Status of preparations for the Fifth Session
of the World Urban Forum (WUF 5)

Statement by the Executive Director
Mrs. Anna Tibaijuka

HSP/CPR/34/7

Nairobi, 24 September 2009
Excellencies,

It is now my pleasure to present an update on preparations for the Fifth Session of the World Urban Forum to take place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 22 to 26 March 2010. The theme ‘The Right to the City: Bridging the Urban Divide’ will inform and guide the discussions in Rio. The substantive content of the Forum comprises six dialogues, twelve breakout thematic debates, twelve roundtables, about 150 networking events, 24 training events and numerous and other side events.

Since my last briefing in June, which was accompanied by a comprehensive report from our first mission to Rio, preparations for the Forum have advanced significantly.

**Programme and Invitations**

I am pleased to report that we have dispatched to your capitals, through all Permanent Missions in Nairobi and New York, official invitation to Governments to attend the Forum in Brazil. Invitations have also been extended to UN Agencies. Excellencies, you have in front of you the Forum Brochure which was attached to the invitation, and in which we have provided you with detailed information on the Forum, including the provisional programme at a glance. We are currently in the process of sending invitations accompanied by a copy of the brochure as well, to all the 1500 Habitat Agenda Partners and most of nearly 15,000 in the WUF data base.

I wish now to highlight further some aspects of the preparations.

**E-debate**

A new feature for this Forum is E-debate, which responds to one of the recommendations in the report of the review of past Forums, calling for broader participation through the use of e-forums. The road to Rio is highlighted by a series of on-
line debates aimed at harvesting new ideas from the global internet community. These are expected to enhance the six dialogues that constitute the backbone of the Forum. The aim is to open up discussions to as many people as possible and to join in a discussion that will also provide new ideas and thinking for the Forum as a whole. Each debate will feature experts in the respective thematic areas who will serve as online moderators. A report of the E-debate and the best comments, statements, will be fed into the discussions at the Forum in Brazil.

Excellencies, Mr. Chair, I encourage you to sign-up on our website and join this pre-forum event which has started 3 days ago and is scheduled to conclude on 15 December 2009.

**Training Events**

Training events are designed to help participants enhance their skills using a “how-to” approach on implementing smart urban development ideas. The online call for proposals from organizations interested to run training sessions is at the moment ongoing on the WUF5 website at [www.unhabitat.org/wuf](http://www.unhabitat.org/wuf) and will close on 31 October 2009.

**Roundtables**

As already mentioned, twelve peer roundtable meetings will be held by ministers, mayors, parliamentarians, partner universities, business, urban researchers, Habitat professionals, women and youth groups, civil society organizations and non-governmental organization, indigenous people and the Global Land Tool Network, all of whom are important partner groups of UN-HABITAT. Member states are encouraged to mobilise their partners in their countries to participate actively in these events and to remember to visit the website for news and updates on various events at the Forum.
Networking Events

Networking events, which are also very popular partner events, will provide a platform for various urban agenda stakeholders and other United Nations bodies to discuss specific issues of interest and relevance on the theme of the Forum. We are planning for almost 150 Networking Event sessions. The call for applications to organize Networking Events will be opened tomorrow Friday 25 September 2009 on the website. Applications will be accepted until 30 November 2009.

Registration

The online registration for participation will open before the end of this month and I wish to encourage all who are planning to attend the Forum to register in good time.

The World Urban Youth Assembly and Gender Equality Action Assembly, which are now integral parts of the Forum pursuant to resolutions 22/2 and 22/7, will both hold from 19 – 20 March and detailed information is available on our website. All substantive officers and their counterparts are fully engaged in making these events important components of the World Urban Forum as recommended by the Twenty – second session of the Governing Council.

Exhibition

The exhibition will be held in two giant halls of 2,700m2. The detailed layout and specifications are still being worked out and will be linked on-line to the registration, to enable exhibitors to apply.
Budget and Financing

The Conference Agreement with our Host has experienced a slight delay due in part to the holiday period and the change of legal officers in charge. We are however assured by our host that progress has been made to secure the sum of USD 2.9 Million which they are currently working to transfer to UN-Habitat as soon as an appropriate legal framework is agreed upon, even as the Conference Agreement itself continues to be discussed.

Excellencies, soon, we shall send out our customary letter requesting governments who are in a position to do so, to support the preparations of the World Urban Forum, especially in the area of travels for participants from Least Developed Countries, including Youth and Women in particular, and sponsorship of renowned speakers and experts.

Venue

Our host has further informed us that the renovation of the Warehouses of the Rio de Janeiro Harbour, the WUF5 venue, is progressing satisfactorily and that the Brazilian WUF5 website will go on-line early October this year.

Excellencies,

I encourage you once more to regularly visit our WUF5 website. Overall, the WUF5 preparations are well on track and we are pleased to have such an engaged and committed host in the Federative Republic of Brazil.

I thank you for your attention.