

OPENING REMARKS BY HIS EXCELLENCY FAHMI AL JOWDER AT  
THE OPENING OF THE UN HABITAT CONFERENCE IN NAIROBI. 16  
APRIL

Your Excellency, President Kibaki of Kenya,  
Your Excellency Mr. Petr Kopriva, President of the Governing  
Council  
Madame Executive Director of UN-Habitat,  
Madame Deputy Executive Director, UN-Habitat,  
Mr. Executive Director of UNEP,  
Excellencies  
Distinguished delegates,  
Ladies and gentlemen

At the outset I would like to express our warm thanks to the Government and People of Kenya for the warm and courteous reception accorded to me and my delegation since our arrival in this beautiful city of Nairobi. I bring you the greetings and good wishes of His Majesty King Hamad Bin Isa Al Khalifa, His Highness, Prime Minister Shaikh Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa and His Highness Shaikh Salman Bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince, and the people of Bahrain.

Mr. President

On behalf of His Highness, Shaikh Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bahrain, and the Government and the people of Bahrain, It is an honour and pleasure for me to express our deep appreciation to the UN-HABITAT, and especially to you Madame Executive Director, for the great honour that has been bestowed on His Highness, and the people of Bahrain by awarding His Highness the Special Citation to the Scroll of Honour. The Special Citation to the Scroll of Honour is the highest honour that UN-Habitat can give to an individual for their work in helping to improve the conditions of people living and working in poverty. Throughout his Prime Minister-ship, extending over thirty-five years, Shaikh Khalifa has made it his life's-goal to lift the living standards of all Bahrainis and to focus on economic developments and welfare programs which will help eliminate the root causes of poverty. I advise that Shaikh Khalifa, in sending his warm greetings to all the distinguished participants in this eminent meeting, dearly wanted to be with us today to receive the Award in person, but is unable to do so due to other matters of State which require him to remain in Bahrain. He nevertheless looks forward to receiving the Award during the next meeting of ECOSOC in Geneva in July.

Shaikh Khalifa is immensely proud that this prestigious Award, although given to him personally, also reaches out to all Bahrainis. While the Government has worked tirelessly to help alleviate poverty in Bahrain and provide equitable shelter for all, such programs have been undertaken in consultation and cooperation with the people. Through leadership and participatory governance, Bahrain has been able to reduce poverty and bring social justice to its people. UN Habitat's recognition of these efforts is therefore both gratifying and welcoming and indicative that our efforts are being made in the right direction.

I also wish to take this opportunity to thank the Members of the Governing Council of UN-HABITAT for so warmly welcoming the Kingdom of Bahrain to attend this meeting of the Governing Council, even though until our term of office begins in 2008, we are here in an Observer capacity. You will find that Bahrain will be an interested and active Member of the Governing Council and that we very much look forward to making a contribution and working closely with you. We feel that valuable lessons can be learned from the Bahrain experience, in particular regarding the development and implementation of shelter policies, the creation of a solid housing finance system, implementation of

good urban governance and social development , all vital for the achievement of development goals. For the benefit of all, and like you have done with us before, we are eager to share with you, during the coming days, the lessons that we have learned , in particular during the parallel session tomorrow or during the dialogue sessions.

I believe that Bahrain's experience in the creation of its housing finance system for example, will be of interest to delegates, as a robust housing finance mechanism is, in our view, vital to the achievement of development goals. There are many vital and ongoing issues that challenge our organization in seeking to provide equitable shelter for all and I am sure that with all our experience and goodwill, the UN Habitat is up to meeting that challenge.

I hope that our deliberations over the next week go well and we may find the solutions and strength to overcome the issues that are before us. Thank you again, Madame Executive Director, for the honour that you have given to Shaikh Khalifa and the people of Bahrain in awarding the Special Citation to the Roll of Honour to His Highness, Shaikh Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa.

Finally, it is my pleasure to invite all participants to visit the Bahrain exhibition which has been organized to complement this auspicious occasion.