

UNITED NATIONS



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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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MESSAGE ON WORLD HABITAT DAY

4 October 2010

As our world grows predominantly urban, World Habitat Day provides an annual opportunity to reflect on how we can make our towns and cities better places for all. With the theme “*Better City, Better Life*”, this year’s observance highlights the actions and policies that can improve well-being for the billion people who live in slums and other sub-standard housing around the world.

Typically living in developing countries, and largely powerless, disenfranchised and under the age of 25, the urban poor are too often condemned to a life without basic rights, hope of an education or decent work. Lacking adequate provision of fresh water, electricity, sanitation or health care, they suffer privations that all too often provide the tinder for the fires of social unrest. Vulnerable to exploitation and corruption, they need and deserve better cities and a better life.

The challenges of urban poverty – from pollution to criminal gang culture – are not insurmountable. Many cities are finding successful solutions. Smart cities recognize the importance of good governance, basic urban services for all, and streets and public spaces where women and children feel safe. They also recognize that better cities can help to mitigate global challenges, such as climate change, by promoting energy conservation and environmental sustainability.

Creating better cities demands the combined efforts of national and local governments, civil society and the private sector, supported by the best efforts of the United Nations system. On World Habitat Day, let us pledge to join hands to make better cities for a better future for all.