Opening Speech by Dr. Joan Clos, ED, UN-HABITAT

United Nations Human Settlements Programme

Twenty-third Session of the Governing Council

Agenda Item 5
Activities of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, including coordination matters

Introductory Statement by the Executive Director

Nairobi, 11 April 2011
Mr. Chairman, Honourable Ministers, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, I am honoured to introduce to you agenda item 5, Activities of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, including coordination matters. The main report on this agenda item is contained in document HSP/GC/23/2. This report summarizes activities undertaken by UN-Habitat in response to the resolutions adopted by the Governing Council at its twenty-second session. It is complemented by other reports that provide more detailed and additional information on activities undertaken in response to specific resolutions. The subjects covered by these reports and the main documents in which they are discussed are as follows:

1. Review of the governance structure of UN-Habitat, contained in documents HSP/GC/23/5/Add.1 and HSP/GC/23/INF/7;

2. Fifth session of the World Urban Forum, contained in documents HSP/GC/23/5/Add.2 and Add.3;

3. Third United Nations conference on housing and sustainable urban development, contained in document HSP/GC/23/2/Add.4;

4. Coordinated implementation of the guidelines on access to basic services for all and the guidelines on decentralization and strengthening of local authorities, contained in document HSP/GC/23/2/Add.5;

5. Joint progress report of the executive directors of UNEP and UN-Habitat: joint activities in the area of urban environment, contained in document HSP/GC/23/2/Add.6; and

6. Cooperation with agencies and organizations within the United Nations system, intergovernmental organizations outside the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations and other Habitat partners in the implementation of the medium-term strategic and institutional plan, contained in document HSP/GC/23/2/Add.7.

Mr. Chairman, in this introductory statement I would like to highlight the key issues contained in these reports, indicating those that require adoption of specific resolutions by the present session of the Governing Council.

**Review of the governance structure of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme**

The document on *the Review of the Governance Structure of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme has* been produced pursuant to resolution 22/5 of 3 April 2009. As a result of this resolution the Secretariat and the Committee of Permanent Representatives have worked together in a constructive and collegial partnership to produce two specific outputs. The first of these was a series of measures characterized as “quick wins” and “medium or long term interventions” to be implemented at the discretion of the Executive Director and the Committee of Permanent Representatives. These measures are described in document HSP/GC/23/2/Add.1. They were formally adopted by the Committee of Permanent Representatives and are now at various stages of implementation.
The second output has been the preparation of options by the joint Secretariat/CPR Implementation Team for more fundamental, structural reform for consideration by the Governing Council. The team worked on this challenging area up to the last possible moment in order to have a satisfactory product. Findings are contained in a separate report entitled Review of the Governance Structure of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme Phase III which is available in the HSP/GC/23/INF/7. It proposes four options for potential changes in the governance structure for consideration by the Governing Council.

I wish to inform you that there is a draft resolution emerging from the reports that I have just mentioned, that is Draft Resolution HSP/GC/23/L.7 on the Governance of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme.

Fifth session of the World Urban Forum

Mr. Chairman, Honourable Ministers, Excellencies, and Distinguished Delegates, I now wish to turn to the fifth session of the World Urban Forum and lessons learnt from previous sessions of the Forum.

I would first like to congratulate the Government and people of Brazil for so generously hosting the fifth session of the World Urban Forum. As you know, it was a great success. The Forum was opened by the President of the Federative Republic of Brazil.

As indicated in our reports, over 350 different meetings were held. Overall attendance hit a record high. The forum exhibition drew some 10,000 visitors to its glittering array of displays from around the world. Participants rated the Forum quite favourably.

The World Urban Campaign was launched at the Fifth session of the Forum, and several governments, non-governmental and industry leaders signed a compact to carry forward the message of sustainable urbanization.

Mr. Chairman, the document on lessons learnt from previous sessions of the Forum is presented by the secretariat in response to Governing Council resolution 22/10. It provides delegates with an overview of previous sessions of the World Urban Forum and an understanding of lessons learnt in order to improve planning, organization and effectiveness of future sessions.

The review was conducted by a senior consultant and a draft of the report was shared with the Committee of Permanent Representatives to solicit and incorporate their views. Several of the recommendations made in the report were taken on board during preparations for the Fifth Session of the World Urban Forum.

I believe a draft resolution on the World Urban Forum may be submitted.

Third United Nations conference on housing and sustainable urban development

In its resolution 22/1 of 2009, the Governing Council recommended that the UN General Assembly consider during its 64th session the convening a third United Nations conference on
housing and sustainable urban development (Habitat III) in 2016. In December 2009, the General Assembly, through its resolution 64/207, took note of the recommendation. It asked the Secretary General to prepare a report on this matter in collaboration with the UN-Habitat Governing Council, for consideration at its 66th session.

The report before you was prepared in response to that resolution. It is for your consideration and subsequent adoption as a basis for the Secretary General’s report. The document highlights a number of developments since Habitat II, which make it necessary to convene a third United Nations conference on housing and sustainable urban development in 2016. These include:

(a) The demographic and economic dominance of cities, which now accommodate more than half of the world’s population;

(b) The rapid spatial expansion of urban settlements, leading to the emergence of megacities, mega-urban regions, poverty and inequality within cities;

(c) The emergence of new global issues and forces, including globalization, climate change, urban insecurity and crime, increasing natural and human-caused disasters and conflicts, and rising informality within cities;

(d) The changing roles of the public, private and non-governmental sectors towards a resurgence of the role of the public sector in urban planning and development; and

(e) The significantly increased volume of operational activities conducted by UN-HABITAT in post-disaster and post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation.

