

Lebanon updates

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Closing of a Success Story Reconstruction Project in Southern Lebanon

A ceremony was held in Southern Lebanon on 11 December 2009 to mark the closing of a two-year intervention of UN-HABITAT in Southern Lebanon. Thanks to the generous contribution of the governments of Holland, Cyprus and Finland, UN-HABITAT managed to significantly support three unions of municipalities — Tyre, Bint Jbeil and Jabal Amel — and all his constituencies in an approach to respond, following the July 2006 war, to shelter recovery in the region.

The aim of this intervention was to respond to the immediate needs for shelter recovery and reconstruction in Southern Lebanon while laying the foundation for the long-term sustainable reconstruction and development. Throughout this intervention, a dynamic project team, working in close relationship with regional and local authorities, managed to facilitate the reconstruction of destroyed and heavily damaged dwellings and to strengthen the capacities of local authorities and affected communities to plan and manage the recovery and reconstruc-

tion processes and long-term sustained development.

More than one hundred people attended the closing ceremony, under the auspices of the Minister of State for Administrative Reform, H.E. Mohamed Fneish, and with the presence of his Excellency Mr. Kyriacos Kouros, Ambassador of Cyprus in Lebanon, Mr. Petros Attas, CyprusAid office in Nicosia, and Mrs. Flora Kurikala, Embassy of Finland in Damascus, and Mr. Alain Grimard, Senior Officer of UN-HABITAT based in the Headquarter of Nairobi.

While different stakeholders presented throughout the day the main achievements of this project, many certificates were presented to authorities and citizens, men and women, who fully devoted themselves in the activities of this project.

Both the Minister of State for Administrative Reform and partner local authorities expressed their wishes to have UN-HABITAT remaining in Southern Lebanon in order to support the authorities

and citizens in preparing in integrated and sustainable manners, to the long-term development needs of the cities and towns of Southern Lebanon. ♦



Mr. Petros Attas, CyprusAid office in Nicosia presents training certificate to one of the beneficiaries.

Lebanon: An Innovative Agreement to Promote an Inclusive Environment for People with Special Needs in the Construction Sector

A Memorandum of Understanding between the Lebanese Physical Handicapped Union (LPHU) and UN-HABITAT has been concluded in Tyr, Lebanon, on Friday the 11 December 2009. This agreement is setting out the framework under which the two organizations will collaborate to promote and develop the concept of inclusive environment for people with special needs.

With one accord, the agreement indicates that the two institutions will now share common interests of making better housing conditions and better access to public places to all community people including persons with special needs.

The Lebanese Physical Handicapped Union, a Lebanese based non-profit organization dealing with people with physical disabilities that has been working on disability issues since 1981 was represented by Mr. Hassan Mroueh and Mrs. Sylvana Lakkis, whilst Dania El-Rifai, UN-HABITAT Representative in Lebanon and Alain Grimard, Senior Human Settlements Officer based in the UN-HABITAT's Headquarter in Nairobi, attend to the ceremony in behalf of our Agency.

Following the July 2006 war in Lebanon, the two institutions were involved in the reconstruction process at the municipal and national levels in South Lebanon,

through providing technical assistance and know how to families and municipalities in order to include engineering accessibility standards and norms within construction activities (in public and private spaces). In this context, a technical booklet was produced by both organizations and distributed to all concerned stakeholders.

With this Memorandum, both institutions agree to collaborate in the future with relevant ministries and public directorates in adopting the needed policy reforms to promote engineering accessibility in private and public buildings and places. ♦

Nationwide Up-Scaling of Technical Offices within Union of Municipalities in Lebanon

Since 2007, UN-HABITAT has been engaged in a pilot initiative aiming at empowering local authorities in South Lebanon to play a leading role in responding to the urgent post-crisis reconstruction needs while laying the foundation for long term development. One of the pillars of this initiative entailed providing support to three unions of municipalities to set up and operate three technical offices. While these offices played an instrumental role during the first stage in monitoring and documenting the reconstruction of totally destroyed houses, the second stage witnessed a structural shift in the operation of these offices that focused on various planning issues to respond to the development needs of the regions.

