

MESSAGE FROM THE UNITED NATIONS HUMAN SETTLEMENTS PROGRAMME ON THE OCCASION OF THE INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY 2006 - 12 August 2006

RECOGNIZING THE ROLE OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN POVERTY REDUCTION

International Youth Day 2006 – *Tackling Poverty Together*, encourages young men and women globally to voice their views and take action on the issue of poverty. This Saturday, August 12, 2006 we must recognize the role of young people and empower them to be active agents of change in the reduction of poverty around the world and in attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Young people now represent more than 1 billion of the world's population. According to the United Nations *World Youth Report 2005*, 515 million young people live on less than \$2 a day. It must be noted that it is young people who are most affected by problems of rapid urbanization, homelessness, unemployment, crime, violence and environmental degradation. Youth continue to live in troubling conditions around the world, and tackling poverty is not a small task. Without decent work, youth are left particularly susceptible to poverty, which in turn complicates access to higher education and basic health services. This also eliminates their access to the necessary assets and resources, strong social networks and decision-making status which is needed for personal development. Young men and women require useful resources, basic rights, and entitlements in order to improve their livelihood and be able to make sustainable positive change. A global shift in mindset is required in order to successfully engage youth in addressing the underlying policy and institutional drivers of our labour markets and education systems in order for them to be efficiently prepared for their future.

UN-HABITAT sees young people as key stakeholders and active participants in the future of sustainable development. The World Youth Forum and the Third Session of the World Urban Forum held in June 2006 in Vancouver, Canada provided a unique opportunity for engaged youth to demonstrate that they are willing and capable of conceiving, designing and implementing successful community-building projects in some of the most marginalised regions of the world. Young people need acknowledgment, guidance, resources and training in order to reach their full potential. International Youth Day 2006 – *Tackling Poverty Together* celebrates successes and encourages forward thinking.

UN-HABITAT has developed a Youth Strategy for Enhanced Engagement in order to present an integrated approach to youth development, provide direction for the promotion of youth empowerment and implementation of the Habitat Agenda. UN-HABITAT focuses on the improvement of policy synthesis and dialogue, facilitates political and social mobilization and assists in development of the role of young people implementing youth programmes, representation and mainstreaming their concerns. The aim is to work across all the divisions, branches and the regional offices in order to promote high quality and continuous engagement of partners. Foster inter-agency and partnerships with youth organizations, engage youth at international level; help formulate international understanding of pressing youth issues and create a platform where they can act as effective advocates of change, both to decision-makers and the general public. The Global Partnership Initiative for Urban Development and the implementation of One Stop Youth Centres are current initiatives that present the abilities of youth. Working with young people and understanding their diverse abilities, realities and experiences is essential for the long-term success of achieving sustainable urbanization.

In 1995, the *World Programme of Action for Youth* made the issue of youth and poverty a priority area. The Programme has approached young people as equal partners in the global effort to eradicate poverty and achieve the Millennium Development Goals, be it in the Favelas of Rio, the slums of Nairobi of Kenya, Mumbai of India or Jakarta of Indonesia.

We must understand the importance of young people and their role in tackling the issue of poverty. It is critical that our future generations are empowered to become active leaders at local, national and international levels today. International Youth Day 2006 – *Tackling Poverty Together*, is an opportunity to recognize the potential of young people in our battle against poverty. We should appreciate and celebrate the resilience, ingenuity and creativity of young people the world over.