Japan highly appreciates this effort to make the UN operational activities more efficient and effective so that the UN system, including UN-HABITAT, can respond to the complex and diverse issues the world is facing today.

Mesdames Chairpersons,

Before concluding my remarks, I pay tribute to the humanitarian assistance extended by UN-HABITAT to provide shelter to the war-torn or disaster-affected people. The Government of Japan has funded various projects proposed by UN-HABITAT for the relief of the suffering of those people. For example, in Iraq, we have extended grant aid through UN-HABITAT projects such as providing shelters, schools and other life

infrastructures. Also in Sri Lanka and Pakistan Japan supported the victims of the tsunami and the earthquake to reconstruct their houses destroyed in the disaster. In such ways, Japan has supported and will continue to support the activities of UN-HABITAT. I wish to report here that Japan's financial contribution to UN-HABITAT projects amounts to approximately 54 million US dollars during the last two years since the Barcelona Forum. As the Secretary-General of the Japan Parliamentarians on HABITAT, I would like to offer my personal assurances to further usher Japan's support to UN-HABITAT.

In conclusion, I express my confidence in that the World Urban Forum proves to be suggestive and informative to all those who work for urbanization and slum up-grading, as well as to be significant in raising awareness of the world to these vital issues. In this connection, I would like to invite all of you to visit the Japanese exhibition booth to share knowledge about sustainable cities.

Thank you very much.