



UN-HABITAT

**Statement by Dr. Anna K. Tibaijuka
Under-Secretary-General and
Executive Director of UN-HABITAT
at the first plenary session of
the 21st Session of the Governing Council for UN-HABITAT
16 April 2007, Nairobi**

Hon. Kumarja Selja, Minister for Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation of India,
President of the 21st Session of the Governing Council of UN-HABITAT
Distinguished Members of the Bureau
H.E. Soita Shitanda, Minister of Housing, Republic of Kenya
Hon. Ministers and Heads of Government Delegations
Amb. Elizabeth Jacobsen, President of the CPR and its Distinguished Members,
Ambassadors and Permanent Representatives,
Distinguished Members of the High Level Panel at the Podium,
President of UCLG, Your worship the Mayors and your delegations
Representatives of other Habitat Agenda Partners
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Members of the Press,
Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before I deliver my policy statement to this august Council, allow me to congratulate you Madame President and Members of the Bureau upon your well deserved election. My thanks and appreciation also goes to the outgoing bureau and to the able leadership of H.E. Mr. Petr Kopriva, Ambassador of Czech Republic.

Allow me also to thank all of the speakers this morning and to thank our distinguished panelists for sharing with us their insights on the key issues and challenges on financing pro-poor housing and urban development. It has been very educating to listen to all this rich experience from different financial institutions that have been dealing with development

financial matters for such a long time. I believe the experiences you have shared here will facilitate the important discussions before this august Council.

This session of the Governing Council has before it some very important issues and equally important decisions to make. For this reason, we have been working arduously with the Committee of Permanent Representatives and its Bureau to ensure that the programme and the organisation of work allows for a judicial balance between dialogue and decision making. Furthermore, we have endeavored to ensure that dialogue and decision making are mutually reinforcing and do not detract from the business we have at hand.

In essence, we have before us three key substantive issues on our agenda.

- The first one is the special theme of this session of the Governing Council.
- The second is the Medium-term Strategic and Institutional Plan for 2008-2013.
- The third is the 2008-2009 Work Programme and Budget.

Allow me to address each one of these items in turn.

Dialogue on Sustainable Urbanization: local action for urban poverty reduction with an emphasis on finance and planning

The theme of the 21st session of the Governing Council is on ***Sustainable Urbanization: local action for urban poverty reduction with an emphasis on finance and planning***.

This theme, which was decided in concert with the Committee of Permanent Representatives, is a direct outcome of the 3rd session of the World Urban Forum that was hosted by the City of Vancouver and the Government of Canada in June last year.

The Forum represented a major milestone in terms of stakeholder participation and the mainstreaming of the sustainable urbanisation agenda. Over 10,000 participants representing government, local authorities and civil society from 156 countries highlighted the call for action for more sustainable cities.

The Forum enabled partners to assess progress made at all levels in implementing the Habitat Agenda and related MDGs. Participants highlighted poverty alleviation, access to water and sanitation, adequate shelter, and managing the ecological footprint of cities as some of the most pressing challenges facing the global community in the 21st century.

A key outcome of WUF 3 was the recognition of the need for more participatory planning at the local level and innovative finance systems to combat urban poverty, urban decay, and the proliferation of slums.

The theme paper before you is intended to provide distinguished delegates with a brief overview of the current thinking and practice in participatory planning and human settlements finance. It draws on lessons learned from experience and proposes the way forward on what governments can do, what local authorities can do and what civil society and the private can do. The key issues for debate with regards to planning include:

- The need to revisit national urban planning legal frameworks and practices from a sustainable urban development perspective

- The need to support the involvement of private sector and civil society in the process of visioning, negotiating and implementing a physical environment that is more inclusive, safe, culturally grounded and ecologically sustainable.
- The need for linking planning with investment to create value out of urban space and to ensure that part of that value benefits the poor and disadvantaged.

The key issues for debate with regards to financing include:

- Targeting intergovernmental transfers to combat urban poverty
- Re-defining the respective roles and responsibilities for local authorities, service providers and the community sector for improving the delivery of basic services to the urban poor
- Capitalising on the experience and track record of community-based micro-credit systems to meet the housing needs of the urban poor
- Providing incentives for the private sector to engage in pro-poor housing and urban development.

The dialogue on this theme, to take place on Wednesday under Agenda Item 6, builds on the tradition established by the Habitat II Conference of stimulating debate between and among Habitat Agenda partners on how to put into practice the lessons learned and actionable ideas that resulted from the World Urban Forum.

