



**OPENING STATEMENT BY DR. JOAN CLOS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF UN-HABITAT AND
HABITAT III SECRETARY-GENERAL**

5th Session of AMCHUD: High-Level Segment

N'Djamena, Chad, 28 February, 2014

Your Excellency, Prime Minister of the Republic of Chad

Honourable Speaker of the National Assembly

**Honourable Minister Gata Ngoulou, Chair of AMCHUD and Minister of Urban
Development, Housing, Land Tenure and Public Property, Republic of Chad**

Honourable Ministers and Heads of Delegations,

Honourable Members of Parliament,

Your Excellencies, Ambassadors and High Commissioners,

Your Worship, the Mayor of the City of N'Djamena, and other Mayors present,

Honourable Representative of the African Development Bank

Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my honour and great pleasure to address this Fifth Session of AMCHUD.

At the onset, I would like to thank our generous hosts, the Government of the Republic of Chad and the City of N'Djamena, for their warm welcome and kind hospitality.

I must, on behalf of UN-Habitat, express deep gratitude to the AMCHUD Chair, **Honourable Minister Gata Ngoulou, and to the outgoing Chair, Honourable Cabinet Secretary Charity Ngilu.** Your stewardship of AMCHUD has greatly enhanced the development of a shared vision of sustainable urbanization and human settlements in Africa. I would also like to thank Honourable Minister Jean-Claude Mbwentchou, for accepting to chair this session of AMCHUD.

The **Secretariat of AMCHUD** has played a critical role in this unfolding vision and focus. On behalf of UN-Habitat, I thank you for your hard work over the years, and especially for your successful preparations for this meeting. I would also like to express profound gratitude to the Government of Kenya for giving a home to the AMCHUD Secretariat, and for all the support provided to the Secretariat.

I am also grateful to for the support of the representatives of the African countries in the Committee of Permanent Representatives of the Governing Council of UN-Habitat.

I would also like to recognize the **tremendous work done during the Expert Group Meeting** in the last two days, and to thank our experts and senior staff for their hard work.

At the continental level, **Africa owes debts of gratitude to President Mahama of Ghana and President Jonathan of Nigeria** who, meeting in New York in September last year, decided to spearhead an initiative aimed at defining Africa's Urban Agenda. Their fundamental aim was to ensure that the Africa Urban Agenda would be reflected in the Africa Agenda 2063. The Governments of both Nigeria and Ghana proceeded to make generous voluntary financial contributions to UN-Habitat in order to translate into action the aim of collectively defining an Africa Urban Agenda. On behalf of UN-Habitat, I would like to express my deep gratitude to the Governments of both Ghana and Nigeria for their financial contributions to UN-Habitat.

Your Excellency, Mr. Chairman, Honourable Ministers, this meeting is taking place at a very exciting time for Africa. All over the world, there is recognition that **Africa is the next 'big thing' in business and economic growth**. Africa is poised to take-off.

Its economic growth in the last few years has been impressive and sustained, in spite of the global economic crisis. So, it is very timely that this Fifth Session of AMCHUD is focusing on the theme of "Financing Human Settlements in Africa", because the contribution of cities to national economic growth is very important, and is increasingly recognized. **But, if cities are to play this role, they must be properly planned and financed** to ensure adequate means of implementation, as well as physical infrastructures, without which there can be no sustained growth.

One of the priorities of UN-Habitat's Strategic Plan for 2014-2019 is Urban Economy and Municipal Finance. Our own work in this area has identified a number of policy and legislative directions that Governments may consider. These include legislation that enables the development of capital markets and the regulation of financial lenders for housing. The promotion of land-based financing, land value sharing and land readjustment, all of them ways of financing urban basic services. Equally, the recent experience gained in emission of , as well as project

based bonds in some African cities are innovative instruments very well received by the international financial market.

I am happy to see that **all of these issues and policy options have been considered and discussed during the last two days**. UN-Habitat stands ready to provide technical assistance to African Governments in order to implement the decisions taken by Ministers at this session of AMCHUD. UN-Habitat recognizes fully the need to partner with key institutions in this area, in particular the African Development Bank, Shelter Afrique and other financial institutions.

I would also like to emphasize the importance of **rural urbanization in Africa**. In this continent, the sustainable development of rural villages and market towns is crucial. This is because agriculture, food security and rural development are clear priorities. Rural urbanization can be the efficient way of providing adequate means of education, health and housing to rural populations, increasing the attractiveness of rural live. It must also accomplish the function of approaching advanced services to the rural areas such as inputs like machinery or fertilizers. UN-Habitat is working in developing rural urbanization to ensure that these services are improved in rural areas and that they are also well-connected to the rest of the country to better commercialize the agricultural production.. This is fundamental for a healthy national economy.

Excellency, Mr. Chairman, Honourable Ministers, permit me to say a few words about the African Urban Agenda, a key component of the discussions at this session.

