



**Statement from Anna K. Tibaijuka
Under-Secretary-General and
Executive Director
UN-HABITAT**

**On the occasion of the closing of Housing and Property Claims
Commission (HPCC)
Pristina, Kosovo, 6 June 2007**

It is with a great deal of pleasure that I can address you on this important milestone in the process of recovery of Kosovo. I wish to apologize for not being with here today, but other urgent matters compel me to be in Nairobi today. I therefore entrust this short message to my Chief Technical Advisor, Ms. Elisabeth Belpaire.

UN-HABITAT welcomed the invitation from the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kouchener, in mid-1999 to assist the UN Mission in Kosovo to address a range of issues including local governance, rebuilding a land administration system and infrastructure in Kosovo, and developing the means to ensure restitution for people who lost their properties, and to help regularize informal transactions during the decade from 1989 to 1999. It is the celebration of the handover of the last case resolved by the Housing and Property Directorate and the Housing and Property Claims Commission that we are here for today, and I am proud that UN-HABITAT has been recognized for its contribution in to this most deserving endeavour.

From the beginning, we were faced with overcoming huge legal battles to secure the mandate for the Housing and Property Directorate through the development of regulatory policy for the Claims Commission. Our team struggled to raise the awareness of those around us that underestimating people's rights to property was a potentially volatile error. However, in those early days it remained on our shoulders to ensure all claims to those rights were properly registered, impartially adjudicated, and returned. With the assistance of the governments of Canada, Finland, Switzerland, and the European Agency for Reconstruction among others, by late 2002 a robust and functioning HPD/HPCC was handed back to the UNMIK to conclude its operational responsibilities.

Today, in discharging the last of the HPD's caseload, we envision a new function. This new function and entity - the Kosovo Property Agency - will address the range of unmet restitution issues facing current and former citizens of Kosovo. I can think of no better

team to undertake this, than the one which has been responsible for concluding the immense mandate of the HPD and HPCC. I wish for you every success, and assure you that UN-HABITAT stands behind this effort and remains a resource for you to call upon in meeting your new challenges.

In closing, please allow me to reiterate my gratitude for all of you who embarked on this initiative together with my Agency,

Thank you.