

**Address to the East Africa Model United Nations
by Mrs. Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka,
Executive Director of UN-HABITAT**

**Nairobi
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Distinguished student delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of Dr. Klaus Toepfer and the whole United Nations family, I am delighted to have this opportunity to welcome you to the United Nations in Nairobi.

In a world that has become more interconnected through commerce and communication, the United Nations system is the only global political body for both dialogue and action. Nearly every country is represented in the United Nations, and each has the right to speak out on issues of peace and development, looking for common solutions to shared problems.

The United Nations represents a global society where Member States choose to work together in solving their problems rather than to face them alone. With each passing year, we become more and more aware that cooperation among countries is the future of this planet. As they become more aware of each other, people begin to see inequalities, comparing their lives with those of others, and asking what can be done to create a more sustainable and equitable planet.

People living in poverty ask why the global economy is not helping them more – and turn to the United Nations for help. People in countries recovering from conflict look for the basic materials to rebuild their homes – and turn to the United Nations for assistance. People in countries engaged in conflict ask how the destruction can be stopped – and turn to United Nations peacekeepers for protection.

And so it is wherever there are intractable problems that cannot be solved by nations acting alone: HIV/AIDS and other deadly diseases; lack of fresh water and food; disappearance of habitat for endangered species; urban and rural poverty; inadequate shelter and basic services; and many other problems are all within the portfolio of the United Nations system. This system works because the wealthier nations also ask: what can we do to help?

This system is made up of many specialized agencies, offices and programmes, each with its specific mandate and professional staff. Here at Gigiri are located the world headquarters for two of the specialized programmes of the United Nations; the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, known as UN-HABITAT.

UN-HABITAT, the programme that I am privileged to serve as Executive Director, has the task of improving the lives of slum dwellers, focusing on shelter and infrastructure needs and on improving the way that cities and other human settlements are governed. We have many dedicated professionals and support staff, both here in Nairobi and around the world, in places like Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq that are now facing the difficult task of rebuilding after conflict. UN-HABITAT has many projects to help both African and Asian cities improve their fresh water management. And, we have a number of slum upgrading projects – most notably here in Nairobi where we are working with the Kenyan Government and

Nairobi City to improve the living environments of those who live in the squalid conditions of urban poverty.

As delegates to this Model United Nations, you will be working on issues that are most important to you, collectively, and working through the politics to achieve consensus and cooperation. As you negotiate your “country’s” interests, you will begin to understand why the United Nations is so necessary in today’s world. There is nothing else like it, and we within the United Nations are extremely proud to be able to serve this unique and beneficial organization.

I urge you over these coming days to view the political process not as a frustrating and inefficient way to solve problems, but as a reflection of the real world, where different cultures and different systems, intent on working together, work hard to find a common thread that each can grasp hold of.

With this important piece of advice, I wish you every success in your deliberations and trust that we may someday see many of you working within the United Nations system for a better world for all of us.

I thank you for your attention.