



UN-HABITAT

**Statement by
Mr. Daniel Biau
Deputy Executive Director
At the
OICC 8th International Scientific
Symposium**

**Sustainable Urban Management
Strategies in the Islamic City**

**Dubai, UAE
25 April 2004**

Your Royal Highness, Sheikh Hamdan Bin Rashed Al-Maktoom,

Your Excellency Eng. Omar Kadi, Secretary General, OICC,

Your Excellency Mr. Qassim Sultan, Director General, Dubai Municipality,

Distinguished Delegates,

Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

I am honored and privileged to participate in this inaugural session of the OICC's 8th International Scientific Symposium. The presence of His Royal Highness bears testimony to the importance of the critical sustainable urban management issues to be discussed.

On behalf of the Executive Director of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT), it gives me great pleasure, and it is indeed a great honour, for me to address such a distinguished gathering of key local leaders from such a large global audience of Islamic Capitals and Cities. I wish to thank and congratulate the OICC, for inviting me personally, and for its tireless efforts to support the municipal movement and the decentralisation process in its member cities.

I especially congratulate the Municipality of Dubai for hosting this meeting. As you know we could not have a better example of Sustainable Urban Management than this city. Participants will witness through a series of informative site visits the manifestation of concrete results of good urban management.

UN-HABITAT is proud to have been part of the Dubai success story. Over a period of about 12 years, we have worked closely on building the capacity of the various departments of Dubai Municipality through one of our excellent Technical Cooperation projects. One must congratulate Mr. Qassim Sultan for his excellent leadership and relentless efforts in turning Dubai Municipality from total dependence on oil revenue for managing its activities to a totally self sufficient and sustainable operation. Dubai Municipality now charges for all its services, turns a profit and invests in the development of the city and Emirate of Dubai. Dubai has achieved this through the application of performance indicators to all its activities using prizes and reward techniques to show appreciation of the best performers. Dubai's efforts have not only made it a model to learn from and to be emulated but they have also, through a partnership with UN-HABITAT, developed and funded the prestigious "Dubai Award for Best Practices to Improve the Living Environment" that is now in its fifth cycle.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Millennium Development Goals represent a global consensus and commitments. The core concern is to bring the vast majority of the world's population out of a poverty trap that robs them of their health, dignity and aspirations for fulfilling their human potential.

In a world where nearly a billion people live in slums in overcrowded conditions without access to basic services, what would be a concrete way to make significant improvements in their lives (Goal 7 – target 11) other than by providing them with access to water and sanitation?

This approach was given further impetus in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. In paragraph 18 of the political Declaration adopted by Heads of States, the W in WEHAB (Water, Energy, Health, Agriculture, Biodiversity) was further amplified to stand for Water, Sanitation and Shelter. The world leaders recognized that MDGs have to be delivered in given geographical spaces or locality. This holistic approach has now been operationalized by the Commission on Sustainable Development by adopting **water, sanitation and human settlements** as an integral cluster. It is great progress and value added.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Human settlements provide a concrete framework for action. The struggle for achieving the Millennium Development Goals will have to be carried out in human settlements - in our cities, towns and villages. It is at this level where actions have to be coordinated and managed. It is at this level that policy initiatives become an operational reality and an eminently political affair. It is here that local actions must and can deliver global goals.

Cities and towns will absorb 95 per cent of the world's expected population growth. With rapid urbanization, there is also growing poverty and feminization of poverty in cities. Women pay a heavy price in procuring water for their families through daily drudgery and lost opportunities.

Urban poverty is vividly manifested in the slums. At present 930 million people live in slums. If the trends continue, 1.5 billion people will live in slums by the year 2020. Most slum dwellers are excluded from the attributes of urban life that remain a monopoly of a privileged minority – political voice, decent housing, safety and the rule of law, education and health.