Medium-term Strategic and Institutional Plan

Distinguished delegates,

This brings me to the second substantive issue on our agenda – the proposed Medium-term Strategic and Institutional Plan for 2008-2013 which falls under Agenda Item 8.

The last Governing Council, having taken note of the great progress made by this agency following its upgrading to a Programme in 2002, decided that the next challenge is to consolidate the gains made by sharpening its focus for more effective programme delivery. I am pleased to table before you the Medium-term Plan as per your request.

Allow me to preface the introduction to this Plan by saying that it has been the product of extensive consultations with member States through the CPR, all my staff, other UN bodies and our Habitat Agenda partners.

This Plan has three components: a strategic component, an institutional component, and a resource mobilisation strategy.

Strategic component

The strategic component is made up of a vision and mission, a sharpened focus, better alignment between normative, capacity-building and operational activities, and partnerships.

Our vision is “Sustainable urbanisation through the Habitat Agenda”. It is an urgent call to recognize the opportunities and the challenges of delivering adequate shelter for all in a rapidly urbanizing world. Our common quest, be it for economic growth, social justice,

biodiversity or climate protection will depend to a large and increasing extent on our ability to manage our cities and the urbanisation process.

However, in striving to achieve this vision or long-term goal, we must first turn our attention to one of the more immediate consequences of rapid urbanisation. It is chaotic and brutal. It is inhumane and debilitating. It affects between 30 and 70 percent of all urban dwellers in developing countries. It is the “urbanisation of poverty”. What we are witnessing is the explosion of slums and shanty towns. Currently, more than one billion people are living in slums. This figure could easily grow by another 400 million by 2020, dwarfing in effect Target 11 of the MDGs on improving the living conditions of at least 100 million people by the same date.

For this reason, our proposed mission is to *“To help create by 2013 the necessary conditions for concerted international and national efforts to ... arrest the growth of slums and to set the stage for the subsequent reduction in and reversal of the number of slum dwellers worldwide.”*

This ambitious mission can only be achieved if we remain focused and work as a true catalyst in coordinating the efforts of the UN family of agencies, programmes and funds, international and domestic financial institutions and our Habitat Agenda partners on the ground.

The Plan thus proposes five mutually reinforcing focus areas. These areas correspond to the key determinants for realising of our vision. They pertain to advocacy and monitoring; affordable land and housing; environmentally-sound basic infrastructure and services; participatory urban planning, management and governance; and last but not least innovative human settlements finance. Each of these focus areas is accompanied by a set of strategic objectives and by indicators of achievement. In addition, the Plan foresees the establishment of a peer-review mechanism comprised of a cross-section of Habitat Agenda partners to monitor progress and achievement.

Your Excellencies,

While most of these focus areas constitute our traditional areas of business, the focus area on innovative human settlements finance seeks to address a key gap in the current international architecture for poverty reduction. The current slum crisis affecting one billion people worldwide is, in effect, a crisis in governance that has led to paucity of affordable housing and basic services for the poor who are the overwhelming majority in the developing countries. Since the adoption of the Habitat Agenda, the UN family has been helping member States address some of the key components of affordable housing, namely land, urban infrastructure, income generation and cost of construction. Little, however, has been done to address the key determinant of access to housing credit.

The General Assembly, in recognising this critical gap in our collective endeavour, called for the strengthening of the Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation. This led the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Legal Office and the Office of the Comptroller, to promulgate a revised set of rules and regulations for the Foundation to fulfil a catalytic role in filling this gap. These revised rules and regulations, in turn, call for a set of Operational Procedures and Guidelines, which are presented to this august Council for its consideration and guidance.

The potential outcome of applying these Operational Procedures and Guidelines is a more sustainable approach to financing affordable shelter and related services, including through revolving funds. The objective of the Medium-term Plan is to implement these operational guidelines in a phased manner, to engage in a learning-by-doing approach in close collaboration with international, regional and domestic financial institutions. The guidance of the Governing Council is critical to this endeavour.

Institutional component
Madame President,

On the institutional front, the Medium-term Plan constitutes UN-HABITAT's contribution to UN system-wide reform and coherence. It does so by addressing results-based management and management excellence. The Plan contains provisions for an integrated results-based management, monitoring and reporting system to improve accountability and transparency, but also to transform UN-HABITAT into a learning and knowledge based organisation. A key initiative of the Plan is to strengthen relations with civil society and other partners by sharing experience and best practices at global meetings such as the World Urban Forum.

