

**Seminar
On
Developing Harmonious and Sustainable Cities in India for a Better Urban Future**

**Welcome Remarks by Dr. Noor Mohammad, Chairman AMDA and
Member Secretary, NCRPB at India Habitat Centre, New Delhi, 20 March 2009**

Dr. M. Ramachandran, Secretary, Ministry of Urban Development
Mr Abhijit Dasgupta, Commissioner, BMRDA
Dr. Oyebanji Oyeyinka, Director, UN-HABITAT;
Dr. Eduardo López Moreno, Head, City Monitoring Branch, UN-HABITAT,
Senior officials from the central and state governments;
AMDA Members and other city governments in India
Colleagues from academic institutions and private sector
Distinguished speakers
Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning to all of you.

I am very pleased to welcome you all on behalf of the Association of Municipalities and Development Authorities to this two-day Seminar on "Developing Harmonious and Sustainable Cities in India for a Better Urban Future". AMDA's main mission is to focus on the concerns of urban local bodies and development authorities with the overall objectives of improving human settlements and improving the quality of life in urban areas; and to promote and facilitate economically efficient, environmentally sustainable, socially just and politically participatory urbanization in the country by information sharing, mutual learning and networking between urban local bodies, development authorities and other agencies involved in urban development in the country. In pursuance of these goals, AMDA has planned this seminar in partnership with UN-HABITAT, GTZ and several other national, state and city level organisations.

As we all know that managing rapid urbanization in India will be a major challenge for at least a few decades to come, with far reaching ramifications on sustaining high economic growth rates, reducing urban poverty, improving the quality of life of urban citizens, and improving the environment and reducing carbon emission. The scale of challenges in developing efficient and sustainable cities in India is multidisciplinary and complex. The chances of success are much higher when synergic partnerships are evolved to deal with these challenges. I hope this seminar will evoke constructive discussion and generate new ideas and partnerships that will further consolidate the ongoing efforts of the Ministry of Urban Development through their flagship program, the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission and various policies including the recent Housing and Habitat Policy, Urban Transport Policy and recently launched National Urban Sanitation Policy. I also hope that this Seminar will highlight national and global best practices to strengthen Urban Governance and also the city infrastructure for sustainable and harmonious development of our cities.

UN-HABITAT's global report on State of the World's Cities 2008/2009 is on the theme of Harmonious Cities which shows that spatial and social disparities within cities and between cities and regions within the same country are growing as some areas benefit more than others from public services, infrastructure and other investments. Evidence presented in this report also shows that when cities already have high levels of inequality, spatial and social disparities are likely to become more, and not less, pronounced with economic growth. High levels of urban inequality present a double jeopardy. They have a dampening effect on economic growth and contribute to a less favourable environment for investment. This report which will be launched by the Hon'ble Secretary, Urban Development during this session will be formally introduced by our visiting colleagues from UN-HABITAT, Nairobi. The data and analysis contained in this report are intended to improve our understanding of how cities function and what we can do to increase their livability and unity.

Let me also briefly touch upon the structure of the seminar. The broad objectives of the Seminar are to highlight the importance of sustainable urban development so as to make our cities more harmonious. The two-day National Seminar seeks to address some of the critical issues relating to the theme of the Seminar under five sub-themes:

1. Promoting Social Equity and Inclusiveness in Indian Cities
2. Making Indian Cities Economically Productive and More Equitable
3. Harmonising the Built and Natural Environment of Indian Cities
4. Preserving the Historical Roots and Soul of the Indian Cities
5. Developing Indian Cities for all Generations

Besides the plenary, in which theme presentation on Developing Harmonious and Sustainable Cities in India shall be made, there are about 25 papers that will be presented and discussed in five technical sessions in which various national policies and programmes will be discussed. These papers will also present the leading urban practices, share experiences and take forward various urban initiatives by the central, state and local governments. These presentations also cover important topics like urban reforms, pro-poor infrastructure investments, inclusive urban planning, integrated management of urban infrastructure including water and waste water, slum rehabilitation and affordable housing, safety and security of our cities and adaptation to climate change.

The presence of Dr. M. Ramachandran, Secretary (UD) indicates his commitment to the cause of making our cities most livable, harmonious and sustainable. While specially welcoming him, I will like to thank him for his big support for AMDA. I also welcome our colleagues from partner organisations collaborating in the seminar - UN-HABITAT, GTZ, NHB, DDA, Greater Noida Authority and my own organisation NCRPB. My special welcome is also to all the participants from AMDA Member organisations, non-member municipalities and development authorities as well as partner NGOs, private sector and civil society organisations.

I hope that we shall have very active discussions for the next two days.
Thank you.

