



Final Statement by Mrs. Anna Tibaijuka, Executive Director

Agenda Item 8

*Mr. Chairman
Excellencies,
Colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,*

It has been an honour to report to you today with an update of the activities of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme. As my term of office comes to a close, this auspicious occasion marks the last time that I appear before this esteemed Committee in my capacity as UN-HABITAT's Executive Director.

In that regard, a historical review is on order. Since I first addressed this committee some ten years ago, steady progress has been made in strengthening UN-HABITAT in its role to monitor and coordinate the implementation of the Habitat Agenda.

No one can deny that the progress we have made over the years could have been possible without the guidance and support of the CPR. From the outset, I was confronted with a Committee that was only Advisory to the Executive Director under the old arrangements when UN-HABITAT was only a Centre!. Working together not only did we transform the Centre into a fully fledged program but also saw the formalization of the CPR as an intersession oversight body for our activities. This reform in governance and management was instrumental in stabilizing our work and putting this agency on a steadier footing. Past administrations had been haunted with the informality and mere advisory role of the CPR, a situation that was not conducive to build trust between the two parties.

With UN-HABITAT upgraded and the CPR formalized, we have worked together to rebuild and strengthen the organization. I shall not repeat to this August body what we have achieved as I have already done so both on the occasion of giving my final statement to the last Governing Council and more recently to the 5th session of the World Urban Forum in Rio de Janeiro. In order to avoid repetition, and in the interest of time, both statements will be re-circulated for easy of reference as part of this statement.

It therefore only remains for me to thank you for your guidance and support, trust and friendship throughout my tenure. With an academic background, I could only encourage a frank exchange of views among the parties that I considered necessary to share the knowledge and experience, add value and turn things around in the desired direction. The organization had lost too much time in obscurity, and at times confusion. It required an atmosphere of critical analyses of issues and openness to get matters sorted out once and for all both for the Secretariat as well as the CPR membership. In so doing, clearly there must have been occasions of communication gaps and misunderstandings they entail. For those who felt unhappy in such developments, let me take this opportunity to apologize, comforted by the belief that in the end it was always constructive criticism that prevailed and finally brought us to the success that the organization has achieved. On my part, am happy to say that at no point did I feel discouraged or unduly concerned of what I understood as differences in approach and never principle. Take for example the long arduous process to formulate the MTSIP, on which we now stand, and fashion the case of path-breaking programmes for the agency such as Experimental reimbursable seeding operations (ERSO).

I have no doubt you will continue to extend the same support to my successor. In that regard, your Excellencies, I was hoping that by now Member States and the Secretary-General could

have already decided on this matter, to accord me an opportunity for an orderly handover. Regrettably this is not the case despite my having given ample notice that I would not seek a new mandate. I therefore appeal to the CPR once again, to see what could be done on this issue to protect the agency from once again being cast into a period of leadership uncertainty and care taker Executive Directors. Clearly both my successor and myself need to know the decision so that we can agree on a mutually convenient for such an handover before it is too late.

Last but not least, let me reiterate my sincere thanks to my colleagues. The Deputy Executive Director, Ambassador Mrs. Inga Björk-Klevby, who knows UN-HABITAT from both sides. As a former CPR member and now part of the Secretariat and all staff both in senior positions and otherwise and with long or short service. In the interest of time I will not mention names. The exception will have to be Dr. Axumite Gebre-Egziabher, who has recently joined us from New York as Director of the Global Division. Thank you, Axumite, for your dedication and stewardship of our New York Office that saw us included in all the coordinating committees of the UN, from the Chief Executive Board (CEB) to the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) for humanitarian affairs, etc. I believe you and colleagues whom I found in the organization are the institutional memory that the new ED will need to forge ahead to even greater heights.

Excellencies,

In this new urban era, approximately 1 billion people, as you are aware, are living in slums and sub-standard housing in the world. These figures from our State of the World's Cities Report show that one out of every three people living in cities is living in life or health-threatening conditions. Unless remedial action is taken, their numbers, I am afraid, are projected to rise to 1.6 billion by 2020, unless radical measures are taken.

Of itself, this reality shows that I am leaving the agency but not its noble mission of securing a better urban future for all humanity. Let me state categorically that in my new incarnation, whatever this be, UN-HABITAT should know there is a natural ally and friend in me. I shall continue to play my part, if called upon to do so especially in the advocacy role through the World Urban Campaign that we launched in Rio de Janeiro at the last Session of the World Urban Forum. I believe we stand a wonderful chance to raise our flag even higher. From obscurity, we are now an agency convening global forums such as the World Urban Forum and spearheading a system-wide event devoted to "Better Cities, Better Life" at the Shanghai Expo 2010. The UN pavilion is now attracting 20,000 visitors a day! All these become ambassadors for our cause in campaigning for sustainable urbanization.

And beyond that into the future we are driving the new World Urban Campaign to ensure that the urban agenda, and that those living in poverty and deprivation, are always kept in mind. I am particularly pleased to inform you that we currently have all traditional Habitat Partners on board with the Campaign. Here I refer to local authorities, professionals, academia, women, youth and the media. In addition, we are partnering with 5 other UN agencies that are running campaigns of direct relevance to the Habitat Agenda. Last but not least, some of the world's biggest players in terms of shaping, planning and investing in our cities are engaging actively in the Campaign.

I am confident that the Kingdom of Bahrain will host yet another landmark WUF session in 2012, and once again is grateful for the leadership and support they have shown to enable me to handover a concrete arrangements for this important core campaign flagship event.

In taking leave, let me once again tell the CPR that it was with your support that we have been able to consolidate the gains made and to strengthen our activities “FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE”.

Thank you for your kind attention, and Karibu Tanzania.