In an attempt to institutionalize and up-scale this pilot initiative, UN-HABITAT in cooperation with the International

Management and Training Institute (IMTI), and the American University of Beirut (AUB) conducted a quick assessment to examine the current state, practices and operation of *technical offices* that exist within Unions of Municipalities in Lebanon.

The findings of the assessment were presented and discussed during a networking meeting, which took place in November 2009 in IMTI Offices. The event gathered representatives of seven out of the ten assessed technical offices in addition to the active participation of the Director General of the Directorate of Municipalities Mr. Khalil Hajal.

The meeting was crucial to facilitate networking and exchange of experiences between concerned unions of municipalities. Several technical, management and financial issues were thoroughly addressed by participants, who agreed at

the end of the meeting to organize similar meetings on regular basis.

The recommendations that resulted from the meeting will be followed up and implemented jointly by UN-HABITAT and the Directorate of Municipalities. ♦



Participants in the meeting.

Launching the 2009 Global Human Settlements Report “Planning Sustainable Cities”

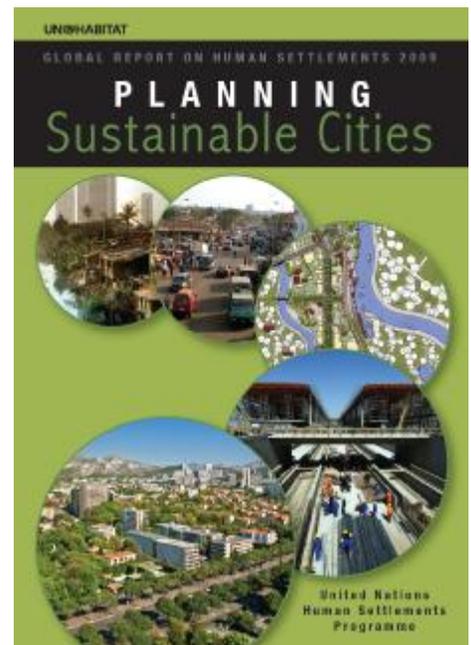
On Tuesday 1 December 2009, UN-HABITAT represented by Mr. Mathias Hundsalz launched the 2009 Global Human Settlements Report entitled “**Planning Sustainable Cities**” in the UN House.

The report emphasizes that planning systems in many parts of the world, most especially in developing countries need to be revisited or reformed. This is because conventional approaches to urban planning have largely failed to promote equitable, efficient and sustainable human settlements. Added to this is the intensification of the problems associated with rapid urban growth and urbanization of poverty, as well as the quantitative and qualitative changes that cities all over the world are undergoing. All these require a fundamental rethink of the current approaches to planning.

In this context, the report concludes that there is a need to identify innovative planning approaches that are able to ad-

dress urban challenges of the 21st century. Urban planning systems and approaches in many parts of the world are not equipping governments with the necessary tools to deal with key urban challenges of the 21st century. These include climate change, oil depletion, challenges of globalization, informality, socio-spatial inequality and governance, etc. Indeed, this Report views urban planning as a significant management tool for dealing with the unprecedented challenges facing 21st-century cities and attaining the goals of sustainable urbanization.

The launch event was co-organized with ESCWA and took place in parallel to a Regional Expert Group Meeting on “The Use of Urban Observatories as a Tool for Localizing Social Policy in the ESCWA Regions”. ♦



To obtain a copy of the report, please send an email to: unhabitat.lebanon@gmail.com

World Urban Forum 5: The Right to the City - Bridging the Urban Divide

In the space of a few short years, the World Urban Forum has turned into the world's premier conference on cities. The Forum was established by the United Nations to examine one of the most pressing problems facing the world today: rapid urbanization and its impact on communities, cities, economies, climate change and policies.

Since the first meeting in Nairobi, Kenya in 2002, the Forum has grown in size and stature as it travelled to Barcelona in 2004, Vancouver 2006, and Nanjing in 2008.

