

**Policy Statement by H.E. Mr. Djismun Kasri,
on behalf of the Group of 77 and China Nairobi Chapter,
at the 21st Session of the Governing Council UN-Habitat, Monday, 16 April 2007**

Madam President, Honorable Ministers,
Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,
Executive Director of UN-Habitat,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, Nairobi Chapter at this very important juncture of the Governing Council of UN-Habitat.

May I begin by expressing my deep appreciation to the Government and People of Kenya for hosting and welcoming all the participants at this 21st session.

Let me congratulate you Madam President, and all the members of the bureau on your election. We look forward to a successful deliberation under your skilled leadership. May I also express our appreciation to the out-going President and members of ~~his~~ ^{the} bureau for their past work and progress they have achieved.

I also wish to thank the Executive Director of UN-Habitat for the comprehensive policy statement.

Madam President,

Allow me to quote Mr. Kofi Annan, former UN Secretary General, that once said: “the locus of global poverty is moving to the cities, a process now recognised as the urbanisation of poverty”. Indeed he had warned us of something very important.

Let us be reminded, that the year 2007 will be the year in which for the first time in history, half of humanity will be living in towns and cities. It marks the beginning of a new urban era. It is projected that by 2030 the figure will rise to two-thirds.

The cities growing fastest are those of the developing world, and the fastest growing neighbourhoods are slums. 2007 is also the year in which the global number of slum dwellers is forecast to reach the 1 billion mark.

Urban poverty is a severe, pervasive and largely unacknowledged feature of modern life. It should also not be forgotten that slums are unfortunately nurturing the rise of crime and violence.

The recent visits by high level dignitaries such as the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon and the President of the UN General Assembly to the Kibera slum in Nairobi, are a strong reminder to other societies that these conditions do exist. Immediate attention is

needed through practical and concrete measures, among others by promoting micro-enterprises and micro-finances in these areas.

We cannot longer ignore the plight of slum dwellers. If we do so, we run risk of not achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) especially target 10 on water and sanitation, and target 11 on slum up-grading, as well as other related commitments agreed upon in previous international conferences.

We all have a responsibility to fulfil the commitments and targets that we have agreed upon.

We committed ourselves in halving the number of people living in extreme poverty by 2015, and that is not too far. Millions of people will rely on the commitments we promised. It will depend on our political will to achieve and improve the million of lives.

Madam President,

The Group of 77 and China would like to call for greater attention by the international community to support the two crucial goals of the Habitat Agenda: “adequate shelter for all” and “sustainable human settlement development in an urbanizing world”. And in this regard, we should all support efforts to strengthen the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat).

UN-Habitat should be strengthened to make it a more effective vehicle of international cooperation in the area of human settlements.

We call for more vigorous actions in order to overcome challenges, by more wider and effective involvement of UN-Habitat Partners, especially the private and public sectors, better coordination between UN-Habitat and other relevant UN agencies, greater mobility through geographical balance to promote dynamic cooperation at the national, regional and international levels, active strategy for financial resource mobilization, and greater linkages between normative and operational work of UN-Habitat through concrete pilot projects in all regions.

We support the revitalizing of the UN-Habitat and its agenda to address water and sanitation issues. This includes its commitments to slum up-grading in an integrated manner and to further address the strategic links between sustainable human settlements and the reduction of urban poverty in the developing countries.

Madam President,

The Group of 77 and China welcomes the focus on the theme at this session dialogue on “Sustainable urbanisation: local action for urban poverty reduction, with emphasis on finance and planning”. We hope that it will contribute to the strengthening of UN-Habitat objectives.

The deliberations on this theme in the dialogue will be in line with the needed support towards the Water and Sanitation Trust Fund, the Programme for the Palestinian People and the Slum Upgrading Facility.

The Medium Term Strategic Institutional Plan (MTSIP) for the six year period of 2008-2013 will provide the basis of strengthening UN-Habitat. Efforts to have predictable and sufficient resources could be based on the “multi-year financing framework”.

The Group of 77 and China supports the development of a strong MTSIP as crucial to initiating a sharpened programmatic focus and broadening the funding base of UN-Habitat. It will also visibly, highlight the catalytic role of the UN Habitat in the implementation of vision of sustainable urbanization.

