

Statement of the UN-HABITAT Executive Director on the Signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with UNESCAP on Interagency Cooperation

Bangkok, 26 February 2004

Mr. Kim Hak-Su,
Colleagues of UN-HABITAT and UNESCAP,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to be with you today to confirm on paper what we have been doing for a long time, which working together as UN agencies to explore opportunities for co-operation and collaboration on poverty reduction in Asia and the Pacific region.

Our cooperation dates back to the early years of UN-HABITAT when we posted one of our Human Settlements Officers in UNESCAP to assist on human settlements issues. UNESCAP also hosted the Coordinator of the UN-HABITAT Community Development Programme for Asia from 1995-99.

From the time that UN-HABITAT established an Office for Asia and the Pacific in Fukuoka, Japan, in 1997 the cooperation with UNESCAP has taken a real flight and quite a number of joint activities have taken place since that date.

The organisation of joint meetings is one of the recurring areas of cooperation. To mention but a few:

- Regional High-level Meeting in Preparation for Istanbul+5 for Asia and the Pacific
Hangzhou, China, October 2000
- Seminar on Securing Land for the Urban Poor
Fukuoka, October 2001
- Regional Symposium on Women and Urban Governance
Phitsanulok, Thailand, June 2002

These meetings have led to joint publications as well.

However, this occasion is not just to look back on what we have done, but to look forward on what we are going to do.

In our cooperation, we will be guided by the Habitat Agenda, the Millennium Development Goals and the World Summit for Sustainable Development. These are agreed documents by the nations, which form the United Nations and they provide direction on the tasks ahead of us. Millennium Development Goal 7,

Target 11, states that, by 2020, we have to achieve a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers.

Target 11 on slums can be met. But it will take hard work. Success will require stronger voices for the poor that lead to improving their security of tenure, adequate planning and economic stability that favour the development of basic services. It will also take political will to make this a high priority target.

The Memorandum of Understanding we are signing today will bring two United Nations agencies closer together to support the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, especially the target on improvement of the lives of the poor.

Some new joint initiatives are already under preparation. Building on experience gained by UNESCAP on the Human Dignity Initiative, and experience UN-HABITAT has gained in urban poverty reduction projects, both agencies are exploring to work together on promoting the principles of human security in a possible new joint programme.

I am confident we will identify an increasing number of joint initiatives and strengthen each other's activities in the spirit of the document we are signing today.

I would like to thank UNESCAP, through you, Executive Secretary, for the past cooperation and I am looking forward to our future cooperation.

Thank you.