

UN HABITAT

Address by
Mrs. Anna Tibaijuka
Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations
and Executive Director of UN-HABITAT
at the closing ceremony of the fifth session of
World Urban Forum
in Rio de Janeiro,
Friday, 26 March 2010

Hon. Mr. Marcio Fortes de Almeida, Minister of Cities of Brazil and Chair
of WUF 5

The Co-Chair Representative - Ms. Reta Jo Lewis, Special Representative
for Global Inter-Governmental Affairs of the USA and
All distinguished Members of the WUF 5 Advisory Group

Mr. Clifford Warmington, Minister of Housing of Jamaica and President of
the UN-Habitat Governing Council,

Honourable Ministers and Members of Parliament,

Mr. Sergio Cabral, Governor of the State of Rio

Your Worship Mayor Eduardo Paes of Rio de Janeiro, and other mayors,

Your Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests and colleagues in the United Nations,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is truly a very great honour for me and my colleagues at UN-HABITAT
to have convened this fifth session of the World Urban Forum here in the
beautiful city of Rio de Janeiro. In terms of global participation, it has been
by far the largest forum we have yet held. It has been also a gathering at
which we heard many voices from every region of the world.

And what springs to mind as I look back on this wonderful week is the growing commitment, the goodwill and the determination of all our partners to bridge the urban divide. I thank you all for coming to share your views and make your contribution.

Let me thank you President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva for steering us so passionately on the road to the *right to the city*! Your observation that “modern leaders find themselves saddled with the burden of correcting the mismanagement of the past manifested in the favelas” is something that UN-HABITAT will use in our campaign to promote sustainable urbanization around the world. For I agree with you entirely Sir that for a government to allow people to languish in slums is to neglect its responsibility and pass on the burden to the children and future generations. The right to the city must be now, if our call for sustainability is to be meaningful!

And I also thank all those Heads of Government and Honorable Ministers who took their valuable time to honour us with their presence and for sharing their wisdom with us. The WUF would not materialize if you did not attend.

Once again for special mention thank you President Museveni of Uganda for joining as all the way from Africa and sharing your views and vision on the urban challenge. Your participation leaves no doubt that the challenge of urban squalor might be deepest in Africa, but the good news is that with leaders engaged at the highest level, the solution cannot be far from sight! We all know that where there is will there is way! Your quote of an old saying that “a problem is best solved by the one exposed to it” bears testimony to the long shared values of inclusion engrained in African culture! The Right to the City is about consultations, inclusion, and empowering people to solve their own problems. It is about fighting slums and not slum dwellers and fighting poverty instead of fighting the poor!

Thank you Mayor Eduardo da Costa Paes! Thank you Sérgio Cabral, Governor of Rio de Janeiro! Thank you Mrs. Dilma Russef, Minister of Government Coordination and thank you Marcio Fortes, Minister for Cities and Chair of the Forum. You and the people of Rio de Janeiro THE CARIOCAS - have been such wonderful and gracious hosts. You have made this forum particularly interesting and useful.

And congratulations for a successful face lifting of this once depressed Rio dockside neighborhood into a modern state of the art convention centre that has been our home this week.

Ladies and gentlemen, I have been introduced to the architect and the renovation engineers of this wonderful place! They are women!! It is another lesson to be learned, using affirmative action in public procurement practices to include professional women and young people! UN-HABITAT has been promoting this in our governance campaigns! Please join me in a round of applause for this best practice in women empowerment!

This conference venue now becomes a new addition to the treasures of this beautiful and scenic City, an enduring legacy for WUF 5 as you now move on to prepare for bigger things to come, the World Cup 2014 and the Olympics in 2016! I believe I speak for all of us that we leave this place convinced that circumstances and resources permitting, we look forward to return or convince others to come, as we are witness of what you can do! Inshallah!

And a special word of thanks to all of you who joined us in solidarity with the survivors of the earthquake in Haiti where so much work, time and money is now needed to build back better for all.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I look outside this convention centre the view of the Niteroi Bridge is stunning. We only see a part of it because at 13 kilometres, it is the longest bridge in the southern hemisphere, and the sixth longest in the world. Indeed, this bridge symbolises in every sense the theme of the Forum, *bridging the urban divide*. For it joins Rio de Janeiro in a physical sense as much as the policy of the city government is intended to narrow the gap between rich and poor by reducing poverty.

And as I listened to some of the wisdom this week, some particularly memorable phrases come to my mind. Mr. Ricardo Gouveia, Director of the Bento Rubião Foundation of Rio de Janeiro quoted the lyrics of a Brazilian samba in accepting the Shaikh Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa UN-Habitat Award, and I quote: `` when the people in the slums are given a chance, the whole city sings ``.

