



“A Trialogue Session on Water, Sanitation and Human Settlements”

Welcome Address

**During the Trialogue Session at the Third Session of the World Urban Forum
10.00 to 12.00 hours, 20 June 2006 in
Ballroom A in the Vancouver Convention and Exhibition Centre, Canada**

By

**ANNA K. TIBAIJUKA
UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
UN-HABITAT**

Hon. Maria Mutagamba, Minister for Water and Environment, Government of Uganda

Hon. Anna Teresa Aranda Orozco, Minister for Social Development, Mexico

Hon. Kumari Selja, Minister of State for Urban Employment and Poverty Alleviation, Government of India

Hon. Ajay Makken, Minister of State for Urban Development, Government of India

Mr. André Juneau, Deputy Head, Infrastructure and Communities, Government of Canada

Dr. Arcot Ramachandran, the first Executive Director, UNCHS and presently the Chairman of The Energy and Resources Institute, New Delhi, India

Ms. Margaret Catley-Carlson, Chairperson, Global Water Partnership and the Session Moderator

Distinguished Panelists on the Dias

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is indeed a great honour and privilege to join you to this Trialogue Session on Water, Sanitation and Human Settlements organized by UN-HABITAT. Water and sanitation is still today as central to the development agenda as it was some 30 years ago at the first conference on Human Settlements

The 1976 Vancouver Plan of Action was very far sighted and underscored the need for adopting programmes to provide water for urban and rural areas and reduce inequalities in service and access to water, as well as over consumption and wastage of water supply.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In today's world where some 1.1 billion people lack access to safe water and 2.4 billion people lack access to basic sanitation, what could be a more direct attack on poverty than to enable them to access these vital, life-sustaining services that could protect their health and improve their productivity?

In a world where 2 million children die, needlessly, every year, for the lack of water or for its poor quality, what could be a better starting point to reduce child mortality?

In a world where millions of girl children are forced to trade education for collecting water, or drop out from schools for the lack of even minimal sanitation facilities, what could be a better way to promote universal primary education or gender equality and empowering of women?

And in a world where one billion people live in slums in overcrowded condition without access to basic services, what would be a concrete way to make significant improvements in their lives other than access to water and sanitation?

The internationally agreed goals for water and sanitation provide a clear framework for action. However, these internationally agreed goals will remain a distant dream, if we do not ground our interventions into the reality of location. It is our human settlements -our cities, towns and villages, where water will be consumed and wastes generated- that provide a concrete context for action. It is at this level that policy initiatives become an operational reality and an eminently political affair: conflicts have to be resolved and consensus found among competing interests and parties. The internationally agreed goals cannot be delivered in orbit but in a defined space.

We all know that a business-as-usual approach will not be enough. We need a fundamental change in our approach to reach the Millennium Development Goals – we need a strategy that is workable, realistic and will make a difference in the lives of the people in their habitats. We have to address many challenges which, inter alia, include the problem of urbanization of poverty, the challenge of improving the slums, localizing the MDGs and monitoring them regularly. There is also a need to promote pro-poor investments in the wake of declining per capita investment in water and sanitation in most developing country cities.

To meet the challenge of providing water and sanitation to the poor, UN-HABITAT has established a Water and Sanitation Trust Fund with the objective of creating an enabling environment for pro-poor investments in water and sanitation in developing country cities and support the implementation of MDGs. During the last four years the Trust Fund has supported cities and countries both in Africa and Asia which have demonstrated their commitment to promote investment in water and sanitation that are specifically targeted to the poorest of the poor living in slums and squatter settlements. Several fast-track mechanisms for reaching out to the urban poor particularly in secondary towns have been supported in the Lake Victoria and Mekong regions. The results of these local actions have been well documented and are presented in the second Global Report on Water and Sanitation in World's Cities launched at the fourth World Water Forum in Mexico in March of this year.

In addition, UN-HABITAT has established a new global slum upgrading facility with the objective to help developing countries mobilize domestic capital for their own slum and urban

upgrading activities through various new processes. This facility, as you may be aware, was launched last year in Indonesia in October 2005.

I am very happy that this Trialogue session has been organized to discuss the most crucial issues which may need to be addressed in the pursuit of the internationally agreed goals for water supply and sanitation. We will have to devise new approaches for developing pro-poor governance frameworks, new strategic partnerships and introduce new delivery mechanisms and also facilitate pro-poor investments in the water and sanitation sector. On our part UN-HABITAT stands committed to make its best efforts to support national and local governments as well as the communities and other stakeholders in developing and operationalising strategies for achieving these goals.

I now hand over the floor back to Ms. Margaret Catley-Carlson, the Moderator of the session.
