

Human Rights Dialogue
Side event at the UN-Habitat Governing Council
April 2013

Background:

Respect for and striving towards the realization of human rights of all peoples, as enshrined in the UN Charter, is part of the core mission of the United Nations and as such, constitutes a joint responsibility of all UN Agencies. UN-Habitat is mandated by the UN General Assembly to promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities with the goal of providing adequate shelter for all. All of UN-Habitat's interventions are underpinned by universal values that promote the adoption and implementation of a strong human rights-based approach to sustainable urban development.

The Executive Director of UN-Habitat will make public the organization's renewed commitment to working towards sustainable urban development premised on human rights at the 24th session of the UN-Habitat Governing Council in April 2013. Fully cognizant of the global demographic and environmental trends and challenges, UN-Habitat grasps the momentum to declare utmost consideration and respect for human rights as a means to direct the development discourse and practice towards more inclusive and equitable human settlements. Henceforth, UN-Habitat will strongly motion the human rights-based urbanization model and related processes that:

- Ensure the free, active and meaningful participation of the partners of development, and in particular of the most marginalized;
- Ensure the accountability of duty-bearers to the claims of rights-holders;
- Address the root causes that violate the principles of non-discrimination and equality; participation and inclusion, and accountability and the rule of law;
- Incorporate strategies for the political and economic empowerment of people, especially the most vulnerable and the most marginalized.

Content:

The Human Rights Dialogue will assemble interested representatives of the UN Member States. UN-Habitat leadership (Executive Director and his Office) will present organizational strategy for premising of UN-Habitat policies and operations in human rights. Considerations will include the significance of the momentum to proceed with a dedicated human rights policy, formalization of organizational arrangements and substantive work already in place as well as the projected activities in the short, medium and long-term.

Proposed format:

The presentations, organized in a panel, will be succeeded by an interactive discussion on human rights as both a substantive and operational premise of UN-Habitat's work. The following items throughout the panel presentations are planned:

- Key note address of the UN-Habitat Executive Director on UN-Habitat's renewed commitment to human rights;
- Presentation of the human rights strategy on how to mainstream human rights in the Agency;
- Presentation of the practical Handbook on the Rights in Cities, as commissioned by UN-Habitat as tangible implementation of one of the tenets of the human rights strategy;
- Address by the representative of a partner government regarding the practical implications of human rights mainstreaming in an urban setting;
- Explore follow up actions.

The meeting will be open to representatives of partner governments, civil society organizations, sister agencies and other interested human rights and development practitioners.

Expected outcome of the meeting:

The meeting will be a milestone consultation initiated by UN-Habitat to:

- Exchange views, experiences on efficient rights-based programming in urban settings.
- Contribute to the thinking, good programming policy and practice for UN-Habitat and other interested practitioners.
- Institute a platform for UN-Habitat and partners 'like-minded' in their commitment to human rights to explore the avenues of support and collaboration on human rights mainstreaming in sustainable urban development interventions.