



Address by Mrs. Anna Tibaijuka,  
Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations,  
Executive Director of UN-HABITAT,  
to the United Nations Global Youth Leadership Summit  
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**[check against delivery]**

Your Excellency, Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations  
Excellencies,  
Fellow Executive Heads of United Nations Agencies and Programmes,  
Distinguished youth delegates and leaders of today and tomorrow,  
Mr. Chair, Dr. Djibril Diallo,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is indeed a privilege to address this meeting of young leaders from all corners of the globe at a time of great change and upheaval in our world. You are gathered here also at a time of change in our own United Nations system, this great international body owned by its 192 member governments: our beloved Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan is stepping down after 10 years at the helm of the organization. The fact that member governments granted him two terms as Secretary-General is sufficient testimony to his great leadership! Let us applaud him!

And now let us recall the words he spoke on the occasion of International Youth Day barely two months ago on the 11<sup>th</sup> of August. He said that in a world of great riches, nearly one in five people between 15 and 24 ekes out an existence on less than one dollar a day, while almost half live on less than two dollars per day. In a process he called the “juvenilization of poverty” Mr. Annan leaves office decrying the fact that labour markets are having difficulty providing stable occupations with good prospects for young people, barring those who are highly trained.

Without decent work, young people are susceptible to poverty, and crime. He leaves office urging us to pay more attention to education and, in particular, to the transition from education to employment.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

Now I wish to refer to the great change and upheaval in our world. Research conducted by UN-HABITAT, the UN Agency for Cities and other Human Settlements of which I am the Executive Director, shows that the year 2007 will be the year when half the global human population will be living in towns and cities.

It will mean that we are no longer predominantly rural. It will also be the year when the global number of slum dwellers in the world will cross the 1 billion mark.

It will be the year when one in every three city residents will find themselves living in inadequate housing with no or few basic services such as electricity, clean water and sanitation, in overcrowded, health-threatening conditions.

Have no doubt: towns and cities are growing at unprecedented rates setting the social, political, cultural and environmental trends of the world, both good and bad. If world leaders are committed to helping reduce urban poverty, it will have a positive impact on the environment.

The key figures of our latest research give a measure of the urban crisis we face: Asia accounts for nearly 60 percent of the world's slum population with a total of 581 million slum dwellers in 2005. Sub-Saharan Africa had 199 million slum dwellers constituting some 20 percent of the world's total. Latin America had 134 million making up 14 percent of the total. At the global level, 30 per cent of all urban dwellers lived in slums in 2005, a proportion that has not changed significantly since 1990. However, in the last 15 years, the magnitude of the problem has increased substantially: 283 million more slum dwellers have joined the global urban population.

These shocking facts and figures explain in part why young people are so vulnerable to unwanted pregnancies, early marriages, prostitution, drug abuse, crime, and AIDS. This is why we are working to keep the candle of hope burning for young people by investing in them and by consulting them. The exclusion of so many young people around the world from decision-making, education, health, and from basic services is both a violation of their human and civil rights, and a failure of sound economic policy.

When it comes to peace, a theme of this conference, make no mistake: slums are a hub of rising crime and violence. We must remember that in this global village, someone else's poverty and deprivation very soon becomes one's own problem: be it poor job prospects, illegal immigration, pollution, AIDS, other diseases, insecurity, and crime. Eventually, it leads to fanaticism and terrorism.

What solutions and alternatives can we find? The recent award of the Nobel Peace Prize to Professor Muhammad Yunus and the Grameen Bank shines out as a most apt example of how alternative economic measures can benefit marginalized communities, which in many developing countries are made up largely of young people.

We already have a road map. In the United Nations Millennium Declaration in 2000, world leaders signed up to the Millennium Development Goals, or the MDGs, as they are popularly called. These are a set of eight goals

aimed at combating poverty to ensure a sustainable future. UN-HABITAT is charged with responsibility for monitoring progress on Goal 7, Targets 10 on water and sanitation, and 11 aimed at improving the lives of slum dwellers. Another pointer on that roadmap is Goal 8, Target 16. It urges governments to “*develop decent and productive work for youth*” – a cornerstone of the Youth Employment Network.

The Youth Employment Network is an initiative of the UN Secretary-General Mr. Kofi Annan in partnership with the World Bank and the International Labour Organization, created under the impetus of the Millennium Declaration. Its work is based on four global priorities known as the four "E's" – Employability, Equal opportunities, Entrepreneurship, and Employment creation.

Thus the partnership between UN-HABITAT, the ILO, other UN agencies, needs constant strengthening and honing – especially in those aspects of it that involve partnering with you, the new generation. All of this has served to strengthen the 1995 World Programme of Action for Youth which recognised that poverty is growing young. It considers youth equal and key partners in the global effort to eradicate poverty and attain the goals.

At UN-HABITAT we believe that equitable and sustainable growth is the key to poverty reduction. We recognise that poverty is today is not only youthful, but increasingly urbanized and feminized

More than 30 years of UN-HABITAT experience confirms that the establishment of an adequate innovative plan for urban poverty reduction requires that we tackle poverty together in an integrated and holistic manner.

Already UN-HABITAT works in more than 63 countries in the world, many of them Least Developed Countries.

The agency has a very strong youth component that focuses on crime prevention and youth governance programmes. We promote water conservation through special water and sanitation education programmes in schools in developing countries. We have also set up a Global Partnership Initiative on Urban Youth Development in Africa. **We recently gave a group of young people in a Kenyan slum cameras to record life as they see it. Do not hesitate to ask us to share this wonderful work with you. [Krishnan you may want to cut this bold section if copies of the book are not to hand in NY.r]**

Ladies and gentlemen,

The question is: can we do enough. At the Third Session of the World Urban Forum in Vancouver, Canada, in June 2006 – UN-HABITAT’s 30<sup>th</sup> birthday – it was generally agreed that how we manage rapid urbanisation is arguably the biggest problem confronting humanity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Vancouver 2006 made it clear that the United Nations needs to galvanise its strength as never before in the quest for sustainable urbanisation and inclusive cities.

Indeed, one of the main messages to come out of the Vancouver Forum is that the urban population of developing countries is set to double from 2 to 4 billion in the next 30 years.

This means in effect that these 2 billion new urban inhabitants will require the equivalent of planning, financing, and servicing facilities for a new city of 1 million people, every week for the next 30 years.

Friends,

In concluding these remarks, it is important that we realise that with many millions of young people living in poverty in the world's cities, we are seeking the creation of a new mechanism, the UN-HABITAT Youth Trust Fund, to help attain the youth employment target in slums and urban centres. The Trust Fund will significantly improve the volume and effectiveness of overseas development aid.

UN-HABITAT experience shows that access to resources is as important as good governance and stability.

Let us heed the Secretary-General's warning and commit ourselves to tackling the *juvenilization of urban poverty before* it becomes a dangerous social time-bomb. Together, we *can* do it!

I thank you all.