The priorities of UN-Habitat have been well spelled out in its focus areas and they mutually reinforce the areas that are considered critical in attaining MDGs and other agreed policies related to human settlements.

Re-aligning UN-Habitat will be crucial to the successful of the implementation of the MTSIP. Such organizational adjustments should be based on the outcome of the discussion on UN reform and enhanced result-based management on country priority needs, the implementation of a comprehensive and innovative resource mobilisation and communication strategy.

The Group has always believed that a balanced enhanced normative and operational framework is necessary for the attainment of the UN-Habitat goals which fosters initiation of pilot projects in more countries, taking into account geographical balance.

We underscore the importance of strengthening the capacity of regional offices of UN-Habitat, including regional initiatives focused on slum targets. These should be matched by adequate financial resources in order to maximize the positive impact of urbanization and reducing its negative impacts. For this reason we support the resolution to establish a financing mechanism to address the MDG slum target for Africa.

The Habitat Programme Managers system has had a positive impact enhancing coherence and integration of UN-Habitat issues into national development policies and other processes at the national level. We stress the importance of adequate resources and training and geographical balance, in order to achieve a more effective role by the system.

This session of the Governing Council should be in support of the additional resources required for the next biennium 2008-2009 with adequately funding to allow a meaningful delivery of the MTSIP.

Madam President,

The World Summit Outcome 2005 in New York, reiterated the necessity to achieve significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum-dwellers by 2020, and recognized the urgent need for the provision of increased resources for affordable housing and housing-related infrastructure, by prioritizing slum prevention and slum upgrading, and to encourage support for the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation and its Slum Upgrading Facility.

The role of the Foundation in providing seed capital and in providing assistance for effective mobilization of pro-poor housing and infrastructure development has been reconfirmed by General Assembly resolution 56/206.

Subsequently, in August 2006 the UN Secretary General promulgated new Rules and Regulations that enable an innovative funding mechanism, through a Revolving Fund Account (REFA). We take note of the operational guidelines and the procedures of the new rules and regulations for the UN Habitat Foundation developed by the Secretariat.

Many developing countries urgently need a proper financial mechanism and infrastructure which addresses the difficulties of reaching the urban poor and the challenges of sustainability and creating alternatives for future housing planning and financing.

The Group of 77 and China supports the initiation of an experimental phased approach for Revolving Fund Account schemes at country level, which will provide an opportunity for UN-Habitat to establish where its comparative advantage lies especially in the international architecture for financing affordable housing and related urban infrastructure.

Madam President,
Excellencies and Distinguished Delegates,

The World Urban Forum has made a significant contribution in mainstreaming the urban agenda. The Group of 77 and China welcomes the successful gathering in Vancouver of all Habitat Partners and other major stakeholders. Our Group will also look forward to the next Forum meeting in Nanjing, China. We believe that certainly, the Forum and can play a significant role in strengthening coordination of international support to implementation of the Habitat Agenda.

We support strengthening the cooperation between UN-Habitat and UNEP. The implementation of UNEP's Bali Strategic Plan on Technology Support and Capacity Building is an opportunity for more intensive collaboration with UN-Habitat, especially because of its emphasis on work at the country level.

As has always been advocated by the Group of 77 and China, that there is a need to strengthen Nairobi as the Headquarters of both UN-Habitat and UNEP. The Nairobi Headquarter is the only UN Headquarter based in the developing country and therefore underscores the need for adequately supporting and acquiring the same status and attractiveness as other UN Headquarters.

Finally, I wish to state that the Group of 77 and China, stands ready to engage and work in a constructive manner, efficiently and effectively in a good spirit of cooperation with our development partners, and all of the Habitat Partners to achieve a successful outcome of the Governing Council.

Last but not least, as I began by quoting the former UN Secretary General, now I would like to close by quoting the present Secretary General Ban Ki-moon “The true measure of success for the United Nations is not how much we promise but how much we deliver for those who need us most”.

We have all assembled here today to deliver on those goals of the United Nations.

Thank you.