Africa is the most rapidly urbanizing region of the world. More than half of Africa's population is still rural, but moving very fast towards urban areas, both to big cities and now, more and more, to intermediate cities, small villages and market towns. More than two thirds of Africa's projected total population of 2.5 billion people will be demanding urban services across the spectrum of human settlements from the rural village to the big capital, by 2063. It is for this reason that I urge you to forge an Africa Urban Agenda that recognizes the opportunities that urbanization represents at the mid and long term and the need of planning this in advance.

UN-Habitat strongly believes in the need for a new and **more positive approach to urbanization**. This perspective places much higher emphasis on the contribution of urbanization to the economic and social dimensions of sustainable national development. In paragraph 134 of the Rio+20 outcome document, "The Future We Want", Governments stated that "...if they are well planned and developed, including through integrated planning and management approaches, cities can promote economically, socially and environmentally sustainable societies."

With respect to the **economic dimension of sustainable development**, towns and cities account for 70% of the world's gross domestic product (GDP): 55% in low-income countries, 73% in middle-income countries, and 85% in high-income economies. The positive correlation between national economic development and

the rate of urbanization is well established. Throughout history, urbanization has driven economic advancement. Urban areas have been and continue to be crucibles for innovation, creativity and discovery, due to the high level concentration of information. There is therefore no doubt that towns and cities can be, and must be, purposefully used by Governments as effective instruments and drivers of national economic growth. **Economies of scale**, larger specialized economic sectors and the fiscal location of markets are the main economic assets that grow in cities.

With respect to **social sustainability**, it is clear that poverty cannot be successfully tackled without addressing the basic needs of the billions of poor urban dwellers. These include access to adequate housing, clean drinking water, sanitation, domestic energy, transport and others. While the world has made progress in reducing absolute poverty, we also know that inequality is rising in the cities of both developing and developed countries. Achieving socially sustainable development will require serious action to reduce urban poverty, especially among slum dwellers who continue to live under very poor conditions. Cities should be the space for the development of new kinds of jobs, at a big scale, especially in industry and the new service sector.

Turning to **environmental sustainability**, it is well known that cities, mostly in the developed world, contribute up to 70% of the world's total greenhouse gas emissions. Urban planning and design in both developed and developing countries has followed the international post-Second World War urban model. This has resulted in sprawling urban settlements, many in the form of megacities that are environmentally unsustainable. In Africa, and other developing countries, rapid urbanization has resulted in uncontrolled peri-urbanization, much of it informal, spontaneous and unplanned. It is therefore evident that environmental sustainability cannot be achieved without serious and concerted action. This requires review of the present model of urbanization in the global north and development of an alternative model in the developing south. South-south cooperation is, in that context, not only a good idea. It is really the opportunity for a global transformative change.

Having said this, I would like to emphasize again that **Africa's Urban Agenda offers a unique opportunity to better address the needs of the population, foster sustainable economic growth, and bypass some of the challenges of the so-called "international model" of urbanization that has a lot of difficulty to adapt to the conditions of sustainability.**

Again, I am happy to note that **discussions during the last two days** have recognized the need for Africa to respond to the significant change of scale of urbanization in the continent, the need to take advantage of the generative and transformative potential of urbanization, and to ensure adequate attention to the unfinished business of the Millennium Development Goals, including the target on slums.

Your Excellency, Mr. Chairman, Honourable Ministers, this session of AMCHUD is taking place amidst a number of global processes, including the **Post-2015 process, the closely followed global negotiations on Climate Change, the preparations for Habitat III** and the Seventh Session of the World Urban Forum that will be held just a few weeks from now.

The preparatory process for Habitat III is just beginning. Negotiations on the outcome document of the Conference will most likely start during the Second Meeting of the Preparatory Committee, to be held in April 2015 in Nairobi. Habitat III will be the first UN conference devoted to the implementation of the Post-2015 Development Agenda or Sustainable Development Goals. I believe both the Post-2015 Development Agenda and Habitat III preparatory processes, as well as the contribution of WUF 7, were discussed by our experts and senior officials during the last two days.

It is clear that the **role of cities and human settlements in sustainable development is gaining increasing recognition** among members of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals and other stakeholders. There is a possibility that this may result in a stand-alone goal on cities and human settlements. **It is my hope that Africa will lend its support to such a goal and related targets and fully contribute to their elaboration.**

The discussions over the last two days and the decisions to be made at the end of this session of AMCHUD are crucial to the Post-2015 Development Agenda, the Climate Change process and Habitat III. As I have said earlier, **UN-Habitat stands ready to provide technical support** to your Governments, individually and collectively, as you proceed with your contributions to the Post-2015 process, the Climate Change meetings in Lima this year and in Paris in 2015, as well as towards Habitat III.

Your Excellency, Mr. Chairman, Honourable Ministers, finally, I would like to conclude my statement by **appreciating the contribution to AMCHUD of two senior UN-Habitat staff members**. As you may be aware, Mr. Mohamed Halfani and Mr. Joseph Guiebo have been UN-Habitat's substantive officers and focal points for AMCHUD Conferences, from the very first conference to the present one. They are both retiring in the next two months. I would like to express my appreciation and gratitude for their hard work in support of AMCHUD and to wish them well in their retirement.

Thank you for your attention.