And so I say your voices are being heard. We are listening. We have heard women tell us repeatedly that when they feel unsafe in a city, it is a city of

shame. And if a city is unsafe for women it is unsafe for the children. And the young people told us that a city that cannot give them a fair chance in life is also a city of shame. Yes ladies and gentlemen, let truth be told if we are to bridge the divide!

Another memorable quote came from Mr. Rodolfo Ramirez of Habitat for Humanity Latin America. In explaining the concept of the *right to the city*, he said: "Let's not define the city as urban territory, but rather let's call it a space for citizenship."

And the enormity of the challenges we face in many cities of the rapidly urbanizing world, in a world where some 1 billion people reside in slums and other sub-standard housing, were very clearly brought home to us.

And you, Mr. Mario Fortes, the Brazilian Minister of Cities told us that regularizing tenure for 30 million people with no title deeds is a huge challenge, but nonetheless one of your government's top priorities. Your commitment was demonstrated by the announcement made at this Forum by the State Government of Pernambuco that 55,000 people living in informal settlements would benefit immediately from the grant of security of tenure. UN-Habitat, through our flagship programme the Gender Land Tool Network (GLTN) is proud to be associated with this effort, as we empowered a network of local women's NGOs to reach this historical decision. I salute our partners ESPACO FEMMINISTA members of the Huarou Commission! I say congratulations and for other remaining challenges Aluta Continua!

Please join me in a round of applause to thank the authorities for this decision and also to inform the world and the skeptics about the FORUM! WUF is a serious market place for ideas urban, and historic business deals, such as this one have been sealed here! Deals that will transform the lives for thousands of marginalized people for the better, for generations to come!

Mr. Shaun Donovan, the U.S. Secretary for Housing and Urban Development stressed the importance of promoting democracy, human rights, enhancing global health, food security and energy efficiency. Like the successful passage of the health bill passed in his country during the week of the Forum, an historic achievement, he emphasized that housing and urban development is also a major priority of the domestic US agenda that will also in time inform its international cooperation assistance. Thank you Secretary Donovan and your esteemed delegation for your leadership

and support, first in Washington DC as host of Global Celebrations for World Habitat Day last year, when you transformed habitat day to habitat week to help focus the nation and the world on the pressing challenges of urban life. As we launch the WUC campaign the example will be very helpful to replicate around the world.

We learned during the week that our nations and communities have the know how. Indeed the know-how exists. But as the Vice-President of the Philippines, Mr. Noli de Casto told us, we must now build the capacities of people living in cities so that they forge their own future. Thank you Mr. Vice President for being a veteran to our Forums in Vancouver, in Nanjing China and now in Rio de Janeiro. The gains made by Phillipines in slum upgrading and empowering the urban poor are familiar to UN-HABITAT and another testimony that where leaders are engaged, progress will be made.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I will not repeat here the shameful figures I cited at the beginning of this week on the huge numbers of people living in slums around the world. But after serving two full terms as Executive Director of UN-Habitat I have to use my last address to you in this capacity to express my anger at this situation.

How will our world look in just two generations to come when it is projected that 70 percent of humanity will be living in towns and cities? What percentage will continue to live in abject poverty? How much dirtier will cities make our planet? As we also learned this week, the means to bridge the urban divide are not lacking. We must, however, muster the political will to make our cities fit for our children, and the time to act is now!

Those who visited the informative exhibition will have seen how such ideas are being turned into action. It is now our duty to keep the momentum for action going. It is the duty of governments and leaders at all levels to provide the requisite resources and to make investments that will provide sustainable cities in a changing climate!

And this is why I am delighted that we now have the World Urban Campaign to drive the message home, and the support of all of you who this morning have pledged commitment to join the Campaign and signed on as Campaign Anchors in your respective neighborhood, town, country

or professional and business category! I want to clarify that this campaign is frontal and global, and UN-HABITAT is a facilitator and coordinator! In line with its mandate it will provide a clearing house where we meet to share experiences and knowledge but will not work and cannot work without each one of you here.

So once again, if you did not or have not committed please do so on line!

Let progress blossom and spread to more and more cities around the world, from the 100 Cities Initiative identified in the preparatory phase to 1000 to 10,000 and above! We need a global movement to turn things around! Isolated efforts however well intentioned will not lead to scalable achievements! In fact it is these isolated efforts that has in the past make our interventions ineffective! And I repeat, it is not the big things that count, the small things you will do will add up to become big things, transformative and enduring. There is opportunity and responsibility for all of us.

