



**UNITED NATIONS HUMAN SETTLEMENTS PROGRAMME
(UN-HABITAT)**

STATEMENT

BY

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Mr. Chairman,

May I first congratulate you on taking the Chairmanship of this important Committee and, through you, congratulate the other members of the bureau who are working to ensure a successful outcome to the session of the Second Committee.

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour for me to address this Committee today on behalf of the Secretary-General to introduce three documents, as requested by General Assembly resolutions 56/205 and 56/206, that have been prepared for your consideration under agenda item number 95.

The first document, A/57/271, reports on the overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II); the second, A/57/272, is a report on the strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT); and the third, E/2002/48, is a Report of the Secretary-General to ECOSOC on Coordinated implementation of the Habitat Agenda.

Because these reports are short and speak for themselves, please allow me to use my time here today to draw your attention to some of their more significant findings and implications.

The basic mandate for UN-HABITAT, found in GA resolutions 3327 (XXIX) of 16 December 1974, 32/162 of 19 December 1977 and 34/115 of 14 December 1979, assigns to Habitat, as it was then called, a wide range of housing and human settlements responsibilities, which we have discharged faithfully over the years. In 1996, with the signing of the Habitat Agenda by 171 Member States, UN-HABITAT acquired a number of additional mandates, particularly those in the areas of partners' coordination, capacity building, technical cooperation, information generation and dissemination, monitoring and reporting. With the adoption by the United Nations of the Millennium Development Goals, UN-HABITAT has been charged with coordinating the realization of Goal 7, Target 11 -- to significantly improve the lives of 100 million slum dwellers around the world by the year 2020. The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in its political declaration has placed adequate shelter alongside other priority areas -- water, sanitation, energy, health, agriculture, and biodiversity.

While this latest targeted responsibility has provided UN-HABITAT with a much needed focus for our broad range of mandated activities, the sheer magnitude of the challenge demands innovative strategies, the wholesaling of involvement by relevant interest groups, a finer mesh in a wider information net and a more nimble response to partners' priorities. In short, our assigned mandates demand new ways of performing our multinational duties, both in greater specificity and at a higher order of magnitude.

Coincident with its new mandates, UN-HABITAT has undergone revitalization and restructuring that has allowed us to move quickly into the mainstream of urban improvement with a relevant organization and a highly skilled staff. UN-HABITAT is now carrying out its prior mandates, such as technical cooperation, information gathering and reporting, in ways that directly support the target of improved conditions for slum dwellers.

Most significantly, we are fully committed to working with our sister agencies in the United Nations family, linking our mandates with theirs in an overall partnership to make the system more efficient and effective in favour of our common clients – the world's poor.

In this past year, for example, we have been working with UNDP on a plan to recruit local human settlements experts as UN-HABITAT staff to assist Resident Coordinators in the preparation of Common Country Assessments, Development Assistance Frameworks and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and to help coordinate the implementation of international human settlements development and housing projects.

Meanwhile, UN-HABITAT has strengthened its partnership with the World Bank through the Cities Alliance, which is dedicated to testing practical measures for city development and slum upgrading around the world. This year, we have also initiated the biennial World Urban Forum, a colloquy of Habitat partners that serves as an advisory body to me, as Executive Director of UN-HABITAT, on issues related to the Habitat Agenda, the Declaration on Cities and the Millennium Development goals. In turn, I will be transmitting priority concerns emanating from the World Urban Forum to our Governing Council for their consideration.

Last year, the General Assembly agreed with the Secretary-General and me that some elements of our organization needed further strengthening. One result was the elevation of the research, monitoring and reporting functions – the Urban Secretariat – to divisional status. The Urban Secretariat produces both the Global Report on Human Settlements and the State of the World's Cities report series and is now engaged with partners around the world to help them catalogue best practices, to collect urban indicators data – including indicators for slums and urban poverty – and to prepare state of the city reports for local and national policy processes. This is being done through our support to a growing network of local and national urban observatories.

The General Assembly also agreed that the Human Settlements Foundation would be granted divisional status on the condition that it is redesigned to carry out its original function as a global municipal development and housing finance facility for the very poor. Depending upon the results of feasibility studies currently underway, this facility may become one of the most important tools in our common fight against urban poverty.

The reorganization of UN-HABITAT has improved its attention to both process and substance. For example, we recognize and embrace capacity building as one of the most effective developmental mechanisms and have elevated that function to branch status, focusing on training of trainers, or the wholesaling of training, particularly of municipal officials. I have also asked for and received branch status for our urban economics and finance functions, two of the most critical matters on any city's slum upgrading and poverty reduction agenda.

Apart from our sharpened focus on the Millennium goal of cities without slums, the international community has called upon UN-HABITAT to play an increasing role in reconstruction following wars and natural disasters. We are the second largest reconstruction agency in Iraq, overseeing the resettlement of internally displaced people in Northern Iraq.

We have had a three-pronged approach to reconstruction in Kosovo since hostilities there ended in 1999, including:

- 1) Development of policies, guidelines and procedures for efficient municipal administration;
- 2) Regularisation of housing and property rights, including establishment of a Housing and Property Directorate and a Housing and Property Claims Commission, and the co-ordination of the support required for their operations; and
- 3) Reconstitution of the property registration (cadastre) system in Kosovo.