The Plan also foresees readjustment of human, technical and financial resources within our current architecture to improve alignment and coherence between our advocacy, capacity-building and technical cooperation activities. The objective is to strengthen UN-HABITAT's pre-investment capacity-building role to ensure that the sum total of our efforts are increasingly followed up by requisite financial investments for going to scale.

Resource Mobilisation Strategy
Distinguished delegates,

Allow me to address the third component of the Medium-term Plan, namely the Resource Mobilisation Strategy.

As you are well aware, since UN-HABITAT was elevated to the status of a fully-fledged Programme in 2002, our work programme and budget have increased substantially. In budgetary terms, funding has increased fivefold in five years, an achievement that we are proud of particularly as it has taken place at a time of zero budgetary growths in the UN system. I wish to thank those donors who have contributed to this progress. It is a show of the support and importance you assign to our activities.

However, there have been and continue to be structural problems that have not been addressed. I refer here to the persistent imbalance between earmarked and non-earmarked contributions, and to the predictability of funding. Both these weaknesses have been and continue to be major obstacles to sharpening our focus, to programme alignment and cohesion, and not least, in programme performance. Distinguished delegates, it is obvious that without core resources, we cannot deliver the work programme according to the priorities you set for us, but according to the wishes of those who provide us with earmarked resources to do what they consider important.

The Resource Mobilisation strategy of the Plan seeks to address these problems in a systematic manner via a three-pronged approach.

First, we need to consolidate our current funding base. A first step in this direction was initiated last month in a donors' consultation meeting held in Oslo. It was the first one of its kind for UN-HABITAT since its revitalization process in 1998. I wish to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank the Government of Norway for organizing the event, and to thank the donor countries that attended. Our intention is to hold these consultations on a regular basis with the presentation of funding packages that provide the Programme with more predictable funding. I wish to acknowledge also the hard work in which our Deputy Executive Director, Ambassador Inga Klevby, has devoted to this exercise, ever since she assumed her duties in January last year.

Second, it is proposed that we work towards a voluntary scale of assessed contributions. The experience with our sister agency UNEP, has shown that the application of such a scale resulted not only in considerable increased funding but also in its stabilization, predictability and broadening of the financial support base, reducing dependence on a few donors. This issue is before you for your consideration and decision. Within the framework of the ongoing UN reform and the spirit of the Paris Declaration, harmonization of practices is important across the UN. It is odd that the two environmental agencies headquartered at the same duty station have different approaches to such a basic issue as system of funding. I trust this Governing Council will finally harmonize this matter between the two agencies over which you preside. This should be seen as a contribution to the ongoing UN reform in line with the recommendations of the High Level Panel on system-wide coherence and in compliance with the recommendation of the UN Joint Inspection Unit that the issue of voluntary indicative scales of contribution be tabled before all governing bodies of UN Funds and Programmes.

Finally, the proposed resource mobilization strategy recognises the need for a much more robust communication strategy to further elevate the visibility and recognition of the Programme. While the last 5 years have seen a tremendous rise in the visibility of UN-HABITAT and its issues and activities in the media, a central feature of the Medium-term Plan is a Communication Strategy to further improve outreach with the broader public both nationally and internationally; with governments and donors; with *Habitat Agenda* partners and UN organisations. We are aware that support cannot be mobilized for issues that are not well recognized and widely debated in the public domain, their importance notwithstanding.

The Decent and Affordable Homes in Their Millions Campaign (DAHOTMCA)
Madame President,

It follows that as part of our resource mobilisation strategy to improve our funding base, we shall seek to tap non-conventional funding sources including mass appeals, particularly for implementing our activities at local level. We are inspired by the great success of our sister agency UNEP, that has successfully mobilized the planting of 1 billion trees using its partners and the internet. Following your approval of our work programme, and working closely with Governments, we shall launch a global campaign for national and city level action plans for the construction of decent affordable homes in every country where this is applicable between now and 2013. This will be a key activity under Focus Area 3, namely, promoting pro-poor land and housing. It is a good example to show how the concept of the Enhanced Normative and Operational of the Medium-term Plan will be operationalized.