Provision of basic services and Slum upgrading must become core business for local and national governments alike, and should receive adequate support by international financial institutions and development agencies.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and gentlemen,

We all know that a business-as-usual approach will not be enough. We need a fundamental change in our approach – we need a strategy that is workable, realistic and will make a difference in the lives of the people.

Unquestionably, the commitment of policy makers should be the first step. The goals may be global but they must be implemented locally in human settlements, where the people live and shelter and services are required. The United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs) and The Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) at country level need to prioritize

water and sanitation and slum upgrading. At UN-HABITAT, we are moving to localize the MDGs at city and municipal levels.

Second, recognition of water as a right and one of the most fundamental conditions for survival is critical. UN-HABITAT is focusing on this issue through the Global Campaign on Secure Tenure and through the Housing Rights Programme in cooperation with United Nations High Commission on Human Rights (UNHCHR).

Thirdly, I must come to the all-important question of financing water, sanitation and slum upgrading in our cities. The finance gap is huge, and requires close partnership of UN agencies with the international financing institutions to supplement domestic resources. The Water for Asian Cities Programme, announced at the Johannesburg Summit, between UN-HABITAT and the Asian Development Bank, is an example of such new types of partnerships, focusing on innovative investment mechanisms for the benefit of the 700 million people in Asian cities. UN-HABITAT and partners are also making efforts to emulate the ADB example in the broad OICC region. Efforts are also underway to develop a slum upgrading facility to field test innovative pro poor housing financing mechanisms.

UN-HABITAT is pleased to have capacity building programmes in a number of cities represented here with us today. Technical cooperation projects range, from support to the development of housing policies, urban slum upgrading for poverty reduction, loans for community improvement, sustainable urban management and development programmes, planning and mapping, supporting the creation of urban observatories and the application of urban indicators.

UN-HABITAT has three regional offices to support cities, one in Nairobi supporting Africa and the Arab States, a second in Fukuoka supporting Asia and the Pacific and a third in Rio de Janeiro supporting Latin America and the Caribbean. UN-HABITAT is proud to announce the creation of a new liaison office in Kuwait City, with full support from the government of Kuwait. This office is due to start its activities before the end of the year, including for the production of Arabic documents and regional reports.

I am also pleased to inform you and in particular the cities represented here from the Occupied Palestinian Territories that the Governing Council of UN-HABITAT has approved a programme for the creation of a human settlements fund to improve the living conditions in the Occupied Territories. The approved programme focuses on setting up an institutional framework to manage capital investment projects in the Palestinian cities. The manager of this programme has been already hired and is present here with us to discuss with you the proposed programme.

It is also my pleasure to invite you all to attend the upcoming World Urban Forum which will be held from 13-17 September 2004 in Barcelona, Spain. This is a key event on the international calendar designed to help highlight the problems and possibilities of cities. The theme of the World Urban Forum is *Cities: Crossroads of cultures, inclusiveness and integration*. Designated by

the UN General Assembly as an advisory body on urbanization policies, it provides an exciting opportunity for representatives of governments, mayors, local authorities, non-governmental organizations, urban professionals and academics to discuss the latest trends in urban development. With over 3000 participants expected in Barcelona, it is my hope that the membership of OICC will be well represented at this second session of the World Urban Forum.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates,

UN-HABITAT is pleased to invite you to the parallel workshop jointly organised with OICC where we will discuss the concepts of sustainable urban management. We will review case studies and share with you the tools that UN-HABITAT has developed to support mayors, councilors and city managers in improving their management through participatory approaches that aim at enhancing sustainability. Among those tools are our newly developed Local Economic Development and Municipal Finance Toolkits. Furthermore, we look forward to tailoring our Global Campaign on Urban Governance to address the needs of the Islamic cities where the Islamic concept of Shura should prevail. We will also like to benefit from this occasion to make an assessment about capacity building needs and priorities of the cities present here and to develop, jointly with OICC, appropriate support programmes.

I wish you successful deliberations and thank you for your kind attention.
