



UN-HABITAT

**23rd SESSION UNEP GOVERNING
COUNCIL/GLOBAL MINISTERIAL
ENVIRONMENT FORUM**

**Speech by
Dr. Anna Tibaijuka
Executive Director
UN-HABITAT**

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23rd Meeting of the UNEP Governing Council

**Address to the Opening of the High Level Segment
by Mrs. Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka, Executive Director of UN-HABITAT**

- Your Excellency Mr. Mwai Kibaki, President of the Republic of Kenya,

Your Excellencies,

- Honourable Mr. Rachmat Witoelar, incoming President of the UNEP Governing Council, (depending on whether elected at the time of this speech)
- Honourable Mr. Arcadio Ntagazwa, outgoing President of the UNEP Governing Council,
- Honourable Dr. Klaus Toepfer, Executive Director of UNEP,
- Honourable Mr. Zeng Peiyan, Vice Premier of the Peoples Republic of China,
- Honourable Mr. Kalonzo Musyoka, Minister for Environment & Natural Resources, Kenya, (assumption)
- Host Government of the Republic of Kenya,
- Honourable Ministers,
- Distinguished Delegates,
- Ladies and Gentlemen

In time-honoured tradition, I have been invited by the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme to address the UNEP Governing Council. I, in turn, soon hope to welcome the Executive Director, Dr. Klaus Toepfer, to address the opening plenary of the 20th Session of the Governing Council of UN-HABITAT. To my

knowledge, this tradition is unique in the UN-system. It shows not only the respect with which our two agencies view each other, but it also reflects the important relationships

and complementarities between our respective mandates and activities, further manifested for example in Dr. Klaus Toepfer's personal attendance of UN-HABITAT's second World Urban Forum in Barcelona last year. I wish again to thank you for your important contribution. Today I am in a position to commit an even stronger, more purposeful UN-HABITAT to the important partnership between our two sister organizations. With a profound sense of common purpose, UN-HABITAT and UNEP are working, each within our mandates, to strengthen the nexus between the natural and built environments.

As we all still vividly recall, the year 2004 ended on a very tragic note. The tsunami that hit the Indian Ocean region on 26 December ravaged coastal communities in many countries and impacted the lives of people throughout the region. The damage to urban infrastructure and amenities is extensive. Again our two agencies UNEP and UN-HABITAT quickly joined forces on early assessment and on the coordination of mitigation and reconstruction proposals for flash appeals.

UN-HABITAT, the United Nations agency for cities and other human settlements, is well aware that local and global environmental conditions are significant in our quest for sustainable urbanization, one of the most pressing challenges facing the global community in the 21st century. Poverty alleviation, access to water, adequate shelter, and other key development mandates assigned to my organization by the Habitat Agenda, the Millennium Development Goals and in the targets agreed at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, are critically dependent upon the sound state of the environment. On the other side of this coin, we are very conscious of the important contributions that well-managed cities and towns can make to the reduction of greenhouse gases, protection of the ozone layer, management of fresh water resources, conservation of forests and marine environments and the preservation of bio-diversity.

In today's opening of the 23rd session of UNEP's governing council, I am pleased to see that ministerial consultations will address implementation of the internationally agreed development goals of the Millennium Declaration, with particular attention to Goal 1 (eradication of extreme poverty and hunger), Goal 3 (promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women) and Goal 7 (environmental sustainability) together with policy issues related to water, sanitation and human settlements. At UN-HABITAT we very much share these concerns and priorities, and we particularly share with you the responsibility to assist member states in gradually attaining Goal 7 of the Millennium Development Goals – to "Ensure Environmental Sustainability." In concrete terms, this means:

- Integrating the principles of sustainable development with country policies and programmes in order to reverse the loss of environmental resources;

- Reducing by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water; and, most importantly for UN-HABITAT,
- achieving a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020.

The twelfth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, with its themes of water, sanitation and human settlements provided an important opportunity for UN-HABITAT to focus attention of the global community on implementation of the Habitat Agenda and MDG Goal 7, targets 10 and 11 on water and slums. It provided also a good opportunity to strengthen the collaboration with other UN agencies.

The struggle to achieve the Millennium Goals must be waged in human settlements — in cities, towns and villages. It must be noted that urban settings will absorb 95 per cent of the world's expected population growth by mid-century. This rapid urbanization will increase poverty and the feminization of poverty in cities.