On the normative front we shall promote pro-poor land tenure and property administration reforms. At the operational level we shall assist our partners to acquire land and construct

their houses either through self-help housing development, where appropriate, as well as through affordable pro-poor mortgage finance systems. For this we need the Governing Council to guide us appropriately with appropriate mechanisms to engage in such activity.

Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our research indicates that in a generation from now, the number of people living in towns and cities will grow from 50 percent today to two-thirds. It is a shame, at the dawn of our new urban era, that the developing economies are witnessing an explosion of slums. Currently, more than 1 billion people are living in slums. Over the next 25 years, over 2 billion people will add to the growing demand for housing, water supply, sanitation, energy and other urban infrastructure and services. Close to 3 billion people, or about 40 percent of the world's population by 2030, will need to have housing and basic infrastructure services. This translates into completing 96,150 housing units per day or 4000 per hour!

No single government or municipality can afford the kind of financial outlay such infrastructure would require. Rather than raise taxes to meet such targets, it is far better to seek the help of the private sector. It is only through business partnerships that we can meet these targets. Our limited experience in partnering with the business community shows how profitable investing in the urban poor can be, politically, socially and in terms of profits.

Muhammad Yunus, the Bangladeshi Professor turned banker and now Nobel laureate tells us that he sees *credit as a human right*. The small loan concept he pioneered has proved to be much more than kind-hearted charity: 99 percent of Grameen Bank borrowers repay their debts. Finding the capital to provide people with security of tenure, helping them own their homes, improve their neighbourhoods, makes for healthier and happier communities. It is a win-win situation for all.

In summary, the scale of the problem is such that we have no choice but to catalyse new partnerships between government and the private sector. This is the only way to finance infrastructure and housing at the required scale – the scale needed to stabilize the rate of slum formation, and subsequently reduce and ultimately reverse the number of people living in life-threatening conditions.

Through effective incentives, the domestic market can be led to respond to the tremendous demand of low-income segments of society. It is absolutely essential that governments around the world, especially in developing countries, guide their housing markets to cater for this demand. A judicious mix of improved policies and legislation on land, infrastructure, and regulatory frameworks for service provision can reap huge social and economic benefits.

On our part we are keen to play our catalytic role by demonstrating how such pro-poor mortgage finance systems could work through revolving fund mechanisms and community organization in, for example, the form of housing cooperatives. We are certain that if given a chance to do so, we shall be able to demonstrate how seed capital to help set up pro-poor housing credit can provide excellent returns on the investment. Our experience with a number of pilot projects around the world show that by providing people with security of tenure, helping them to own their homes and improve their neighbourhoods, constitutes the true meaning of becoming a stakeholder in society.

Excellencies,

We have come to the conclusion that to fight urban poverty and housing deprivation, we need to launch a global campaign that will galvanize the world into action to build homes at a scale that is as unprecedented to match equally unprecedented urban growth. We will engage with our partners in baseline surveys at national and city levels to establish and ascertain gaps in housing stock, and launch a mass campaign to mobilize funding for construction of decent but affordable housing in a manner that can close that gap by 10 percent a year, between 2008 and 2013. This should result in the construction of several million housing units, in pursuit of the 100 million slum improvement target of the MDGs, and above. I am convinced that with your support, a wide range of actors could be mobilized to join this campaign. The first step is for Governments to mainstream pro-poor housing and urban development in their national development plans and budgets. Together with appropriate incentives, this would provide an important signal to private sector actors and domestic financial institutions to jump on board. Following independence, the Government of South Africa surpassed its target of 1 million housing units in a matter of 3 years, and this is not taking into account private sector mobilization. I therefore believe that the UN-HABITAT Decent Affordable Homes in Their Millions Campaign (DAHOTMCA) will become a household word in your respective countries and neighborhoods. What we need from you is national level action plans in this direction provided there is political will. On our part we shall bring our expertise in community organization, capacity building and policy advice to deliver such a vision.

The Land Tenure Reform Question

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I have indicated before, for the first time there are now more people in the world living in urban areas than in rural areas. We are already seeing the effect that this has with regard to chaotic urbanisation in many developing countries. The impact is social, environmental and political, as witnessed by the increasing number of inner city conflicts including in cities in developed countries. Chaotic urbanisation is also related to the increasing number of migrants in the world, and to the rise in the number of forced evictions which are taking place. Not all of this urbanisation is due to rural-urban migration. Almost half of urban growth is due to the natural increase of the existing urban population. We must add to these two figures refugees fleeing from conflicts, environmental refugees impacted by climate change, orphans and women disinherited by the ravages of HIV/AIDS.

