

**Address by
Dr. Joan Clos
Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations
and Executive Director of UN-Habitat
on the Occasion of the Sixth Session of the
World Urban Forum,
Naples, Italy, 3 September, 2012**

Honourable Minister of Public Administration of Italy, Mr. Filippo Patroni Griffi,

Honourable Prime Ministers, Ministers and Heads of Delegations,

Honourable Members of Parliament,

Your Excellencies, Ambassadors and High Commissioners,

Honourable President of the Region of Campania, Mr. Stefano Caldoro,

Honourable President of the Province of Naples, Mr. Luigi Cesaro,

Your Worship, Mayor Luigi de Magistris of the City of Naples, and other Mayors,

Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my honour and great pleasure to welcome you to the Sixth Session of the World Urban Forum. It is fitting that this world's most important urban conference is being held here in Naples, one of the oldest and continuously inhabited cities in the world.

At the onset, I would like to thank our generous hosts, the Government of the Republic of Italy, the Region of Campania, the Province of Naples, and the City of Naples, who stepped in to help at a critical moment when the likelihood of holding this session of the World Urban Forum appeared to be in doubt.

I would also like to sincerely thank the Honourable Vice-President of the Comoros, Mr. Nouridine Bourhane, Her Royal Highness Sheikha Amthal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, of Kuwait, as well as the Ministers and Heads of Delegations for their presence here today.

My special thanks go to Mayors and representatives of local authorities who have honoured us with their presence. Your support of the conclusions and recommendations of this Sixth Session of the World Urban Forum will be crucial to the realization of a prosperous urban future.

Our thanks also go to the leaders of the more than 500 stakeholders of the Urban Agenda present here today in Naples, including leaders of grassroots associations, NGOs, universities, research groups and of all other stakeholders who have come to attend this Forum.

The theme of this WUF session is “The Urban Future”, focusing on the prosperity aspects, mainly the capacity to generate jobs and decent livelihood means for the citizens, as was agreed at the previous session of the World Urban Forum of 2010 in Rio de Janeiro. As we begin the second decade of the twenty-first century, and as the world struggles to address many global challenges such as the economic crisis and climate change, it is important to ask ourselves about the future of our cities and towns and their capacity for, or contribution to, generation of decent jobs and livelihood means.

As Adlai Stevenson said in 1952 in the first years of the United Nations, “We can chart our future clearly and wisely only when we know the path which has led to the present”. It is therefore auspicious that this session of the World Urban Forum is being held here in Naples, a city that has almost 27 centuries worth of experience in continuous urban living.

Allow me to take this opportunity to thank a number of sponsors whose generosity has made this session of the World Urban Forum possible.

First and foremost, on behalf of UN-Habitat, I would like to express our deep gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Italy for its generous financial contribution and support of this session of the World Urban Forum.

I must also sincerely thank the Governments of the Republic of France and the USA for their generous financial contributions towards supporting the travel of participants from developing countries to WUF 6.

My special thanks go to the Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain which, some years ago, generously commenced sponsorship of the Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa UN-Habitat Award, which has since then been a feature of the World Urban Forum.

My thanks also go to other members of the World Urban Campaign who are present today to participate in this Forum.

I would like to specially mention other UN sister agencies, with whom we Deliver as One UN, for their support and presence today.

Last, but not least, I would like to express my profound gratitude and appreciation to all participants who are present here today. The World Urban Forum is an arena for the exchange of new and innovative ideas on urban development. This would not be possible without your contributions and participation.

Let us pause for a moment and give all our supporters a big hand of applause.

Thank you.

Excellencies, Honourable Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen

We are gathered here to share ideas on the theme of “The Urban Future”. Allow me, therefore, to share with you UN-Habitat’s current thinking about the role of urbanization in developing countries. We believe a sound understanding of this role of urbanization will guide our urban future.

Let me start by emphasizing that the world is fast becoming predominantly urban, and relentlessly so. At the beginning of the 19th century, only 2 per cent of the world’s population was urban. By the beginning of the 20th century, the percentage had increased to 10. As, you all know, the world’s population living in urban areas reached 50 per cent during the first decade of the 21st century.

In the developing world, Africa and Asia are the least urbanized continents, still below 50 per cent, while the Latin America and Caribbean region’s urbanization level has already surpassed 76 per cent. The fastest rates of urbanization are in Africa and Asia, the two continents where the majority of least developed countries are also concentrated.

Economic historical studies have established that there is a positive correlation between urbanization and development. It is also clear that throughout history, urbanization has been, and continues to be a source rather than only an outcome of development. Because of this, urbanization can be used as a powerful tool for creating employment and livelihoods. This requires a mindset shift on the part of decision makers, away from viewing urbanization mainly as a problem, towards viewing urbanization as a tool for development.

Cities and towns in developing countries are facing serious challenges, which include: unemployment, especially among the youth; high percentages of people living in slums; dominance of the informal sector; inadequate urban basic services, especially water, sanitation and energy; unplanned peri-urban expansion; social and political conflict over land; high levels of vulnerability to natural disasters; and poor mobility systems, among others.

