



**Statement by
Her Excellency Ismat Jahan
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the UN
at the 41st session of the Commission on Population and Development
under agenda item #3
Conference Room 3, 1:15 – 2:30 p.m.
New York, 29 October 2007**

Mr. Chairman,

Bangladesh delegation most warmly appreciates you and other members of the bureau upon your well-deserved elections. We believe your stewardship would lead to an effective conclusion of this session. We applaud the Secretariat for its comprehensive documentation. Bangladesh associates with the statement of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of G77 and China.

The debate that we would be willing to embark on is not to choose an option between rural and urban development. Our concern is rather addressing the insurmountable challenges that developing countries are facing from the current phenomena of population transformation. The degree of current urbanization is unprecedented. It has been projected that all future population growth will be absorbed in urban areas. Developing countries will have to service most of them. Population growth is therefore becoming largely an urban phenomenon concentrated in the developing world.

Rapid urbanization entails significant economic, social, demographic and environmental consequences. Poverty is much more rampant in urban areas than rural. According to a recent statistics, between 1993 to 2002, globally, the total number of poor has reduced by 98 million. This achievement is entirely attributed to better performance in rural areas. During this period, rural poverty reduced by 148 million, while urban poverty increased by 50 million. Most of this increment is caused by rural-urban migration. The prevalence of deadly diseases such as HIV is also higher in urban than in rural areas.

Globally, around one billion people are now living in slums. In 2005, 37 per cent of the urban population of developing countries lived in slums. This accounts for 840 million people. Asia has the highest number of slum-dwellers which is 542 million followed by Africa with 179 million. Projections suggest that in next 30 years, the global number of slum-dwellers will increase to about two billion if no concerted action to address the challenge of slums is taken. This is a natural flow driven by many practical compelling factors. The massive task

before us is therefore to halt the spread of poverty and to reverse it, providing improved housing and living conditions, ensuring access to basic social services and employment. Addressing these challenges is an urgent development priority of our time.

The challenges that urbanization is posing to LDCs are paramount. Around 225 million people are now living in urban areas, while 580 Million are in rural areas in the LDCs. As per projection, the figure will increase to 967 million in urban areas and 775 million rural areas in 2050. The urban growth will be 3.0 percent and the rural growth will be 0.2 percent which are highest among all other sub-groups in the developing countries. In 2050, 55 of the total LDC population will be living in urban areas.

In the least developed countries, nearly 140 million people now live in poor housing conditions. This constitutes 18% of total LDC population and 78 per cent of their urban population. These peoples are living with abject poverty, high unemployment and underemployment situations. They are also facing limited access to basic services, such as safe drinking water, sanitation, healthcare services which causes a major setback in achieving the internationally agreed development goals including the MDGs in those countries.

We believe that the following areas are the key for sustainable urbanization in developing and least developed countries:

First: The focus on urban development should not come at the expenses of rural development. An integrated approach for both rural and urban development can enhance the synergy and thus yield better results. We concur with the SG's report when it says "both urban and rural development are necessary and addressing both in an integrated way will provide the best chances for success."

Secondly: Sound urban management and planning ahead of future growth are essential to unleash the potential of urban growth. Sustainable urbanization should be integrated into the national development strategies. It should also be mainstreamed in the operational activities of the United Nations.

Thirdly: Sustainable urban development must be based on environmentally sound technologies. While cities only occupy just over 2 per cent of land, they currently produce 70 per cent of waste and account for an equal proportion of greenhouse gas emissions. Environmentally sound basic urban infrastructure and services are therefore critically important to ensure an environmental friendly urbanization;

Fourthly: Target 11 of Millennium Development Goal 7 – which underlines to ‘significantly improve’ the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by the year 2020. The investment required to attain MDG target 11 on slum upgrading is estimated at US\$ 20 billion per year for the period 2005-2020. However, ODA to the urban sector has remained largely stagnant in real terms for the past decade at US\$ 2 billion per annum. We call upon the developed countries to increase the flow of ODA in support of pro-poor housing and urban development in developing countries. Innovative financial mechanism can supplement the domestic resources and the ODA. Microcredit programmes can enable the urban poor to access housing credit.

Fifthly: The cross-cutting nature of the issues related to sustainable urbanization and urban poverty reduction warrants a coordinated approach among UN-Habitat, UN Funds and Programmes, Specialized agencies, BWIs and other relevant stakeholders.

Sixthly: There remain a number of best practices and lessons learned in the area of sustainable urbanization. The Commission can play a central role in providing a platform for the exchange of innovative models and successes.

Seventhly: There is an urgent need for reliable and timely data for appropriate policy programming at national, regional and international levels. The reports at hand have however not addressed the special concerns of the least developed countries in a disintegrated manner. I would like to refer to paragraph 19 of the UNGA resolution 62/203 entitled third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries. *The paragraph requests* the Secretary-General to include the least developed countries in all relevant reports in the economic, social and related fields in order to ensure the follow-up of their development in the broader context of the world economy and contribute to preventing their further marginalization. It is our expectation that the future report of the CPD will adequately address the concerns of the LDCs in full compliance of the paragraph that I have just quoted.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, A properly managed, urbanization can help in combating poverty, inequality and environmental degradation. The world has the resources, know-how and power to reach the target established in the Millennium Declaration. We must seize on that.