



## **Introductory Remarks by Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Gerald Anderson**

Thank you Mr. President.

The U.S. Government acknowledges and applauds UN-HABITAT's mission of working towards the realization of sustainable human settlements in urban areas. The issues surrounding urbanization are of utmost importance to all of us.

We all are familiar with the statistics – for example, that by 2050 two-thirds of the world's population will live in urban areas and that today there are already 1 billion people living in slums. These statistics suggest a need for more coherent, strategic and targeted thinking by both donors and local leaders on urban challenges. Cities must establish comprehensive strategies that touch upon a broad array of sectors – from health and sanitation to housing, infrastructure, and economic growth. Such strategies would allow cities to absorb increasing populations and provide a framework for stability, smart growth, and prosperity.

The reality is that cities will continue to explode in population no matter what we do – it is wiser to plan for this population increase and harness it productively than to ignore its implications and allow the root causes of political instability, economic unrest, and social upheaval to establish themselves. Even on a micro-level, the impact that well-timed, strategic projects can have in cities is remarkable. There are abundant examples of urban renewal projects that have radically transformed the very fabric, scope and direction of cities. What is especially noteworthy is that these projects succeed in transforming cities because they are tied to a larger urban development vision.

UN-HABITAT has an important role to play in facing these urban challenges. We believe, however, that UN-HABITAT's role in the field of human settlements is first and foremost a normative one. The organization

is well suited to help establish best practices and to provide a forum for dialogue and expertise – such as through the World Urban Forums. The organization also has a role in serving as a catalyst for action at the local level by providing technical advice and knowledge management – such as through the peer exchanges on housing finance co-sponsored by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Further, we believe that UN-HABITAT would be more effective in fulfilling its mandate if it focused more narrowly on consolidating its core programs, as the UN's own Office of Internal Oversight Services has noted. In this vein, we strongly encourage UN-HABITAT to take the steps toward internal institutional strengthening outlined in the MTSIP. That would be consistent with the High Level Panel's urging that UN organizations work more toward overall coherence and effectiveness. If UN-HABITAT continues to work with too many and too varied programs, all of its programs will decline in effectiveness.

Achieving the shelter-related goals of the Habitat Agenda will require a massive mobilization of capital, primarily from domestic savings. It will require tens of billions of dollars in infrastructure and unprecedented commitment to social investment. None of this will be possible without sound and transparent national financial systems, secure tenure for individuals, vibrant markets for property and services, and effective and efficient government. While the primary responsibility falls on national and local governments, there are many stakeholders who are able to support governments in their endeavors. For example, the United States is committed to supporting the work of associations of cities and local authorities both at home and abroad. We believe the technical and financial capacity of local government is crucial for the sustainable development of cities. We look forward in the coming days to the Governing Council's High Level Dialogue on the special theme of "Sustainable Urbanization: local action for urban poverty reduction with an emphasis on finance and planning."

Just as cities need to work with and learn from other cities, we encourage UN-HABITAT to work with and learn from other UN agencies. In particular, we encourage UN-HABITAT to actively engage in the "One UN" pilot programs to learn lessons and find synergies with local organizations, other UN agencies, donors, and NGOs. Through this cooperation, UN-HABITAT will be able to develop best practices for a

“value-added” approach to its partnerships with others in the UN and international system.

We applaud UN-HABITAT’s focus on data, evidence and measurable results in its programming, as evidenced in its Medium-Term Strategic and Institutional Plan (MTSIP). Transparency is critical to good governance, and the MTSIP is one tool by which UN-HABITAT is working to become more focused and more transparent. The more focused and clear UN-HABITAT’s own strategy is, the likelier it will attract additional voluntary funding from both governments and non-governmental entities.

We look forward to a continued vigorous partnership and dialogue as we work together toward the common goal of improving human settlements.

Thank you.

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