

**Thai Evening and Exhibition
UN Offices Gigiri, Tuesday, 8 June 2004**

**Remarks by Dr. Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka
Under-Secretary General and Executive Director, UN-HABITAT**

Honourable Ministers, Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have great pleasure in welcoming you to the United Nations offices in Nairobi, the Headquarters of the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme.

I would also like to extend a cordial welcome to Dr. Sumet Tantivajkul, Secretary General of the Royal Development Projects Board in Thailand, for traveling all the way from Bangkok to Nairobi for enlightening us all on the Royal development projects of His Majesty, the King of Thailand.

The occasion that brings us all here this evening – The Thai evening - is indeed a unique one – an occasion for celebration. In October last year, on the occasion of the World Habitat Day, UN-HABITAT announced the conferring of the HABITAT Scroll of Honour (Special Citation) to His Majesty Bhumibol Adulyadej, the King of Thailand, in recognition of His Majesty's outstanding contribution to sustaining habitats and improving the quality of life of the people in cities and communities in the Kingdom of Thailand.

The HABITAT Scroll of Honour (Special Citation) is the highest recognition accorded by UN-HABITAT, and is accorded most selectively, for outstanding innovation in human settlements development, which is replicable internationally. I am greatly delighted to inform you that His Majesty is the sixth recipient of this Honour since the inception of this award in 1985.

In February this year, I traveled to Bangkok to personally hand over the Scroll of Honour to His Majesty the King. At this occasion, the Government of Thailand decided to organize a **UN-HABITAT-Government of Thailand Cooperation Day** in Nairobi to celebrate this honour bestowed on

their beloved King. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate His Excellency the Ambassador of Thailand in Kenya and the Permanent Representative of Thailand to UN-HABITAT and his hard-working team, for their tireless effort to make this evening a great success.

Honourable Ministers, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

UN-HABITAT has been mandated by the United Nations General Assembly to promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities with the goal of providing adequate shelter to all.

Water resources management in human settlements presents an outstanding challenge for sustainable human settlements development. It combines two key challenges into one. First, the challenge of securing for all the basic human need of a reliable supply of safe drinking water and sanitation; and secondly, the challenge of meeting the competing demands of the domestic sector, agriculture and industry, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their water needs.

The Millennium Development Goals and the Plan of Implementation adopted by the World Summit on Sustainable Development have set clear targets to improve access to safe water and basic sanitation to the urban and rural poor. This will require an integrated approach to water resource management in human settlements. The United Nations General Assembly, in its resolution 57/275 adopted in 2002, requested UN-HABITAT to support developing countries in implementing these goals in order to increase access to clean water, sanitation and adequate shelter.

His Majesty's tireless efforts and outstanding contribution to improving water resource management in Thailand have been well documented. Notable among these contributions are: pollution control of Bangkok's canals, innovative water treatment of Makkasan Lake, which are aptly known as the "natural kidneys of Bangkok", Pa Sak River Basin Development Project which reduced water pollution in Bangkok and other major cities of central Thailand, and the management of floods and salinization problems in Southern Thailand.

All these Royal Development Projects are characterized by simplicity, innovation, concern for nature and the environment and an intimate understanding of peoples' perceptions and priorities for improving living

conditions. These also represent the cardinal principles underlying sustainable development. The Royal Development Projects have not only helped immensely to improve the quality of life of the people of Thailand but they also stand out as shining examples of sustainable human settlement development initiatives that the rest of the world could learn from.

During my recent visit to Thailand, I was pleased to be informed by the Honourable Prime Minister that Thailand was observing 2004 as the Year of Africa. The event this evening provides a good opportunity for the interaction of African leaders and the industry to get to know of Thai development experience relevant to the continent.

For example, the Government of Thailand has undertaken an ambitious slum upgrading programme in sixty cities around the country. This experience could be very useful to us as we implement our slum upgrading initiative in Africa.

UNHABITAT's programmes like the Water for African Cities could also provide opportunities to benefit from Thai experience in water management, specifically, waste water treatment, cleaning up of rivers etc. in African countries. The experience of the Thai construction Industry would also be of interest in our slum upgrading initiatives in Africa.

UN-HABITAT is currently working with countries in the region to develop a small towns initiative around Lake Victoria, to support these settlements to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. The experience of Mekong regional cooperation would be of interest in this context and any expertise that Thailand could provide to us in this context would be welcome.

I am also pleased to note that Thailand gives high priority to reconstruction programmes in post-conflict countries in its international partnership programme, particularly in Afghanistan and Iraq. UN-HABITAT'S Disaster Management Programme could provide an opportunity to Thailand to support our ongoing efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Turning to the Asia Pacific region, I would welcome Thailand's active participation in UN-HABITAT's Water for Asian Cities Programme. This programme provides a good opportunity to enhance regional cooperation in urban water management. UNHABITAT has launched this programme in

partnership with the Asian Development Bank, which will bring \$ 10 million capacity building grants and \$500 million follow-up investments over five years (2003-2007) to Asian cities.

As part of this programme, UN-HABITAT is currently working with the Government of Thailand to develop a Mekong regional cooperation in the area of urban water management. Thailand's experience of innovative wastewater treatment, river cleaning up etc. developed through Royal Development Projects, could help countries in the region to improve their water resources management.

In closing, I would like to thank all of you for joining in the Thai cultural evening and wish all success to the Government of Thailand's effort to enhance cooperation with Africa.

Thank you.