

COLOMBIA



COLOMBIAN MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

140 EAST 57TH STREET, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10022

Statement by

H.E. Mrs. Claudia Blum
Ambassador, Permanent Representative

Second Committee

**Item 54. Implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on
Human Settlements (Habitat II) and strengthening of the United Nations
Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)**

61st Session of the United Nations General Assembly

New York, 26 October 2006

Check against delivery

Madam Chairperson,

My delegation associates itself with the statement made this morning by the delegation of South Africa on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The Government of Colombia welcomes the recognition made by the Secretary-General in his Report on UN-Habitat, of the group of low- or middle-income countries where the growth rate of marginal neighborhoods has begun to stabilize or has been reverted.

Colombia has managed to control the formation of marginal neighborhoods through foresight and the planning of development and urban growth; the widening of social investments focused on generating better economic and employment opportunities for the poorest areas in cities; the investment in low-cost housing, accessible to the most vulnerable groups; and the determined investment in widening and modernizing public service coverage. Colombia, considers that with adequate policies and practices, it is possible to prevent the formation of marginal neighborhoods, regardless of the country's wealth level.

The report of the Secretary-General also makes reference to the resources UN-Habitat has mobilized towards financing projects, including the mechanisms of the World Bank aimed at formulating sectoral housing policies and strategies. Regional financial institutions can also effectively contribute in this area.

In Colombia, the Inter-American Development Bank has lent its support to carry out a study that will serve as the basis to strengthen social interest housing programs in the urban area. The study develops alternative financing mechanisms and improvements to the normative credit framework.

Madam Chairperson,

The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the decisions of the 11th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, are the main frame of reference to face the problems that afflict us today. Water, basic sanitation and human settlements were topics at the 12th session of the Commission, instance during which the access to drinking water was reaffirmed as a human right. The right to water and housing is decisive to meet other development commitments, in fundamental areas like sustainable development , eradication of poverty and the reduction of inequity.

These rights constitute a matter of public interest, where States have the responsibility to promote and facilitate access to public services in areas with limited resources. This

access, must be accompanied by comprehensive policies aimed at improving the economic and social conditions of the communities that have been marginalized by the progress of development.

Within this framework, it is equally indispensable to have the specialized knowledge, the financial resources and the technical support of the different institutions working in areas of urban and rural development, and on social issues, including at the international level. These entities are called upon to lend their valuable support to community, collective and individual initiatives, related to social or productive projects that allow them to build by themselves a stable and sustainable welfare.

Madam Chairperson,

The investments that developing countries must make in these areas are of a great magnitude and must have the same priority level than those in education, health, civil security and transportation. In this sense, it is critical to strengthen the flow of international financial resources towards developing countries, as a necessary condition to achieve the results outlined in terms of human settlements.

It is necessary for donor countries to increase the percentage of official development assistance to reach the levels defined in the Millennium Declaration and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. The transfer of technology from developed countries and the promotion of the national institutional capacity, are also essential aspects to fulfill these commitments.

Within cooperation actions, it is also worth highlighting the importance of sharing experiences in water, sanitation, and human settlements experience, as well as stimulating the transfer of technology and the creation of capacities within the framework of South-South cooperation.

Finally, Madam Chairperson, Colombia joins the special call made to UN-Habitat, in its capacity as coordinating mechanism on this issues, to maintain, in close collaboration with the pertinent institutions, a continuous supervision to the fulfillment of the goals related to human settlements, in particular the international cooperation commitments in this important area of development.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.