The Housing and Property Directorate / Housing and Property Claims Commission activities have been fully established and I am happy to report that with effect from next month they will be handed back to the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) for routine management.

UN-HABITAT has been active in Afghanistan for over a decade, implementing projects for community-based development even under the Taliban. We have recently been requested by the new government of Afghanistan to assist in preparing and implementing an overall urban reconstruction and redevelopment strategy for the country.

Another growth area for UN-HABITAT has been urban water and sanitation. As key indicators of slum conditions, accessibility to water and sanitation will be objectives in almost any strategy to upgrade slums. Since 1999, we have been using funds from the UN Fund for International Partnerships and other sources to implement the Water for African Cities Programme, which has recently been endorsed by NEPAD participants. And, just this year, we have entered into an agreement with the Asian Development Bank and the Government of the Netherlands to implement a US\$500 million programme on Water for Asian Cities. In response to these demands on our expertise and skills, I have raised our infrastructure section to branch status, and established a Water and Sanitation Trust Fund to mobilise resources more quickly for our Water for African Cities Programme, which is in high demand. I would like to appeal to

those of you in a position to do so, to make contributions to the Water and Sanitation Trust Fund.

Finally, let me take note of progress made in the past year by our two global campaigns on secure tenure and good urban governance. These campaigns were designed as strategic entry points into the very complex Habitat Agenda. So far, the strategy is working. Where we have launched national-level campaigns, they are serving to integrate many of the Habitat Agenda commitments and recommendations in concerted efforts to improve slum conditions. Campaigns have been launched in Nigeria, India, the Philippines, Namibia, South Africa, and Eastern Europe with plans underway for launches in Burkina Faso and the Baltic States. We are increasingly integrating the two campaigns as we find that the Millennium target on slums provides a common platform for both secure tenure and good urban governance.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

My mission here today is to report as objectively as possible on the progress UN-HABITAT has made over the past year in both its own revitalization and in helping to implement the goals of the Habitat Agenda. I must confess, however, that it is difficult for me to be objective when I look back over this short period of time.

Urban issues, particularly those related to urban poverty, are arguably the fastest growing sector in the development cooperation portfolio. The UN system was conceived at a point in history when the problems of cities – apart from their reconstruction after World War II – were barely on the horizon. For nearly twenty years, since the Vancouver Habitat conference, UN-HABITAT struggled almost alone to assist Member States in dealing with the impacts of a global urbanization that has accelerated enormously from about 1950. Since the Istanbul City Summit, however, there has been a global realization that we are destined to become an urban species and that our policies at all levels need to catch up with this growing reality.

The General Assembly has had the confidence in our Programme to assign it new tasks in response to this reality. In this, I believe UN-HABITAT has been its own best advocate, remaining flexible within a dynamic world context, reshaping itself in order to continue delivering high quality results of value to Member States and their partners.

I believe we are decidedly more relevant to both the United Nations and to our partners than we were a year or two ago. With guidance from the General Assembly, ECOSOC, our Governing Council, Committee of Permanent Representatives in Nairobi and the Secretary-General, UN-HABITAT is undertaking many more tasks considered to be vital to the interests of Member States. I have been granted the organization that I have requested and, for that, I am extremely grateful to the Secretary-General and the General Assembly. In

this past year, my staff has been regularized and upgraded and is fully competent to deal with the wide array of issues that make up our mandate.

Permit me to say, however, that the ability of UN-HABITAT is proscribed by the irregular and insufficient nature of available support. While we have successfully attracted very large sums of programme- and location-specific resources, the nature of our new mandates – which now include recurring activities like global monitoring and reporting – would benefit from more sustained and predictable funding as well as from other kinds of support.

Yes, UN-HABITAT is relying increasingly on partnerships and the “franchising” of much of its work. In an enabling environment and in an age trending toward participatory action, this is most appropriate. Yet, to sustain our own long-term plan of work on behalf of United Nations Member States and their partners, UN-HABITAT needs their continuing endorsement and regular budgetary commitments.

With more predictable funding, our technical cooperation and capacity building activities can remain focused on the Millennium Development Goals without the periodic distraction of having to augment the operating budget. Thus our technical cooperation activities in the areas of slum upgrading and urban water supply and sanitation can move smoothly forward. With a longer-term commitment of resources, we can also intensify our dialogues with Governments and Habitat partners, providing more support to the World Urban Forum and to capacity building.

As important, Member States can participate in our work in ways that will be of direct benefit to themselves by establishing National Habitat Committees, as called for in the Habitat Agenda, to help guide countries’ approaches to their urban challenges. Such committees, comprised of both representatives of civil society and policy makers, would benefit greatly from the designation of national and local “urban observatories,” each of which would be responsible for monitoring and reporting on urban conditions and trends within national and local policy processes. As a passenger on this information train – not as driver – would be the international community and its need to assess overall progress in implementing the Habitat Agenda.

There are many other issues and recommendations that I could make to you today. I have touched on those that I consider to be the most profound. This will be both an urban millennium and a new age for participatory governance. Your continuing guidance, endorsements and commitments will help ensure that UN-HABITAT is prepared to address these fundamental realities in the years to come.

I thank you for your attention.