

STATEMENT BY THE HONOURABLE F. MHASHU, MINISTER  
OF NATIONAL HOUSING AND SOCIAL AMENITIES, AT THE  
SECOND SESSION OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL OF THE  
UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON HUMAN  
SETTLEMENTS PROGRAMME UN-HABITAT; 30 MARCH 2009  
NAIROBI, KENYA.

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MR PRESIDENT,

THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF UN – HABITANT,

ANNA TIBAIJUKA

YOUR EXCELLENCIES

REPRESENTATIVES OF UN AGENCIES AND

MULTILATERAL ORGANISATIONS

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS

INVITED GUESTS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

May I in the first instance join the other speakers before me in  
congratulating you for being elected the President of the Second  
Session of the Governing Council of the United Nations Commission

on Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat). We are equally grateful to the Executive Director of UN-Habitat for extending the invitation to the inclusive Government of the Republic of Zimbabwe to participate at this important meeting.

Mr President, you undoubtedly have a mammoth task before you, as you are coming into office when the human settlements sector world wide is faced with numerous challenges. This situation is likely to be worsened by the current world economic recession which will see the housing sector given the least priority.

Zimbabwe is not an exception, as there has not been any significant investment in housing infrastructure during the past decade. The general lack of off-site services in most of Zimbabwe's urban centres has affected urban growth resulting in serious cases of overcrowding.

A recent study on urban housing needs estimates the housing backlog for the 29 major urban centres at 542630 housing units resulting in an occupancy rate of 22 persons per 200 square metre stand in highly populated settlements of Harare, Chitungwiza and Epworth.

The existing infrastructure is also calling for huge investment to maintain it and upgrade it to meet the fast increasing urban population. Our local authorities need to be capacitated in terms of

both human resources and construction equipment to enable them to undertake meaningful construction works.

Mr President, the inclusive Government of the Republic of Zimbabwe upholds the principles under which the United Nations Commission on Human Settlements was established and assures this august house of its total support in implementing the resolutions of this meeting. We are committed to continue with projects started by the previous government towards meeting the goals set under the Millennium Development Goals. We are also committed to the implementation of the recommendations of the Habitat Agenda, which among other things encourage national governments to adopt human settlements policies that facilitate the participation of other partners in housing development.

May I also inform this august house, that inline with the above policies, my Ministry has been very successful in mobilising other partners from the private sector, local authorities, non governmental organisations and community based organisations. The consultative process which will end up with a housing convention in May 2009 has already begun. The main objective of the housing convention will be to afford a forum for all stakeholders to have an input in the housing policy formulation process. This will enable the Ministry to understand the magnitude of the housing problem and map the way

forward. The Ministry of National Housing and Social Amenities of which I am the Minister, is grateful to the logistical support given by UN-Habitat in preparing for the housing convention.

Mr President, Zimbabwe is ready and committed to implementing the Millenium Development Goals inline with the resolutions of this august house and is appealing to sympathetic friends and other international institutions to support it's endeavour by availing off-shore lines of credit in order to recapitalise building societies and local authorities to effectively play their roles in human settlements development. Zimbabwe has a very advanced private sector housing finance infrastructure which is dominated by building societies. The sector has however not been spared by the current economic difficulties facing the country. What is now required is bridging finance to enable the banks to kick-start the mortgage lending process. On the other hand our local authorities also lack the necessary capital to enable them to construct major off-site infrastructure works which now pose as the major constraint to urban expansion.

Ladies and gentlemen, aware of the role and responsibility placed on UN-Habitat and the insufficient resources at its disposal to effectively carry out its role, the Government of Zimbabwe supports the

previous resolutions which call upon the United Nations General Assembly to increase its allocations to UN-Habitat. We equally call upon member states to honour their pledges to the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation. I am aware that Zimbabwe has for sometime not been contributing to this Fund but would like to assure this august house that we will start the regular contributions to the Human Settlements Foundation as soon as our economic situation improves and this won't be any longer.

Mr President, Zimbabwe subscribes to the resolution of the Twenty First Session of the Governing Council of the United Nations Commission on Human Settlements which recommends the establishment of a National Housing Fund within the United Nations and Human Settlements Foundation to be used for direct intervention by UN-Habitat when and wherever there is a human settlement crisis. This is necessary given the fact that the developing world is experiencing an ever increasing rate of urban poverty and that international capital is not attracted to invest in such conditions.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Zimbabwe is fast urbanising at an average rate of 7% per annum and thus creates lucrative opportunities for land developers. I assure you that Zimbabwe is a safe destination for

investors who are interested in medium and up-market housing schemes. Investors are welcome to package their projects with local land developers and building societies of their choice. Government is considering a number of investment incentives that are attractive to foreign investment.

At this juncture, ladies and Gentlemen, I once again would want to reiterate our call for renewed co-operation with the international community in human settlements development. A friend in times of need is a friend indeed.

Mr President I wish you success during your term of office.

I thank you.