UN⊛HABITAT

United Nations Human Settlements Programme

Opening Address to

Third African Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development (AMCHUD III)

"LAND IN THE CONTEXT OF SUSTAINABLE URBANISATION"

There can be no sustainable urbanisation without sustainable land management

By

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Your Excellency, Madam Gakou Salamata Fofana, Minister of Housing and Urban Development of Mali,

Honourable Ministers,

Excellencies,

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to start by thanking the Government of Mali, for inviting UN-Habitat to participate as a co-organizer of this Third African Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development.

Allow me, Madam Minister, to pay tribute to the Honourable Ministers and delegations from the various African countries who have come to Bamako. Your presence here bears testimony to your commitment to the agenda of this conference, and demonstrates the importance you attach to the institution of AMCHUD.

I would like to especially recognize the presence of the representative from the **Commission of the African Union**. AMCHUD is highly privileged to have been founded in Durban, South Africa, in 2005 under the auspices of the continental body – the African Union. The Commission has all along been supportive of the AMCHUD initiatives and has promoted closer collaboration. UN-Habitat considers the AU as the ultimate patron and custodian of the further development of this institution. We appreciate this very much.

AMCHUD has become a powerful vehicle for promoting the agenda of sustainable urban development. It has also enhanced the voice of African Ministers of housing and urban development in global forums.

I seize this opportunity to congratulate the outgoing Bureau and Chair of AMCHUD for the work done since the **Abuja Conference in 2008**.

Your Excellency, Honourable Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen.

> "**Access to land and legal security of tenure** *are strategic prerequisites for the provision of adequate shelter for all and for the development of sustainable human settlements affecting both urban and rural areas. It is also one way of* **breaking the vicious circle of poverty**."

I have just quoted paragraph 75 of the **Habitat Agenda**. This statement adopted by you all as UN member states in 1996 in Istanbul is still very relevant today.

The timing of this conference, in relation to the theme being addressed, is very significant. **Sustainable urbanization** is one of the main challenges impacting on the development agenda of the 21st century globally. Your inputs will enrich our 23rd Governing Council in April next year and will fit into the preparations for the Rio+20 Conference in 2012.

Excellencies, the growth of **urbanization in Africa is the highest in the world**. The urban population will grow from 38% today to 50% by 2025.

What is contributing to rapid urbanization today in Africa?

1- Climate change is affecting Africa's ecosystems more than any other continent. It is particularly affecting land use systems. Frequent droughts have direct impacts on biodiversity loss and desertification. These result in loss of agricultural land and related economic opportunities, producing waves of **climate refugees in cities**.

2- Violent conflicts are often land-related, based on a struggle to access and control natural resources. Africa now has some 22.5 million internally displaced

persons and refugees. While deeply regrettable, crises affecting cities should also be seen as opportunities to rebuild and operate better and make the African cities work for their citizens.

3- Changes in agricultural policies and rural poverty move people to the city.

Large scale migration of people to urban and peri-urban areas is a key factor in Africa's rapid urbanization process. These migrants need resettlement areas that provide safety, food, water, a home, sustainable livelihoods, environmental safety and socially stimulating spaces. Population growth means competition over water use, land and services.

Over 60% of Africa's urban population lives in informal settlements. This inequality of access to resources, particularly land, dominates urban development patterns and is impacting on social stability. This has serious implications for national economies, since cities are key drivers of the economy.

Sustainable urban development is therefore vital to both national economic growth and poverty alleviation. **Equitable urban land use and management systems** are key to achieving sustainable urban development. Effective policies, laws and practices governing the use, administration and management of land are fundamental for urban development and housing.

Addressing land in the context of MDGs is important, because land intersects with a number of MDGs, especially Goal 7 on ensuring Environmental Sustainability, under which the target on slums falls.

Urbanization and land Issues

The **vulnerability of low-income families,** given these problems, has worsened the face of poverty in many African countries. A new urban phenomenon of extreme deprivation is emerging, making **social safety nets like land critically important**.

