



**UN-HABITAT**



**United Nations Human Settlements Programme**

**International Meeting to Review the  
Implementation  
of the Programme of Action for the  
Sustainable Development  
of Small Island Developing States  
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**Statement by  
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Mr. Chairman,  
Honourable Ministers, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am honoured and privileged to participate in this high level segment to review the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS). At the outset, allow me to express my heartfelt sympathy and solidarity to the governments and peoples of those Asian and the East African countries, who were affected by the terrible tragedy of the Tsunami that struck the region several weeks ago. This tragedy is a grim reminder to all of us of the vulnerability of coastal regions, particularly the Small Island Developing States.

I would also like to thank the host Government of Mauritius for their warm welcome and hospitality. Mauritius presents an excellent example of human settlements development that successfully incorporates a heritage of rich cultural diversity and racial harmony. I see, reflected in this example, the theme of the recent World Urban Forum organised by UN-HABITAT in Barcelona in September 2004, and I am pleased to see that Mauritius has adopted an inclusive and integrated process of development.

With regard to the issues before this conference, UN-HABITAT has long recognized that SIDS suffer from peculiar disadvantages associated with small size, marginalization, remoteness and vulnerability to natural disasters. Those factors render the human settlements of SIDS susceptible to forces outside their control, as the dramatic, tragic and unprecedented cataclysm of the recent earthquake and tsunami has demonstrated. This event should serve to strengthen the focus of this meeting on adopting strategies that would mitigate the effects of natural disasters on SIDS and reduced the vulnerability of SIDS through foresight, planning and other preventive measures.

Immediately following the disaster, UN-HABITAT Programme Managers in Sri Lanka and Indonesia commenced working, in close collaboration with other United Nations agencies and programmes, to assess the damage and develop programmes for immediate, intermediate and long-term recovery and reconstruction. UN-HABITAT has prioritized human settlements issues

in the inter-agency response to facilitate the transition from humanitarian relief to long-term recovery and reconstruction.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I want to focus your attention on sustainable human settlements developments in SIDS. This has not received the adequate attention that it deserves. I wish to share with you my conviction that the struggle for achieving the objectives of the Barbados Programme of Action, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI) and the Millennium Development Goals will have to be waged in human settlements - in our cities, towns and villages. It is at this level that people-centered development takes place. It is at this level that actions need to be coordinated and managed. It is at this level that the global goals and policies become operational realities. It is here that local actions must and can deliver global goals.

Shelter is one of the basic necessities for survival. The Barbados Programme of Action called for improved availability of shelter and the improved economic and environmental quality of human settlements (Paragraph 34 A and 34 C). Two years after the adoption of the Programme of Action, the international community reaffirmed its commitment to human settlements development in SIDS in the adoption of the Habitat Agenda at Istanbul in 1996. Paragraph 204 Z (bb) of Habitat Agenda states as follows:

**"Implementing the commitments of the international community to the special needs and vulnerabilities of human settlements in small island developing States, in particular by providing effective means, including, adequate, predictable, new and additional resources, for human settlements programmes, in accordance with the Declaration of Barbados and on the basis of the relevant provisions of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States".**

I would like to urge all of you to include this important dimension in your deliberations.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Given the challenges of sustainable human settlements development in SIDS, we need a fundamental change in our approach – we need a strategy that is workable, realistic and will make a difference in the lives of the people. In the remaining few minutes of the time allotted to me, I would like to highlight a few key emerging challenges facing the international community and SIDS in their efforts to fully and effectively implement the Programme of Action.

### **First key challenge**

A first key challenge is the rapid growth of urbanisation in SIDS and the urbanisation and feminization of Poverty. In the decade since we met in Barbados, SIDS have become increasingly urban. Of the 52 million people in SIDS, 30 million (or 58 percent) live in urban areas. Of these, nearly 8 million or about 25% are slum dwellers. Let us ask ourselves if we have recognized this important dimension in our deliberation and if not let us reflect on it.

**Sustainable development of SIDS must include the provision of basic services. This requires thinking beyond slum upgrading to comprehensive development of human settlements that include urban planning, secure tenure, and the provision of basic infrastructure and services. As part of this effort, UN-HABITAT launched its campaign for secure tenure in the Caribbean and in the Small Island Developing States in the Pacific. I am confident that with the support of the national governments and local authorities, the follow-up actions will be implemented as planned.**

**Regrettably, the international community support for slum upgrading is inadequate. There is a need to increase the Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) for slum improvement and to develop strategies to mobilize additional domestic resources. UN-HABITAT is in the process of establishing a Slum Upgrading Facility to field test innovative, local and pro-poor infrastructure and housing finance mechanisms to kick-start this process**

## Second key **challenge**

A second key challenge for SIDS is its ability to deal with human settlements in emergency situations created by both natural cataclysmic events and conflict. Natural disasters compound the problems of the economic and social fragility of SIDS. Hurricanes, tropical cyclones and tsunamis destroy transport, telecommunications and power infrastructure, wreck agriculture, tourism and other sectors of the fragile economies of SIDS and destroy shelter, particularly of the very poor, rendering thousands homeless, as recently witnessed recently in Grenada, the Cayman Islands, the Bahamas, Sri Lanka and the Maldives.

