Exchange of Letters Between

Association of European Parliamentarians for Africa (AWEPA)

and

UN-HABITAT

Dear Mrs Tibaijuka,

I refer to the various consultations between officials of AWEPA and UN-HABITAT regarding a collaboration between our two offices.

As you may be aware, AWEPA works to reduce poverty, improve livelihoods and defend human rights by promoting an African-European partnership to strengthen parliamentary democracy. AWEPA’s principle objectives are to support and strengthen the effective functioning of parliaments in Africa and to keep Africa high on the political agenda in Europe. AWEPA works in Africa from a development perspective to strengthen the core functions of parliaments: oversight, representation and legislation. AWEPA’s Members, who are over 1500 current and former parliamentarians from almost all European Member States, Norway, Switzerland and the European Parliament, work in Europe to increase the commitment among parliamentarians and other political leaders towards important issues in Africa.

You may agree that urbanisation in Africa is growing at a rapid pace. This type of development creates a variety of sizeable social, economic and environmental challenges. Parliamentarians, who democratically represent their constituents and have a responsibility to help improve their standard of living, must be able to adequately respond to these challenges.

Effective sustainable human settlement policies need to be looked at in relation to socio-cultural, historical, environmental and gender-related factors. The post-2007 election violence in Kenya, for example, has shown how fragile and temporary human settlements can be when fundamental land policy issues have not yet been resolved. Lack of effective policies on land tenure and access to decent shelter, water and sanitation among poor
urban households often have dire implications for health, environmental sustainability and social security. In Kenya this is particularly true in the slums, where fierce confrontations took place during the January 2008 political turmoil. Such issues are recognisable in most post-colonial countries in Africa, and are often the cause of volatile political situations in Sub-Saharan countries.

The improvement of human settlements, access to clean water and good sanitation are some of the key factors that must be addressed in efforts to reverse the current threatening effects of climate change. It is therefore the duty of all political leaders to begin taking action in the fight against climate change in order to secure the life and well-being of generations to come. The question that should be asked is: “What can parliamentarians do today to stop, and even reverse, the process of climate change”?

While the formulation of effective human settlement policies and strategies requires cooperation, consultation, negotiation and decision-making at all levels of society, the support of political institutions is paramount. This is where AWEPA can make a real contribution to effectively face these problems. By facilitating cooperation between parliamentarians and decision makers on one hand, and technical experts and other stakeholders on the other, AWEPA can help parliamentarians to make progress in achieving common goals and objectives.

A Parliamentary Mobilisation Programme

In view of the above, I suggest that AWEPA and UN-HABITAT work together in a Parliamentary Mobilisation Programme to address two key thematic areas namely: secure land tenure and ownership, and climate change in an urbanizing world.

1. Secure land tenure and ownership

The following key areas should be addressed:

1.1. Historical (post-colonial), socio-cultural and ethnic factors;
1.2. Poverty reduction and private sector development to financially enable people to own land;
1.3. Gender-related cultural and/or tribal backgrounds that prevent women from owning or inheriting land;
1.4. Formulation of policies to reduce formation of slums, while looking at ways of making slums more humane without making tenancy more expensive. Policies areas could include:
   o ‘Core-cell’ housing units that can be owned and can grow with the owner’s income
   o Innovative housing-finance schemes
1.5. Protection of the land tenure rights and the right to access decent shelter for street children and children orphaned or made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS.
1.6. Children are often unaware of the processes needed to retain their shelters or land and risk losing their rights to land and decent shelter.
2. **Climate Change**

To combat the effects of climate change, the following sustainable urban development policies should be addressed:

2.1. Water and sanitation;
2.2. Solid and liquid waste management e.g. plastic waste, recycling waste, sorting waste, location and relocation of landfill sites;
2.3. Energy;
2.4. Alternative modes of affordable and reliable transport;
2.5. Urban agriculture;
2.6. Provision of urban facilities to rural areas;
2.7. IT support and development to collect information about resources and demographics. This will help to better inform environmentally friendly and sustainable policy formation in relation to urban settlements.

**Scope of the Programme**

A number of activities could be formulated in the Parliamentary Mobilisation Programme over a five year period that would address the role of parliamentarians in the realisation of sustainable and "climate, environment and human-friendly" urban development. The programme might include the following main elements:

- **Feasibility study, orientation, consultation and planning:**
  The most important problem areas are identified, as well as possible partners, and programme planning is elaborated.

- **Thematic workshops and seminars:**
  Different parts of Africa are covered by regional seminars and national workshops with parliamentarians, experts and civil society. Parliamentary seminars in Europe and other OECD regions highlight challenges posed by African Urbanisation and what policies should be encouraged globally to improve the situation.

- **Development of Parliamentary Action Plans and Codes of Conduct:**
  Parliamentary Action Plans and Codes of Conduct give a focus for future action. This should include action related to parliamentary oversight on relevant government programmes and legislation, north-south dialogue monitoring ODA and follow up on international agreements and commitments.

- **Institutional Capacity Building:**
  Capacity building support is provided to the Global Parliamentary Network for UN-Habitat, especially its African Chapter.

- **Innovative Partnership building**
Partnerships are developed between public, social and private sectors to jointly improve environmentally sustainable human settlement and access to decent shelter.

The Programme’s emphasis will be on establishing a flourishing parliamentary dialogue within and between Africa and Europe, targeted towards the creation, implementation and monitoring of concrete Parliamentary Action Plans, at both a regional and national level. The aim will be to stimulate revised legislation, policies, budgets, oversight and representational frameworks around urban poverty reduction and environmental sustainability promotion.

To prepare for such a collaboration we suggest the following steps for your consideration:

- Setting up a committee
- Identifying a liaison person in each organisation
- Develop project proposals

It is expected that at a later stage that the appropriate legal instruments will be executed when specific projects are identified for implementation.

If you agree with the the contents of this letter as reflecting the outcome of the various consultations, I would be grateful if you could confirm your agreement by signing this letter and resending it to us as an affirmation of the understanding reached by our two institutions. It being fully understood that this exchange of letter does not impose any legal obligation or liability on UN HABITAT in any way whatsoever.
Date: 10/12 2008
Signed: [Signature]

[WWEPA Official]
Mr. Pär Granstedt
Secretary General, AWEPA

Date: 10/12 2008
Signed: [Signature]

Mrs. Anna Tibaijuka
Executive Director
UN-HABITAT