Introductory Statement by Dr. Joan Clos

Executive Director

Thematic/Country Presentation

Agenda Item 7

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Statement by Dr. Joan Clos
Executive Director, United Nations Human Settlements Programme
(UN-Habitat) and the Undersecretary-General
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Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Members of the CPR,

We present to you the UN-Habitat work in Egypt and Syria.

In Egypt, UN-Habitat builds from its initial activity of undertaking Strategic Plans for 50 Cities. The presentation on Egypt programme will show how ASUD project has transformed the programme into a “New Urban Agenda” initiative entirely focused on guiding and supporting sustainable urbanization in Egypt through key interventions at national and city levels, with accompanying institutional building and legislative development. The Government of Egypt has demonstrated its strong interest to adopt the three legged approach to sustainable urbanization.

The Egyptian government, through technical support for the ASUD project, is currently discussing a draft law on land readjustment and a new urban planning law which will be presented to parliament as soon as it convenes.

Distinguished members

Due to the refugee situation in Syria, we cannot talk of our interventions without mentioning Lebanon, Iraq and Jordan. In Syria, through the Rapid City Profiles (Syria/Lebanon) UN-Habitat helped map the demographic changes, damage, and the impact of the conflict on proper function of the key service sectors. This was done through participatory planning with relevant stakeholders. In Lebanon, UN-Habitat established Regional Technical Offices (RTOs) within municipalities to strengthen the city’s
resilience against the backdrop of civil war in Syrian. These are highly trained local professionals that form a roving technical team within the unions of municipalities that are able to identify, plan and implement critical infrastructure interventions as needed to cope with the strain on public services. Previous experience (Lebanon 2006 crisis) has shown that RTOs are eventually adopted permanently into local government, enabling municipalities to better cope with future shocks.

Your Excellencies,

Housing rental prices have inflated significantly due to high demand compared with supply. To meet the housing supply needs at scale, without subsidy, UN-Habitat (Jordan) works with commercial banks and housing developers in developing an innovative affordable housing supply system for middle and low income Jordanian families that can also provide for refugee through rental.

Over decades the region has experienced IDP and refugee camps turning into slums as temporary houses and tents become replaced with permanent buildings. To better the situation, UN-Habitat has introduced in Iraq a new approach through the development of durable shelter camps planned as city extensions managed by municipalities. This strengthens social cohesion between IDP and host communities. This approach also better enable access to social services and employment, allowing donors to invest in permanent infrastructure rather than temporary water and sanitation systems which over time tend to require high maintenance and costs.

We highly appreciate your continued guidance and support to deliver this important mandate, even though sometimes our staff are forced to work under difficult circumstances in conflict countries such as Syria and Iraq.

Allow me to invite Mr. Dyfed Aubrey, our Director of the Regional Office for Arab States to take us through the presentation.

Thank you.