We at UN-HABITAT strongly believe that disaster risk reduction is a foundation for sustainable development of human settlements in the SIDS. It is a collective responsibility, which should be facilitated by solid political commitment and sound institutional support. UN-HABITAT works through the Executive Committee for Humanitarian Affairs and sister agencies of the United Nations to bridge the gap between relief and development by combining technical expertise and human resources on the ground. We have worked in many countries and with local authorities in Bamako, Cuba; New Amsterdam, Guyana; Cap-Haïtien, Haiti, Dili in Timor-Leste, and Praia in Cape Verde. In each case, we have promoted the UN-HABITAT's concept of sustainable relief that has been developed out of the recognized need to address relief efforts within the framework of longer-term development strategies.

## Third key **challenge**

A third key challenge is related to the ability to cope with water supply and sanitation for the poor and the marginalised in SIDS. Water supply for human settlements in SIDS has been a persistent problem and many SIDS are vulnerable to increased warming, dryness, and flooding. Sea-level rise increases the cost/vulnerability of infrastructure and coastal resource-based industry. In addition, several industries—such as tourism and recreation - the principal industry in many island economies—are threatened as a result of the water supply crisis.

**During the past few days in Mauritius, the UN-HABITAT's Water for African Cities Programme has organized a Workshop on Values-based**

**Water and Sanitation Education. Our aim in this workshop, and similar workshops held elsewhere, is to build the capacity of local authorities and other stakeholders in water demand management. It is important first to conserve the available resources and minimize wastes before we take up augmentation on the supply side.**

**At the Johannesburg Summit, I had made a pledge to bring significant pro-poor investment through our regional programmes on water and sanitation in Africa and Asia. With this objective, I established the Water and Sanitation Trust Fund of UNHABITAT in October 2003. I am pleased to say that this pledge has now been redeemed and together with the Asian Development Bank, the African Development Bank and other partners, we plan to bring \$500 million pro-poor investment to Asian cities, and nearly \$ 100 million in African cities and towns. It is my hope and wish that this programme can be extended to SIDS with the support of relevant regional banks and development institutions.**

#### **Fourth key challenge**

**A fourth key challenge relates to improved urban governance in SIDS. Governments need to recognize that the process of urbanization in SIDS is irreversible. We have to act pro-actively to improve the living standards of the urban poor through increased investment and improved urban management practices and processes. We at UN-HABITAT have learned that good governance is essential to the effective implementation of the Programme of Action. Good Urban Governance is essential to the promotion of accountability and transparency as it responds to and benefits all sectors of society, including the urban poor and it aims to eradicate all forms of exclusion.**

**Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**I wish to once again express my sympathy for the hundreds of thousands of grieving families affected by the loss of their loved ones, and the millions of people displaced and facing the loss of their livelihoods, their homes, and their peace of mind following the disastrous earthquake and Tsunami of the 26<sup>th</sup> of December.**

**UN-HABITAT has joined other UN agencies in the recovery process, and continue its mission to support through immediate measures, the transition**

from emergency to reconstruction and development in those states most affected.

I wish to take this opportunity to announce the formation of a "Tsunami human settlements recovery facility" which will accumulate financial resources, that will be allocated for specific programmes in Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Somalia and Thailand, and in other affected countries as requests for UN-HABITAT presence continue to emerge. UN-HABITAT has allocated seed capital of One Million US Dollars to kick start this facility. I am hopeful that donors and all members of the international community who would wish to use UN-HABITAT expertise to fast-track recovery assistance to the affected areas to contribute to the UN-HABITAT recovery facility. I am pleased to state that UN-HABITAT has been approached by private sector housing and real estate developers to contribute to this fund, and use UN-HABITAT expertise in the recovery process.

UN-HABITAT will use this recovery facility to focus on five key areas of immediate recovery need in human settlements in these countries, namely:

1. Emergency clean-up and environmental remediation
2. Restoration of critical infrastructure, including water and sanitation
3. Emergency and transition shelter
4. Critical land use planning, and
5. Restoration of livelihoods through employment generation.

These five focus areas represent the starting point for longer term reconstruction of human settlements; they are the building blocks for the human settlements recovery process, and, the vehicle through which the transition from relief to sustainable development, is driven.

Further, it is essential that we do not limit our efforts only to immediate relief, but also develop the basis for long-term development. We need to take measures to ensure that human settlements become less vulnerable to such disasters in the future.

It is critical, therefore, that agencies such as UN-HABITAT, involve themselves at this early stage to ensure that these foundations are built. The presence of UN-HABITAT programme managers in the affected countries has placed the agency at a comparative advantage to engage both in the immediate relief and long-term recovery efforts. The Tsunami Human

Settlement Recovery Facility will further augment UN-HABITAT efforts in the affected countries.

In conclusion, let us remind ourselves that ten years after the adoption of the Programme of Action, our achievements fall short of the expectations of SIDS. As we review our achievements and debate on the language, there are millions of poor people in the cities and towns of SIDS who are denied the ability to fulfil basic human needs such as access to adequate shelter and clean drinking water. SIDS, particularly the LDCs amongst them, are also faced with chronic and stubborn disasters such as HIV/AIDS and abject poverty, which are exacerbated by rapid urbanisation. The Tsunami should not make us forget the silent disasters packaged in the MDGs but on the contrary increase our resolve to act. UN-HABITAT stands ready to play its role in this process and to move the implementation of the Programme of Action forward.

I thank you for your kind attention and support.