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STATEMENT

by

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(12.30 PM to 1.30 PM)**

Distinguished delegates, experts, ladies and gentlemen.

It is a privilege to be present here on behalf of my country at this august gathering of world leaders and thinkers on the occasion of the fourth World Urban Forum.

The theme of the World Urban Forum IV, "harmonious cities", is one that is very close to our hearts back home. It is projected that in the next fifty years, two-third of humanity will be living in towns and cities. The developing world today is faced with an urban paradox: on one hand, cities are the engines of economic growth; on the other, cities are also centres of increasing poverty and unemployment. Neither a society as a whole or a city in itself can be harmonious where there is great inequality, in situations where large sections of the population are deprived of basic services, resources and opportunities. Income inequalities within cities can threaten not only the harmony of the city itself, but also threaten the country at large, acting as a breeding ground for social and political fissures which can further widen if not addressed immediately. A harmonious city is one, therefore, where everyone has access to basic services, where there is equal access to resources and opportunities, where there is social equality and inclusive growth and also where there is equality of gender. A major challenge is to minimize escalating poverty in cities, improve the urban poor's access to basic facilities such as shelter, clean water and sanitation and achieve environment-friendly and sustainable urban growth and development.

My country, India, as you may all know, is fast transforming from a predominantly rural to a more urbanized country. While the overall population has increased from 684 million to 1027 million from 1981 to 2001, showing a decadal growth of 25%, the urban population in the same period has grown from 159 million to 285 million, showing a growth of 40%. The million plus cities have increased from 12 in 1981 to 35 in 2001. The slums have also grown at an alarming rate of 70%, with over 61.8 million persons reported to be living in urban slums in India.

Recognising these challenges, the Government of India has taken several measures both at policy and programme level. At the policy level, steps have been taken to update the existing policy framework and frame new ones to meet the emerging needs and changes in the overall economic and social environment of the country. In 1991, India adopted a more 'inclusive' view of economic development emphasizing that it must integrate with the global economy. The National Housing Policy, 1994 was a product of this economic point of view. The recent National Urban Housing and Habitat Policy (NUHHP), 2007 seeks to enhance the spotlight on 'habitat' with a 'Regional Planning approach' as well as further deepen the role of Government as an 'enabler' and 'facilitator'. The core focus of this Policy is provision of "Affordable Housing for All" with special emphasis on vulnerable sections of society, especially the urban poor. The Policy provides that 10 to 15 percent of land in every new public/private housing project or 20 to 25 percent of FAR / Floor

Space Index (FSI) whichever is greater will be reserved for Economically Weaker Sections(EWS)/Low Income Group (LIG) housing through appropriate legal stipulations and spatial incentives. The Housing Policy focuses the spotlight on multiple stake-holders namely, the Private Sector, the Cooperative Sector, the Industrial Sector for labour housing and the Services/Institutional Sector for employee housing. In this manner, the Policy seeks to promote various types of public-private partnerships for realizing the goal of "Affordable Housing For All". The total estimated housing shortage at the end of the 10th Plan Period in India, i.e. March, 2007, was around 24.7 million units. 99% of this shortage pertained to Economically weaker section (EWS) & Low Income Groups(LIG) sectors. The issue of affordability, therefore, assumes critical significance.

The issues of urban poverty are assuming critical proportions. A key policy issue in addressing urban poverty is the lack of adequate knowledge on the dimensions of urban poverty. Accordingly, my Ministry under Government of India has embarked upon the initiative of preparing India Urban Poverty Report addressing almost all aspects of knowledge in urban poverty. Very eminent researchers in the country were selected to conduct research and prepare papers on various issues, such as data base, gender dimensions, poverty and migration, unorganized sector and urban poverty, urban microfinance, access to basic amenities, urban security, urban land market and access of the poor to urban land, access of urban poor

to health, education and urban governance.

In a significant and far-reaching move, the Government of India in 2005 has launched a pioneering programme the “Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM)”, with a central outlay of Rupees 500 billion or approximately US \$ 12.5 billion, for an initial period of seven years. The aim of the Mission is to encourage reforms and fast track planned development of 63 identified cities, focusing on efficiency in urban infrastructure and service delivery mechanisms, community participation, and accountability of urban local bodies/ Parastatal agencies towards citizens. JNNURM comprises two sub-missions namely: Sub-Mission for Urban Infrastructure and Governance; and Sub-Mission for Basic Services to the Urban Poor. The Sub mission of Basic Services for the Urban Poor (BSUP) has a seven point charter - security of tenure, affordable housing, water, sanitation, health, education and social security – in low income settlements in the 63 Mission Cities. The Sub-Mission for Urban Infrastructure and Governance gives focused attention to integrated development of infrastructural services to develop effective linkages between asset creation and asset management. In addition to the identified 63 Mission cities, issues of infrastructural services are being addressed through the Urban Infrastructure Development Scheme for Small and Medium Towns (UIDSSMT) in the remaining Non-Mission cities. The Integrated Housing and Slum Development Programme (IHSDP) seeks to provide the same set of seven services in towns/cities other than Mission cities. JNNURM

seeks to encourage private sector participation with the Government providing viability gap funding. The total number of dwelling units approved is approximately 1.1 million under the Mission Programme.

