

SPEECH BY LN SISULU CHAIR OF THE AFRICAN MINISTERIAL
CONFERENCE ON HOUSING AND MINISTER OF HOUSING OF
THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA AT THE PLENARY SESSION
OF THE 21ST SESSION OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL OF THE
UNITED NATIONS HUMAN SETTLEMENT PROGRAMME
(UNHABITAT)

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Read by Thozamile Botha, Special Advisor

President of the General Council

Your Excellencies

Distributed guests

Ladies and Gentlemen:

We meet again this year, since 2005, to collectively deliberate on those issues that define the nature of the relationship we have with each other as different countries of the world. These are issues and concerns that highlight the fact that towards each other and collectively as the international community we have particular responsibilities towards the poor. Various resolutions within the United Nations system have consistently highlighted this fact and the most in this regard that has become our guiding [light] remains the Millennium Development Goals.

When we made in 2002 in the Johannesburg Declaration of the World Summit Summit on Sustainable Development to spare no effort 'to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanising conditions

of extreme poverty' and to 'making the right to development a reality for everyone, and to freeing the entire human race from want' we recognised that our responsibilities to the poor were indeed collective. Thus to us, the African Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development (AMCHUD), the call by the 2005 World Summit on governments and the international community to increase the resources required towards housing and related infrastructure and to establish slum prevention and slum upgrading measures in place, was a natural consequence of the appreciation of the collective responsibility we have towards the poor.

At this General Council, which happens in the second year of the formation of AMCHUD, we once again have taken it upon ourselves to propose some concrete action that could be taken to ensure the realisation of these commitments. Recognising that the process of accelerated and rapid urbanization deepens and sustains poverty within the cities and towns of the continent - as amply demonstrated by the stubbornness in the growth of slums - we have come to the conclusion that a regionally based initiative to help mobilize resources would be the most urgently needed solution to the particular problems we are being confronted with. We are proposing that a an Africa focused financing mechanism for slum prevention and slum upgrading that would catalyse increased official development assistance and investment into Africa is in need of establishment within UNHABITAT. We believe that its establishment will strengthen the effectiveness of UNHABITAT in meeting the objectives being set particularly in the proposed Medium-Term Strategic and Institutional Plan for 2008 - 2013 whose endorsement we recommend to this session.

If established the mechanism would be important in providing research into ways to stem the growth of slums and their upgrading, the recording of best practices, the establishment of pilot projects and the implementation of review and monitoring system whose development is presently fairly advanced.

UNHABITAT is the only dedicated UN agency on issues of housing and human settlements with the capacity and relative advantages to administer the mechanism. It has capacity to encourage the kind of partnerships needed to ensure that collectively we indeed do deliver on the responsibilities we have recognized for ourselves to the poor. It follows therefore that Africa will not meet the targets set in the Millennium Development Goals without deliberate and focused attention from UNHABITAT. Hence the appeal we are making.

We appeal that as proven by the resolutions and actions we collectively have taken thus far let us remain consistent in the pursuit of the MDG targets. For indeed, as the report, *In Larger Freedom*, of the UN Secretary General to the World Summit stated:

At no time in human history have the fates of every woman, man and child been so intertwined across the globe. We are united both by moral imperatives and by objective interests. We can build a world in larger freedom — but to do it we must find common ground and sustain collective action.

Let the 21st Session of the Governing Council of UNHABITAT be a further marker of our collective commitment to the poor.

I thank you.