

STATEMENT BY MR. SHATRUGHAN SINHA, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT, ON AGENDA
ITEM 20 – IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OUTCOME OF THE UNITED NATIONS
CONFERENCE ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS [HABITAT-II] AND STRENGTHENING OF THE
UNITED NATIONS HUMAN SETTLEMENTS PROGRAMME [UN-HABITAT] AT THE
SECOND COMMITTEE OF THE 66TH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL
ASSEMBLY ON NOVEMBER 01, 2011

Mr. Chairman,

India aligns itself with the statement delivered by Argentina on behalf of the G-77.

I wish to thank the Secretary General for his reports on the Implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements and strengthening the UN-Habitat.



Urbanization and its varied socio- economic dynamics, Mr. Chairman, constitutes one of the most pressing developmental challenges today. With more than 50% of people the world over living in urban areas, the significance of urban development need not be overemphasized. And it is projected that by 2050 this figure would go up to 70% with developing countries accounting for most of the change.

Such demographic dominance of urban areas in developing countries entails new challenges for Governments and policy planners.

In the years ahead, global efforts to combat poverty, promote inclusive growth and reduce environmental stress will increasingly be determined by the efforts we put in to integrate urban development into the larger socio-economic planning.

The expansion of urban settlements leading to emergence of megacities, extensive urban corridors, growth of slums and stress on natural resources pose

unprecedented developmental challenges and are being placed at the forefront of national actions. The Government of India has identified urbanization as one of the core issues in its 12th Five Year Plan (2012-2017).

Mr. Chairman,

Global priority to urban challenges is vital to catalyze and integrate local, national and international actions to create innovative and sustainable solutions for cities of the future. We are hopeful that RIO+20 would accord this primacy. The UN-Habitat can play an important role in enriching the discussions on sustainable development at Rio+20.

Mr. Chairman,

In the unfolding scenario, the UN-HABITAT has a much larger role to play in guiding global discourse and action on habitat issues. Likewise, the participation of municipal and local governments, urban planners, and other stakeholders assumes far greater significance in management of cities.

India supports the governance review undertaken by the UN-Habitat. We, ourselves, are working for governance reform in our local bodies to make them a catalyst for change. Our efforts have involved greater representation of all sections of society in local authorities, and expansion of their functional domain to focus on environment, local economic development, as well as innovative resource mobilization.

Mr. Chairman,

India's economic growth in the past decades has led to a massive shift in its population from rural to urban areas. We have added 90 million people to our urban population in the last decade and we are poised to having nearly 50% of India living in our cities by the earlier part of the present century.

To meet the challenges of rapid urban development in an integrated manner, India launched the National Urban Housing and Habitat Policy in 2007. The policy seeks to realize the goal of "Affordable Housing for All" by ensuring equitable supply of land, shelter and services at affordable prices to all sections of the society.

An important element of this policy is the "Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission". This programme seeks to provide seven basic services to the poor, namely, land tenure, affordable shelter, water, sanitation, education, health and social security.

With majority of its population still living in rural areas, India has also been actively promoting affordable rural housing. Dedicated programmes such as "Indira

Awaas Yojna”, provide direct support through grant-in-aid for construction of dwelling units and upgradation of temporary houses.

The report of the Secretary-General has highlighted the significance of rational land-use planning, green building codes and energy efficient transport options to reducing energy consumption and emissions. In this context, I am happy to mention that India has adopted an Energy Conservation Act and an Energy Efficiency Code for new commercial buildings, and has been promoting use of compressed natural gas for public transport.

Mr. Chairman,

We value our partnership with UN-HABITAT. We support the mid-term review of the Medium-term Strategic and Institutional Plan of UN-Habitat for the period 2008-2013, particularly the focus on strengthening the catalytic and pre-investment role of UN-Habitat.

In this context, we urge upon all entities to contribute to further capitalization of the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation so as to enable UN-Habitat to provide more financial and seed capital support for slum upgrading and prevention.

Enhanced efforts by the international community to provide financial and technical assistance, including transfer of technology, in the areas of poverty eradication and infrastructure support, remain crucial if the human settlements related Millennium Development Goals are to be achieved.

I would like to highlight that India has been privileged to share housing technology, particularly in the field of cost-effective, environment friendly and disaster resistant construction, with fellow developing countries within the framework of South-South cooperation.

For the sake of equity Mr. Chairman, I must bring to bear that so far UN-Habitat has been by and large focused on urban habitat. It is time that it also looks at habitat in rural areas in a concerted way.

I thank you.

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