While cities are engines of growth and drive the economy of the modern world, we need to ensure that we deal with the emerging problems in cities to manage the intensifying conflict and insecurity, symbolised by the escalating number of evictions, clashes and multiplying slums, to ensure continued global and regional economic growth and stability. What is needed is a paradigm shift which focuses on sustainable urban development in cities, small towns, and rapidly growing villages. As the Ministers of Housing in this audience well know, it is not possible to deliver adequate housing for all without addressing the land issue. Effective land-use planning and administration is critical to combating urban poverty, for business development, for public infrastructure to improve economic productivity, and for reducing the ecological footprint of cities.

Land issue goes to the heart of many of the problems facing our nations and our cities. We cannot deliver sustainable urbanisation if we do not address the land issue, which is both

politically tortuous and technically and legally complex. We therefore need to adopt a two-pronged approach. Firstly, as outlined in the Medium Term Strategic and Institutional Plan, the sustainable urbanisation campaign, with land as a major driver of that campaign, must take centre stage in the work of UN-HABITAT and its support to member States.

Secondly, the problems associated with the legal, technical and institutional complexity of land already being addressed through UN-HABITAT's Global Land Tool Network need to be further mainstreamed. This Network has already started work with partners including the World Bank, bilateral donors, slum dwellers associations, professional associations and research institutions. The Network develops innovative pro-poor land tools to assist member States to solve their land problems. Here I want to congratulate Ethiopia on delivering 20 million rural land certificates within a 3 year period by adopting pro-poor land tenure and land administration approaches. This is a great success which we would like to see replicated in other countries and, of course, in urban areas.

UN-HABITAT has been working with the Government of Kenya, by chairing the donor group on the land sector in Kenya for the last 4 years. I would like to congratulate the Government of Kenya with regard to the broad-based stakeholder process which has led to their draft Land Policy. I understand that a National Land Symposium has been convened by the President for the 26 and 27 of this month to discuss this policy. I would like to encourage H.E. the President Mwai Kibaki to continue with this excellent work and move towards implementing this policy as soon as possible. I would also like to applaud the courage of the Government of Kenya on commissioning and publishing the findings of the Commission into the theft of public land and encourage them to move forward to strengthened implementation of the recommendations of this Commission as contained in the Ndungu Report. I would also like to show my appreciation to the Government of Kenya which is currently involved in the development of eviction guidelines for both urban and rural areas, as currently no such guidelines exist. Again I will look forward to seeing these in practice so that other member States can learn from Kenya's experience.

While we have some success stories with regard to land, UN-HABITAT's research shows that the implementation of women's rights to land, property and housing remains a formidable challenge facing the world today. This challenge persists despite a host of international human rights standards, Millennium Development Goal 3, and the 2005 World Summit Outcome, where women's land, property and inheritance rights are seen as an important indicator of women's empowerment and human development. Too often inheritance is treated as a peripheral issue in policies concerning security of tenure. Yet inheritance is the commonest way women are denied fair access to land. In a number of countries the constitution still allows discriminatory customary practices against women. I am calling on all member States represented here to review your constitutions and laws and root out any discrimination against women, to face the challenge of advancing the lives of women through improving their access to land and their legal empowerment. Where they do not exist, women's land and property rights need to be promulgated before one can tackle this problem seriously.

Madame President,

I would also like to report on an important initiative currently underway – the Commission for the Legal Empowerment of the Poor, of which I am an Advisory Board Member. This is the first ever global initiative to focus specifically on the link between exclusion, poverty and

law. The challenge is tremendous – to find innovative ways of using the law to create opportunities for the poor. The Commission focuses on four issues: access to justice and the rule of law; property rights; labour rights; and entrepreneurship.

I am pleased to report that UN-HABITAT has been working hard to support the Commission's work. And we are making significant progress. There is a clear recognition that there are no "magic bullets" in development. This is particularly true in the area of land. Each country must put into place a combination of legal reforms that not only protect its citizens – particularly the poor – from, for example, forced eviction, but also put into place measures that provide new opportunities for greater prosperity.

Currently, we are actively engaged in developing tools and indicators that will translate the legal empowerment agenda into tangible improvements in the lives of the poor. In our strategic plan for 2008-13, our commitment to legal empowerment is clearly evident – in monitoring, urban planning and governance, access to finance, and, of course, land and property rights. One of the principle indicators of UN-HABITAT's success in the 2008 to 2013 period will be our ability to facilitate legal, institutional and regulatory reforms that fundamentally improve poor people's access to land and security of tenure.