Five objectives of the conference are proposed in the report. These are:

(a) To undertake a comprehensive critical review and assessment of the implementation of the Habitat Agenda, the Declaration on Cities and Other Human Settlements in the New Millennium and relevant internationally agreed development goals;

(b) To identify major constraints hindering the implementation of the goals set forth in the documents above;

(c) To tackle new challenges and opportunities that have emerged since Habitat II, including climate change, the proliferation of slums and urban safety and security;

(d) To outline a new development agenda capable of responding to the new challenges and strengthening the new role of cities and relevant institutional frameworks in sustainable urban development and housing; and

(e) To assess and redefine the governance structure of UN-HABITAT and its strategic development partners in the new development approach.
Linked to the Executive Director’s report on this issue is Draft Resolution HSP/GC/23/L.1 on the Third United Nations conference on housing and sustainable urban development.

**Coordinated implementation of the guidelines on access to basic services for all and the guidelines on decentralization and strengthening of local authorities**

I now wish to turn to the coordinated implementation of the guidelines on access to basic services for all, and the guidelines on decentralization and strengthening of local authorities.

Governing Council Resolution 22/8 approved the guidelines on access to basic services for all. It acknowledged the complementarity of this resolution with resolution 21/3 on the international guidelines on decentralisation and the strengthening of local authorities adopted earlier in 2007.

Since the adoption of these resolutions, however, few international, national or local initiatives refer directly and clearly to the implementation of both sets of international guidelines.

UN-Habitat has intensified collaboration with interested partners to provide an implementation plan. It has also developed a strategy which includes policy development and advocacy at the regional and national levels; training and capacity development at regional, national and local levels; and monitoring and reporting.

Within the context of the enhanced normative and operational framework, UN-Habitat and its partners have selected pilot countries to test the viability of the guidelines. The key to success will remain political will and availability of funding to conduct the activities proposed.

Linked to the Executive Director’s report on this issue is Draft Resolution HSP/GC/23/L.8 on the coordinated implementation of the guidelines on access to basic services for all and the guidelines on decentralization and strengthening of local authorities.

**Joint progress report of the executive directors of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme and the United Nations Environment Programme on activities in the field of the urban environment over the reporting period 2009–2010**

Mr. Chairman, permit me to turn briefly to the joint progress report of the executive directors of UN-Habitat and UNEP in the field of the urban environment over the reporting period 2009 to 2010. The report before you, HSP/GC/23/2/Add.6, has been prepared jointly by the Executive Directors of the two Programmes pursuant to a number of resolutions by the General Assembly, the Commission on Human Settlements and the Governing Councils of both UN-Habitat and UNEP.

The report looks at the Partnership Framework for the period 2008–2013, the Joint Operation and Coordination Group, in which representatives of both Programmes meet monthly to coordinate their joint work, and other forms of cooperation at the local, regional, national and global levels.
Under the Partnership Framework for the period 2008–2013, the two Programmes have been stepping up their cooperation to provide better and more extensive services to local and national governments in the field of the urban environment. The aim is to enable cities to be able to better assess and prioritize local environmental concerns and to have a voice in the national and global environmental debate, particularly in such areas as climate change.

The two Programmes implemented the first 2008–2009 work plan of joint activities and embarked on the implementation of a second biennial work plan for 2010-2011. The first work plan focused on providing cities and national Governments with tools and capacity-building in the area of environmental planning and management and in dealing with urban environmental issues across various sectors. The current work plan is being implemented under the overall theme of cities and climate change. Joint activities focus on documenting urban greenhouse-gas emissions, the assessment of urban vulnerability to climate change impacts and the development of innovative adaptation mechanisms.

**Cooperation with agencies and organizations within the United Nations system, intergovernmental organizations outside the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations**

Excellencies, this brings me to document GC/23/2/Add.7, which deals with cooperation with agencies and organizations within the United Nations system, intergovernmental organizations outside the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations. The report before you reviews progress made between January 2009 and December 2010.

During this period, UN-Habitat broadened its cooperation with agencies and organizations across the UN system. The main vehicles for cooperation included the Chief Executives Board for Coordination, the United Nations Development Group in Asia and the Pacific and the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs. Further, the Programme participated in meetings of the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs and provided technical inputs for reports of the Secretary-General and other relevant documents.

Beyond the UN system, UN-Habitat has continued to consolidate relations with major partners, while exploring and strengthening new partnerships so as to add value to its work and leverage resources. This has included partnerships with a number of inter-governmental organizations such as the European Commission, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the Organization of American States, the League of Arab States, the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Cities Alliance, and regional development banks.

UN-Habitat has also developed partnerships with multilateral and bilateral organizations, civil society groups, professional bodies and research and training institutions. We also strive to ensure that gender and youth form an integral part of policy development.

Mr. Chairman, Honourable Ministers, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, this brings me to the end of my introductory statement on agenda item 5. I thank you for your kind attention.