Before taking my leave of you, let me also make a few announcements, and even some few introductions.

Firstly, I wish to take this opportunity to inform this distinguished assembly that we have been working in Brazil for a long time. The Mayor of Rio is host to our Office for Latin America and the Caribbean. The City of Rio supports this office financially! This WUF would not have been as successful as it has been without the support of the City, and the dedicated staff of our Rio Team under the able leadership of their Director Ms. Cecilia Martinez. Please give them a round of applause!

I am pleased and grateful that this morning, we have signed an agreement with the Minister for Cities to open a branch in Brasilia too! I call upon all in a position to do so to volunteer to host our campaign anchoring offices around the world. An operating space makes things happen as they bring order and enhance our capacity to implement programs.

Thirdly, UN-HABITAT staff present here and even those back in Nairobi holding fort have worked hard for the Forum. For special mention I have to single out the WUF Secretariat under the able leadership of the Secretary to the Governing Council Chris Mensah and the WUF Coordinator Mariam Yunusa. Here in Rio, staff have performed different roles and they are all important. However, I would be remiss if I did not single out the Drafting Committee under the dedicated leadership of Mohamed Halfani that has

had go put up the characteristic long nights to services the Advisory Committee and finalize the WUF Report that is now before you. Please join me to thank them.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished participants

That report and your recommendations will now be presented on your behalf by the Executive Director to the Governing Council when it meets in Nairobi in April next year. As you know WUF is a mechanism to channel your recommendations, advice, and even views to the Governing Council, a subsidiary organ of the UN General Assembly. The GC is a Ministerial level body that oversees the implementation of the HSP of the UN. In this regard, I wish to thank the steady guidance and support extended by the Committee of Permanent Representatives in Nairobi in the preparatory process.

Finally, I wish to recognize some distinguished members of my team who are retiring who had not been mentioned at the Governing Council. Our Press and Media Secretary Sharad Shankardass is one such. Sharad is a not a typical personality. Soft spoken, quiet and yes even shy, he is focused and persistent to gets the message through. If anyone has helped me to raise the profile of UN-HABITAT ii is Sharad. And if there is anyone who will leave a gap that will be hard to fill, it is him. He is among the most dedicated staff members who will not sleep until the task is accomplished. He never tires to network, to promote, to convince media that UN-HABITAT and its leaders are news worthy. It has not been an easy task but you will agree with me he has done it, and done well. Thank you Sharad for keeping up with me at times when I was not keen to speak to your ntnetwork, or had to do so to keep my peace! Please join me to thank him.

Mr. Daniel Biau, Director of our Regional and Technical Cooperation Division is familiar to a number of you. He could not join us at this WUF session due to unavoidable circumstances but has played an invaluable role for the organization. He served as Acting Deputy Executive Director for the organization through the turbulent years before I was appointed. He continued to serve in that capacity until 2006 when Mrs. Klevby, the Deputy Executive Director was finally appointed by the Secretary-General in 2006. When we decided to launch the WUF, way back in 2002 the first draft Concept Paper for WUF was written by Daniel Biau. An efficient no nonsense manager, he has been the guy who you know will get things done. He will be hard to replace in the organization

but then he leaves behind a strong RTCD that has grown several fold under his tenure. Please join me to thank him.

Secondly, the sponsors of WUF apart from Rio are the Governments of Norway and the EU who provided travel assistance for youth and women participants from least developed countries. I salute you.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In my handover notes I shall be writing about the challenges of financing this forum to the next Executive Director. To date it has been funded by the generous hosts who have headed my call to host the event. In 2002 the City of Barcelona, in 2006 the Government of Canada, in 2008 the City of Nanjing and Government of China. The Forum is an expensive undertaking and UN-HABITAT does not have the means to host it outside our duty station in Nairobi without substantial financial support from the host? Please join me in a round of applause to thank this support.

And in doing this let me thank so sincerely a Government and Leader that has accepted to take on the challenge and huge responsibility as our Next Host at the 6th Session. The Government of Bahrain at the invitation of His Royal Highness Shaikh Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa. This will be the first time for a middle East Arab country to host the forum so I hope to see all of you there to learn the best practices emanating from that region, as witnessed here in the Awards they are sponsoring?

I humbly thank you all again for the wonderful support you have always afforded to this great agency of the United Nations.

And as we leave today let ´s hear our cities sing! Thank you.

Obrigada.

Cioazinho!