UN-HABITAT and the Government of Brazil have started preparations for the fifth session scheduled in Rio de Janeiro 22 - 26 March 2010. The Forum is one of the most open and inclusive gatherings of its kind on the international stage. It brings together government leaders, ministers, mayors, diplomats, members of national, regional and international associations of local governments, non-governmental and community organizations, professionals, academics, grassroots women's organizations, youth and slum dwellers groups as partners working for better cities. The fifth session in Rio builds on the lessons and successes of the previous four events.

The Forum shall comprise a series of different meetings: dialogue sessions discussing the main themes, networking events, caucus meetings, special sessions, roundtables, training seminars and an array of side events.

The WUF5 exhibition features:

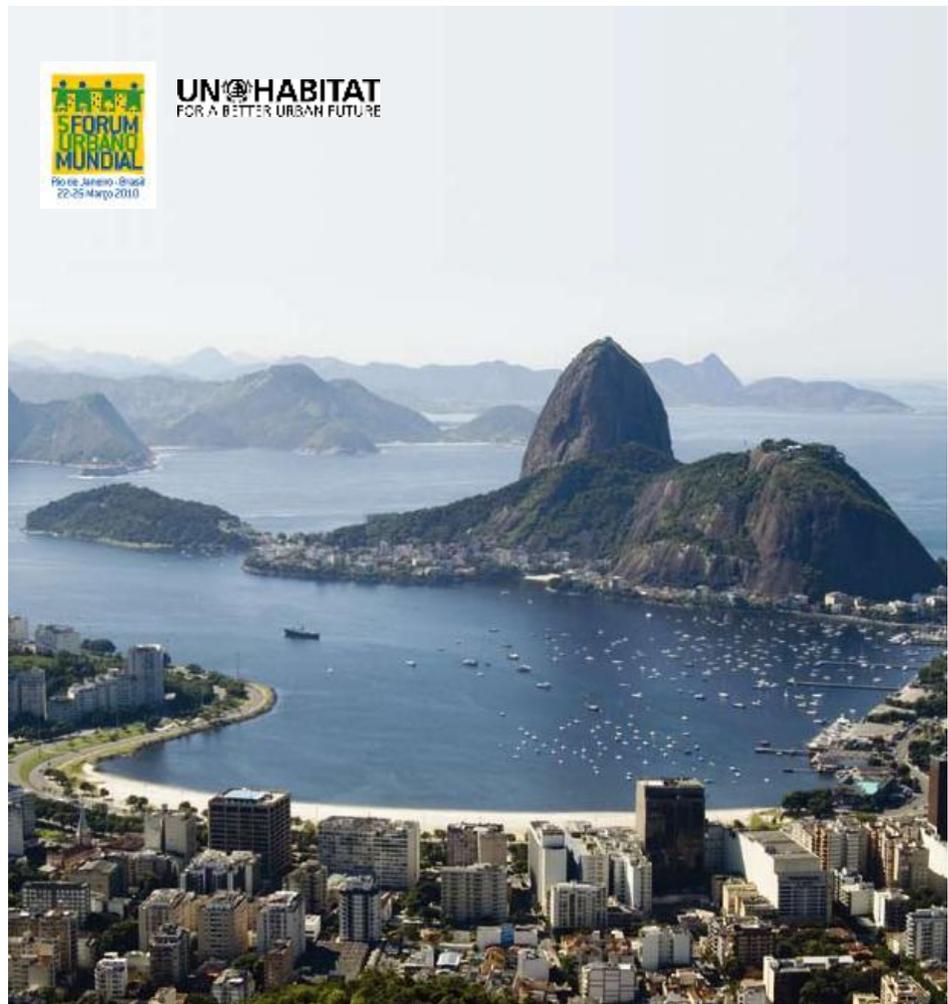
- Cities will showcase highlight programs, initiatives, partnership and solutions dedicated to addressing the

challenges of sustainability.

- Country pavilions and other levels of government will present programs for cities on both national and international level.
- UN agencies will profile their work with cities globally.

- Non-governmental organizations will promote their roles in urban sustainability.
- The Brazil Hall will showcase urban best practices from the country.

For additional information you can log on www.unhabitat.org/wuf ♦



City of Rio de Janeiro

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