Urban poverty is vividly manifested in slums. At present a billion people live in slums. If the trends continue, 1.5 billion people will live in slums by the year 2020. Most slum dwellers are excluded from a good urban life; a life with a political voice, decent housing, safety and the rule of law, education and health; a life currently monopolized by a privileged minority. At CSD12, I called for the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAF) and national Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) to prioritize water and sanitation and slum upgrading. I urged that financing water, sanitation and slum upgrading requires a close partnership between United Nations agencies and the international financing institutions in order to supplement domestic resources.

The upcoming CSD13 is the 'policy session', during which policy decisions will be adopted to enable the implementation of practical measures related to the three topics of water, sanitation and human settlements. UN-HABITAT will strongly emphasise links between the three topics and the need for an integrated approach to all three. We hope

that there will be consensus and commitment of Governments to incorporate water, sanitation and human settlements as essential and inter-related elements in national environmental policies, poverty reduction strategies and plans for sustainable development.

Implementation should first focus on the immediate needs of the poor – especially women – and their communities, engaging them as pro-active partners and stakeholders in locally appropriate, affordable and sustainable development schemes.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Partnership between the two UN focal points for environment and human settlements is clearly an eminently practical vehicle to carry us along the path toward sustainable development, and the General Assembly and our respective governing bodies have time and again confirmed their appreciation and explicit mandates for our joint programmes and activities. During the period 2003–2004, UNEP and UN-HABITAT have increased and formalised this cooperation further. A joint operation and coordination group has been established to provide an institutional mechanism between the two agencies, with a regular monthly meeting routine. Furthermore, at the global level of the Sustainable Cities Programme, a partners' strategic advisory committee has been established.

UN-HABITAT and UNEP already have a host of time-proven joint programmes where we are pooling our complementary scientific, normative and operational capabilities very effectively indeed. This is because economically efficient, socially equitable, and environmentally sustainable development – all of which are fundamental to the reduction of poverty – can actually be achieved when we squarely address the deteriorating living environment in and around our cities and towns. But, this will be accomplished only by being resolute in our insistence upon integrated water, sanitation and human settlements strategies and environmental policies and in our advocacy for decision-making within frameworks that promote the effective participation of all the stakeholders.

The "Joint Progress Reports of the Executive Directors" on cooperation between our two organizations (identified as UNEP/GC.23/INF/22 at this Governing Council and as HSP/20/10 at UN-HABITAT'S coming Governing Council) provides an update on our joint activities. Sections of that report cover the following programmes and activities:

- The UN-HABITAT/UNEP joint *Sustainable Cities Programme*, which has become a primary tool for supporting the implementation of Agenda 21, the environment dimension of the Habitat Agenda and the Millennium Development Goals through a process of broad-based participatory urban decision-making and implementing well balanced environmental planning and management strategies;
- The UN-Habitat *Water for African and Asian Cities Programmes* under which UNEP has been invited by UN-Habitat to join the Lake Victoria Region Water and Sanitation Initiative;
- The '*Global Environment Outlook*' (GEO) process in planning the development of projects at local level that analyse the state of the local environment and impacts of the cities, supported by both UN-HABITAT and UNEP;
- The UNEP *Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Disaster Management Programme* of UN-Habitat have jointly developed a regional climate change adaptation project to reduce the vulnerability of urban coastal zones to the impacts of climate change.
- The *third World Urban Forum, Vancouver 2006*, where we will continue to promote the "Coalition for Sustainable Urbanisation," a series of concrete partnership commitments for implementing the WSSD targets.
- The UN system-wide *New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)* where UN-HABITAT and UNEP are joint lead agencies for the activity cluster on environment, population, and urbanization;
- The *Cities Alliance* where UNEP and UN-Habitat are cooperating closely at the steering group level and in developing joint slum upgrading projects in cooperation with other Cities Alliance partners;
- The *Nairobi River Basin Project*, a multi-partner initiative spearheaded by UNEP in a joint undertaking with UN-HABITAT to restore, rehabilitate and maintain

safe water quality of the river system passing through Nairobi, reducing environmental health risks for the urban population.

In closing I wish to offer my highest assurances that UNEP and UN-HABITAT will continue to adapt, strengthen and broaden our framework for cooperation. As I have briefly stated, our joint programmes and activities are designed to ensure that the environment is an integral component of urban development and poverty alleviation, worldwide, goals that cannot be separated. Our overall intention is that both agencies respond optimally and in concert to the requests of Governments and partners.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, I look forward to continue working closely with Dr. Toepfer and with all the delegations assembled here. . As for this important session of the UNEP Governing Council, I wish you every success in your deliberations and thank you for your kind attention.