But at the same time, cities and towns play their role as drivers of national economic and social development, and therefore the challenges that they present have to be addressed one way or another.

In developing countries, rapid urbanization is preceding industrialization. This fact has resulted in a limited number of formal industrial jobs and in widespread unemployment. This, in turn, has led to the expansion of the urban informal sector.

Slums and the informal sector can be seen as the spontaneous form of urbanization consisting of a series of survival strategies, most borne out of poverty and desperation. But as difficult as it is, the slum represents the only housing and livelihood opportunity for a lot of people, and proper consideration should be given to slum upgrading and improvement strategies, not simply demolition.

What can be done to address these challenges and to ensure that the cities and towns of developing countries improve their effectiveness as tools for national development? There are four fundamental pre-requisites that UN-Habitat promotes.

The first is effective political decision-making. Planned urbanization requires robust political institutional capacity to manage differences, land disputes and conflicts of interest. In a democratic context, planned urbanization requires political legitimacy, trust and the rule of law.

The second is a good understanding of the use and productivity of common goods. Urban public space is the most important common good, and the challenge of free-riders must be effectively addressed at all times. Without this clear understanding of the importance of public goods, there can be no capacity to plan urban development effectively.

The third is effective governance capacity. The transition from spontaneous urbanization to planned urbanization requires robust governance capacity at both the national and local levels.

The fourth pre-requisite of planned urban expansion is adequate technical capacity to plan, develop and manage the city. This goes hand in hand with institutional capacity, since the effectiveness of urban planning, development and management can only be guaranteed by robust legal and administrative frameworks.

To translate these ideas into effective reality, UN-Habitat is promoting two lines of action, the first at national level, i.e. the elaboration of national urban policy, and the second mainly at the local level, i.e. properly planned city extensions.

National urban policy provides a framework for future urban development. It should ensure maximization of national and local benefits of urbanization, while at the same time

mitigating potential negative impacts. It should also provide mechanisms for the coordinating the work of different sectors and ministries in urban development. It should answer the question on how the Government plans to host the next generation of urban population.

Properly planned city extensions are necessary to address the widespread phenomenon of spontaneous informal settlements, to create urban jobs, and to achieve social integration. Planned city extensions can also guarantee a number of other positive outcomes, including: (i) adequately planned future supply of land with affordable development solutions; (ii) mitigation of the effects of urban growth and land speculation; (iii) optimization of land use and bringing of population closer to employment opportunities; (iv) less energy consumption and reduced carbon footprint; and (v) maximization of the use of existing infrastructure and more cost-effective and phased development of new infrastructure.

UN-Habitat has the mandate to facilitate urban policy reform and to provide technical assistance for programme and project implementation at the national and local levels. We believe strongly that we can achieve this through strengthened partnerships with all relevant stakeholders and the promotion of a fruitful dialogue, including South-South cooperation.

As we prepare for the 2016 Third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), let us work together to create an environmentally sustainable, economically productive, and socially inclusive urban future.

This sixth session of the World Urban Forum is the first opportunity for us to share ideas about Habitat III, whose agenda will be about the urban future that we want to create for ourselves, our children and for generations to come. It is in this context that I believe the ideas and recommendations from this WUF session will be particularly significant. As in the past, I will convey your recommendations to the 24th session of the UN-Habitat Governing Council, which will be held in April 2013.

Excellencies, Honourable Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me conclude my introductory statement by announcing the publication of the latest issue of UN-Habitat's State of the World's Cities Report 2012-2013, which is titled Prosperity of Cities. The report's content and findings are extremely relevant to the discussions that will take place during this session of the World Urban Forum. It will be launched at a special event during the Forum.

The report takes cognizance of the arrival of the urban age and the accelerated advance towards a global urban future. It reaffirms that this historical development is not merely a demographic phenomenon. It is neither only a shift of population concentration nor is it simply a growth in the size of cities. The city is not only a space where structures are placed

and where life is lived. Indeed, the city is a vibrant and powerful force for development and that it exerts a tremendous impact on wellbeing at the global, regional, national and local levels.

Yet it is observed in this report that the quest for prosperity has been severely lopsided and ill-balanced. Its benefits are confined largely to privileged social groups and spatial areas.

The report that we will launch includes an instrument for measuring progress towards shared prosperity at different stages of urban development and in different parts of the world. We have called this instrument, the City Prosperity Index.

We do hope that at an opportune time, we will be collaborating with your cities to use this instrument as a basis for developing strategic interventions that can enable your urban centres to achieve what seems to have been elusive for the past several decades.

Excellencies, Honourable Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen

Allow me once again to state my profound gratitude to the Government and people of Italy, to the Campania Region and the Province of Naples, and to the City of Naples for their generous hospitality, and to all of you for coming here to share your ideas.

Thank you for your attention.