

**Statement by Minister of State for Environment  
Government of Pakistan  
H.E. Malik Amin Aslam  
at the 21<sup>st</sup> Governing Council meeting of UN-Habitat  
16<sup>th</sup> April 2007**

Madam Chairperson, Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me at the outset congratulate the Chairperson and other members of the bureau on their election for the 21<sup>st</sup> Session of the Governing Council. I am quite confident that this meeting would achieve its desired results under your stewardship.

I would also like to take this opportunity to convey my sincere appreciation to the Habitat secretariat for making excellent arrangements for this session and to the Government of Kenya for its support and warm hospitality.

The Government of Pakistan greatly acknowledges the contribution of the UN Human Settlements Program in its endeavours for resolving habitat issues. In this context, we fully support the fast track implementation of the UN Habitat's Medium Term Strategic and Institutional Plan 2008-13 (MTSIP) which aims to create, by 2030, the necessary conditions to stabilize the growth of urban slums and to reduce urban poverty. This objective is clearly in line with our national goals as defined in our national Medium Term Development Framework (2005-10). We believe that this plan provides a very effective framework for action at the regional, national and local levels which is temporally defined in the short, medium and long term objectives.

Pakistan is among one of the most populated countries and one of the fastest developing economies of the world. Concerted efforts are, thus, required to develop its numerous urban settlements in a

holistic and integrated manner. Our goal is to have development which is sustainable and economic growth which leads to a better quality of life. What we do not want to end up with, are congested concrete jungles choking under their own growth. It is, therefore, in our national interest to collaborate regionally and internationally through the UN-Habitat forum, for sustainable urban development in our country.

Pakistan supports the immediate formulation and implementation of the “Sustainable Reconstruction and Recovery strategy for displaced and vulnerable population” focusing on earthquake and flood affected persons as well as refugees and displaced households. The devastating earthquake of last year was not only a big catastrophe and challenge for Pakistan but, in hindsight, also an opportunity to plan and design a better future. One of the bitter lessons that we learnt was the absolute necessity for quick availability of emergency relief. Quite clearly the world can not sustain a system where the affectees are fund raising while people are dying.

We are, thus, encouraged by the creation of the Central Emergency Relief Fund (CERF) and fully support its objectives. We also appreciate the pro-active role played by UN-Habitat during the earthquake which has led to their permanent presence in the country. This presence now needs to be leveraged and streamlined for maximum utility by both Pakistan and UN-Habitat.

Pakistan, also fully supports the linking up of the “World Urban Forum” with the MTSIP in order to establish a principal forum which can forcefully forward the Habitat agenda. However, we would like to caution against duplication of efforts which, more often than not in the UN system, results in wastage of scarce resources.

Pakistan is today, also piloting the “One UN Concept” project. The process for unification of UN organizations under one umbrella has already started at the operational level in the country and we hope that urban settlements will also receive the required focus in the pilot program.

We would also like to announce here the revival of our national “Habitat Steering Committee” with the objectives of benefiting from the special fund windows like the “UN-Habitat and Human Settlement Foundation, the “Slum Upgrading Facility” and the “Water and Sanitation fund” as well as the proposed “Revolving Fund Facility”.

Madam Chairperson,

Pakistan realizes that there is a need for strengthening and streamlining the urban settlements finance systems. What is required is a focus on leveraging private sector interest towards low cost housing for managing sprawling urban populations. This can only be made possible through innovative financial mechanisms, exploring public-private options and institutional capacity building to maximize the contributions of various stakeholders.

We hope that this Governing Council with its focus on financing and planning will put forwards concrete proposals in this regard.

Thank you very much.