Slums are a physical manifestation of social exclusion and inequity. There is ample evidence to suggest that improvement in the lives of slum dwellers is socially and economically beneficial in long-term and can go a long way in making cities more inclusive. The Housing Policy 2007 also provides a broad policy framework to tackle the issue of slums.

Indian initiatives pertaining to Slum Upgrading and prevention are in line with Goal 7 of the Millennium declaration covering Environmental sustainability, which addresses the challenge of housing and urban development. The goal of “Improvement of the Lives of Slum Dwellers” implying access to safe water, sanitation, security of tenure, durability of housing and sufficient living area as well as social services such as health and education are to be given focused attention to achieve improvement in the lives of targeted 100 million slum dwellers globally by the year 2020. The concept of City-wide Slum Upgrading strategy is being carried forward in several ways in different parts of India. Innovative steps are being contemplated by the Government of India both for security of land tenure for the Urban Poor and the establishment of Urban poor funds. All state and city authorities have been directed to have “mandatory reservation” for economically weaker sections and low income

groups in all housing projects.

My Ministry has launched a campaign for slum-free cities with the objective of ensuring that the urban poor get a new deal. The campaign envisages that 07 basic amenities/services, viz; land tenure, affordable housing, water, sanitation, education, health and social security are provided to the urban poor as a package in a time bound manner. We envisage that substantial progress will be achieved by various cities and towns by 2020. Several States have drawn time-bound programmes to make their cities slum-free and poverty-free.

In India, the historic 74th Constitutional Amendment enacted in 1993 has enabled the local governments to have an important role in all matters concerning their respective cities/towns. An elected body with councilors elected from each ward facilitates articulation of felt needs and priorities at ward level. Communities co-opt and work through the councilors to access services such as access roads/paving, water supply and sanitation, community facilities such as community hall, pre-school/crèche etc. There is a growing awareness about the prospects of community action that can supplement and support the efforts of public agencies to enlarge the coverage of access to basic services and housing specially, by the poor. To realize this potential, the Government of India has taken steps to establish a Community Development Network (CDN). This network is aimed at fostering network of Community Development Societies,

Neighbourhood Committees; Self Help Groups of the poor, other civil society organizations and resource institutions working on issues of urban poverty. It works as a catalyst, mutually reinforcing Government and community efforts and using a common platform to deliberate on issues of urban poverty and sustainable neighbourhoods.

The concern of gender: considerations of equality, equity and empowerment is one that cuts across all others and is of particular relevance in the urban context. Studies have shown that women are much more severely affected by poverty and deprivations than men. India has recognized the need early on, and in fact, is one among the 40 countries across the world which has been making conscious efforts to adopt gender budgeting as a means for mainstreaming the gender issues.

Most of the programmes of my ministry like the Swarna Jayanti Shahri Rojgar Yojana (SJSRY), and the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) have adopted gender mainstreaming and budgeting whereby atleast 30% beneficiary of SJSRY are women and housing titles under JNNURM are given mostly in the name of women and even in exceptions, given jointly in the name of husband and wife. Other schemes of the Ministry like Integrated Low Cost Sanitation (ILCS), Interest Subsidy Scheme, and others, have also been reformulated with focus on gender concerns.

Informal workers like hawkers and vendors make a unique contribution to the city's fabric. We have acknowledged their contribution and are in the process of revising an existing National Urban Street Vendors policy which shall provide a framework for providing legal space to them under city master plans. A model act for provincial governments is also being framed. Initiatives of Government of India go beyond policy proclamation and in several cities such as in Mumbai, the Government of India is working hand in hand with grass root level organizations working for welfare of slum dwellers to find common acceptable solutions. In Mumbai alone, over 90 buildings have been constructed by various organizations, providing houses to more than 35,000 slum dweller families.

We have taken major strides and more importantly in the right direction. We look forward to a dream India in the future where we would have addressed the development disparities in urban India in a comprehensive and holistic manner. I eagerly look forward to the experience-sharing and learning from all the member countries represented here at this World Urban Forum to further step up our efforts towards building a sustainable urban India harmonious in its socio-economic fabric.

Jai Hind