The **ad-hoc approach to the delivery** of shelter and urban infrastructure is not sustainable. Many local authorities have weak capacities, administrative and fiscal autonomy to cope with the overwhelming demand for services, compounded by the multi-faceted challenges of poverty.

Proactive, comprehensive and integrated approaches to land are essential to the overall improvement of cities. A fresh examination of **management instruments** such as urban planning, land tax and land policy in African cities is needed.

Land-related policy interventions are instrumental in increasing the productivity of African cities and the delivery of basic services, addressing the threats of climate change, managing post-crisis situations and environmental preservation.

Successful land management and governance will influence the compactness or sprawl of cities, as well as the scale of their environmental footprint. It will also influence the extent of their inclusiveness of women as well as vulnerable and marginalized groups.

Ultimately, **land is a critical factor in sustainable urban development.**

Your Excellency, Honourable Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Key Challenges and Opportunities

Given these issues, I would like to highlight some **critical land related challenges and opportunities** facing African Ministers responsible for housing and urban development.

Land is at the core of housing and urban development in Africa. The way land is addressed impacts on the **location of settlements**; housing; mobility flows; asset valorisation; economic activities; flora and fauna; and natural features.

States often do not recognise informal settlements, usually excluding them from access to basic services such as water, solid waste management, sewerage, schools and health centres.

Political leadership and will are required to make urban reforms to address the needs of the urban poor. The urban sector is under prioritized and resourced in the national agenda.

Developing adequate policy, regulatory and institutional frameworks is paramount in enabling various government agencies dealing with land and urban matters to work effectively.

The Land Policy Initiative for Africa (LPI), has, in this context, been promoted by the African Union, the Economic Commission for Africa and the African Development Bank, with support from UN-HABITAT's Global Land Tool Network. African Ministers in charge of land, housing and urban development have the opportunity to support a common land policy framework through this Initiative. It is intended to foster partnerships, collaboration and sharing of good practices on land issues amongst African states and is an opportunity to advance the urban agenda.

Governments will gain by reviewing their regulatory and institutional frameworks in line with the Land Policy Initiative for Africa. **Development partners** will also find this Initiative particularly important as the umbrella for any large scale land initiatives at country level.

It is vital to recognize the range of tenure systems, including individual titles or deeds; tenancy agreements; customary rights; co-ownership; and communal titles. This has proven to have several benefits for urban development and housing delivery at scale. Over 14 African states have such a range of tenure practices allowing the inclusion of group representatives and the protection of the poor.

Tenure rights of slum dwellers, now recognized in some countries, enable local authorities to develop and implement participatory local urban land use planning.

Land, tenure and information are linked and are all important. A land inventory system should serve multiple ends: tenure, land use planning, and development.

UN-Habitat, through its Global Land Tool Network, a partnership of global land actors, is developing pro-poor land tools. These tools include the "Social Tenure Domain Model", which supports the implementation of the continuum of land

tenure. These tools also cover land governance; gender evaluation; innovative land and property taxation; citywide strategic planning; land, environment and climate change; and post-disaster land issues, among others.

The full potential of using **appropriate land administration, planning processes and urban management tools** to make cities real engines of growth is yet to be realised in most African countries.

Land use and management for urban development have to deal with competing yet complementary environmental, economic investment, shelter and infrastructure demands. These needs require an integrated coordinating framework.

Participatory urban planning can provide a framework for rationalising decisions and choices, including density, mix of uses, typologies of housing, mobility, infrastructure and services..

Promoting densification through appropriate legal tenure systems is crucial for the next stage of sustainable urban development in Africa. Such systems include condominiums, apartments, forms of housing associations and cooperatives.

Inclusion of all key stakeholders in land policy processes is essential for ensuring sustainable outcomes. The growing number of stakeholders in the urban sector support bottom-up approaches for urban development, including innovative public-private partnerships.

Appropriate land administration and land record systems are crucial to achieving city wide delivery. Creating integrated sustainable urban systems, including land records, planning, governance, services and infrastructure will help countries to move from small scale slum upgrading to city wide initiatives, including slum prevention initiatives.

