Developments at the 62nd Session of the General Assembly

Agenda Item 5

Statement

By

Anna Tibaijuka
Under-Secretary-General and
Executive Director of UN-HABITAT

HSP/CPR/27/5
CPR Meeting: 6 December 2007
Statement by the Executive Director on developments at the 62\textsuperscript{nd} Session of the General Assembly

Madam Chair, Distinguished Representatives,

I would like to take this opportunity to brief the CPR on our agenda item before the General Assembly. This year, three reports were presented before the Second Committee. The first was the report of the Governing Council at its 21\textsuperscript{st} Session. The second was the report of the Secretary General on the coordinated implementation of the Habitat Agenda which was submitted to ECOSOC earlier this year and referred to the General Assembly. The third report was the report of the Secretary General on follow-up to the Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements and the strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme.

I am pleased to say that these reports were well received by the Committee. As you are aware, the 62\textsuperscript{nd} Session of the General Assembly opened its deliberations with a high level debate on climate change. The overarching vision of “Sustainable Urbanisation” of the MTSIP thus became all the more relevant. Numerous statements pertaining to our agenda item were made by member states from all regions urging action on mitigation and adaptation.

In my statement before the Second Committee on 30 October under the UN-HABITAT agenda item I underscored three issues. The first issue is that we can no longer ignore the link between cities, urbanization and climate change with half of humanity living in cities. Cities are already the major consumers of energy and the major contributors to greenhouse gas
emissions. Thus any serious mitigation efforts will necessarily see cities as front line actors. Consequently they must be empowered to engage in mitigation through, inter alia, appropriate degrees of decentralization.

The second issue I stressed was the equally urgent need for adaptation. So many of our cities lie in coastal areas and areas that are vulnerable to extreme weather conditions caused by climate change. These cities include some of the world’s largest capital cities, port cities and trading centres. Unfortunately many of these cities also harbour a substantial portion of the world’s one billion slum dwellers. Needless to say these slum dwellers will undoubtedly be the most severely affected victims of the consequences of climate change.

The third issue I raised was that the urgent requirement for mitigation and adaptation measures provides an excellent opportunity for us to address and redress the chaotic aspects of rapid urbanization.

These measures are none other than the focus areas of the MTSIP, namely more rational land-use and planning, more resilient infrastructure and environmentally sound services, less polluting transport and mobility, and more ecological building design and construction.

These measures are a unique opportunity to review and revisit so many of the misinformed assumptions concerning urbanization, not to mention our unsustainable production and consumption patterns which have made cities in the North the major contributors to greenhouse gas emissions and our cities in the South the homes of millions of slum dwellers.
Distinguished Representatives,

I would like to conclude by informing you that a draft resolution on our agenda item has been put forward by the informals for further consideration by the Second Committee only a few days ago. It would be premature therefore to release it, but rest assured that we will distribute the final text of the resolution as soon as it is adopted.

I thank you for your attention.