*Climate Change
Distinguished delegates,*

In recognition of Nairobi being the home of UNEP and UN-HABITAT and therefore the de facto UN nexus on Environmental Sustainability, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change of 2005 was hosted here. We were afforded an opportunity to stress that spatial dimension of environmental sustainability that has been more or less forgotten, and makes actual implementation of policies difficult. I was able to inform that meeting that we need to focus at the community, town and city levels to adapt to Climate Change. I elaborated how the urban poor are the most vulnerable when it comes to disasters. All too often, they live in places where no one else would dare set foot, along flood plains, near sites prone to landfalls, on polluted grounds with shaky structures that are destroyed in an instant when hurricanes, floods or earthquakes strike.

We live in an age where we have the experience and technology required to take preventive action and plan ahead to offset the worst. Decent and safe housing is a direct means to offsetting the horrors of disasters brought on by climate change. Furthermore, the United Nations has calculated that one dollar invested in disaster prevention today, can save up to seven dollars tomorrow in relief and rehabilitation costs.

In the last 30 years, natural disasters have affected five times more people than they did only a generation ago. If sea levels rise as predicted, many major coastal cities will be under threat: Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, Los Angeles, New York, Lagos, Karachi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Dhaka, Shanghai, Osaka-Kobe, and Tokyo. Those are just the mega cities with populations of more than 10 million. Never mind the numerous smaller cities and island nations that risk perishing because of climate change.

UN figures show that in 2006 alone, 117 million people around the world suffered from some 300 natural disasters, including devastating droughts and massive flooding in Asia and Africa and less we forget, New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. Climate change, above all will affect

people and their habitats. Any discussion on adaptation is perforce a discussion about the implementation of the Habitat Agenda, the blueprint given to us by governments for sustainable human settlements in an urbanising world.

The Medium-term Plan clearly places our work in the field of climate change at centre stage. Under its Focus Area 3, one indicator of success is an agreed number of countries adopting pro-poor housing, land and property delivery systems for the urban poor and populations affected by crises including climate change threats. This implies that cities have a voice in the climate change debate! Cities must be involved in the crucial climate change negotiations! And cities must implement the policy changes at the local level! We shall work very closely with UNEP on this global agenda to build local capacity for local action. UNEP and UN-HABITAT are *working together* to help implement key resolutions of the World Mayors' Council on Climate Change and the Cities and Climate Change action plan of the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives. Under the Medium-term Plan we shall seek to prevent cities becoming disaster traps for millions of people.

***Work programme and budget
Madame President,***

I should now like to turn to the third substantive issue of our agenda. It is incumbent of the Governing Council to approve the budget for UN-HABITAT for the biennium 2008-2009 which falls under Agenda Item 7. The Medium-term Plan, however, will necessarily influence this work programme and budget. The secretariat has issued a revision based on the Plan. This revision entails an increase of \$15 million to kick-start the implementation of the Plan. I thank all donors who have supported this organization to reach the great strides we have made to date. However, much remains to be done. The previous revitalization of UN-HABITAT in 1999 failed to recognise and to address some of the structural weaknesses of the organization, including its funding. While it led to the upgrading of our status as a Programme, and consolidated our normative mandate, we were left with the systems of a Centre.

The time has come for us to invest in our systems so that this Programme can realize its full potential in terms of effectiveness and efficiency, responsiveness and innovation. This investment will finally allow UN-HABITAT to build on its strengths, consolidate its recent gains while overcoming its weaknesses.

Allow me to conclude by saying that the three key substantive issues – the theme and dialogue, the Medium-term Strategic and Institutional Plan, and our Work Programme and Budget are not an end in of themselves. They are a starting point on a path towards a more focused, more coherent and aligned UN-HABITAT that is ready to fulfill an invigorated catalytic role in the coordinated implementation of the Habitat Agenda, and to making a difference for 1 billion women, men and children that are living in life-threatening conditions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In closing, let me assure you that the entire UN-HABITAT Secretariat is at your disposal in facilitating your discussion at this important meeting. We are on standby to clarify any issues that are unclear and will be pleased to be part of a successful and fruitful Governing Council that poses the stepping stones for long-term success in our mission. I thank you for your kind attention.