Women own only an estimated 3 per cent of land in Africa. Promoting gender sensitive and inclusive processes will ensure that women's needs will be recognized and enhanced in land as well as urban and housing policy formulation.

The poor are discriminated against by the urban land market in many African cities. Rising costs of urban land prevent poor, vulnerable and disadvantaged groups from gaining access to suitable land. They are forced to settle informally in areas that pose economic, environmental or health risks to the residents.

Investing in appropriate land and property taxation could initiate sustainable urban development, given how prominent land and housing assets are. Land and housing taxation has a multiplying effect on investment, urban development and the construction industry. Some African Governments are currently considering or improving land and property taxation in order to fund urban development and infrastructure.

We know that the urbanization process creates a lot of economic value. This added value is normally gained by the private stakeholders of the urbanization process. It is important that the public sector get a part of it in order to invest in the amelioration and extension of the urban services.

Bringing urban development into harmony with the environment is essential to achieving a sustainable urban world.

Housing needs in Africa are estimated at around six million units per year, over 60 per cent of this is needed to accommodate urban demand. In many cities, weak implementation of planning measures reduces access to amenities and services.

Urban residential plot sizes in Africa typically vary from 300 to 700 square metres. Such standards propel urban sprawl and are costly for housing consumers, local authorities and developers. This is partly due to the associated infrastructure costs.

Urban housing costs are becoming increasingly high in all countries. Access to land constitutes one of the major shares of the cost of housing.

Through the preparation of housing profiles, UN-Habitat is supporting countries to assess their housing sectors. This is done through participatory approaches for developing housing policies and strategies.

Options for the Way Forward

Your Excellency, Honourable Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Access to urban land is fundamental for sustainable urban development and the housing sector, as a catalyst for economic development, poverty reduction and employment generation. Going forward, I would like to suggest three areas for your consideration.

First, what considerations should be addressed in order to create enabling frameworks?

A **framework that secures tenure** for all existing and new urban populations is needed to ensure sustainable development in Africa.

Secure land rights for all are best achieved when nested within **coherent governance frameworks** which build accountability and stronger participation.

Second, what are some of the strategic land-related entry points?

Urban planning and building regulations must facilitate the prosperity and equity of cities. This includes revising standards and administrative procedures, reducing entry costs and accelerating the supply of new legal developments.

Land records and land information should be managed so that the systems which underpin sustainable cities can operate effectively. These systems include planning; infrastructure and housing delivery; as well as environmental, solid waste and transport management.

Introducing and collecting land and property taxes on both developed and undeveloped land should be considered, in conjunction with other instruments.

Third, what approaches are needed to address urban land issues?

A holistic approach to land, integrated at different institutional levels, is important. This should include, in particular, security of tenure, access, administration, management, re-redistribution and reform.

Incremental development of land tenure, housing construction and service provision should be considered.

Including women and those living in poverty is essential while African governments are introducing reforms and committing to providing legal security of tenure and equal access to land to all people.

A national housing and urban development committee including all key players would be a good instrument. It should include central and local governments, civil society, the private sector, research and training institutions and development partners.

UN-HABITAT is prepared to work with regional and sub-regional institutions, development partners, and all Habitat Agenda partners to pursue the recommendations of this conference.

Your Excellency, Honourable Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I finally take this opportunity to extend my personal invitation to you all to join us at the **23rd Session of UN-HABITAT's Governing Council**, to be held in Nairobi from 11 to 15 April 2011. The theme of the Governing Council session is closely related to that of this AMCHUD session, as it will focus on "Sustainable urban development through expanding access to land, housing, basic services and infrastructure".

The conclusions of your deliberations during today and tomorrow will enrich the discussion at the Governing Council. The voice of the African continent will be important in shaping the resolutions that will be adopted at the session and thereafter forwarded to the General Assembly.

Furthermore, Sustainable Urban Development is the focus of our **World Urban Campaign** and the sixth session of the **World Urban Forum** to be held in Bahrain in 2012. Both will contribute to the **Rio + 20 Conference** in 2012. These will also be good opportunities for including your positions on the subject.

I thank you for extending me an invitation to speak, for the wonderful hospitality of our host, and for your kind attention.