

STATEMENT BY MS. SANGEETA KUMARI SINGH DEO, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT AND MEMBER OF THE INDIAN DELEGATION, ON AGENDA ITEM 50: 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 63<sup>RD</sup> SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON OCTOBER 28, 2008



Madam Chair,

We thank the Secretariat for the report on the agenda item “Implementation of the Outcome of the Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)”. We associate ourselves with the statement made by the distinguished representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77.

Madam Chair,

India is a founding member of UN-Habitat and has been an active member of the organization. We support its 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 welcome the developments towards the early operationalization of the reimbursable seeding operations activities, which will permit UN-Habitat to assist national housing development programmes. India has been active, particularly through public housing finance institutions, in promoting institutional housing finance to the poor and economically weaker sections. We look forward to the experimental phase of reimbursable seeding operations, which will lead to larger follow-up investment.

We also support the guidelines on decentralization and strengthening of local authorities, adopted by the Governing Council of UN-Habitat. We were happy to host a meeting earlier this year of the Advisory Group of Experts on Decentralization. India has always advocated greater involvement of local authorities in decision making as well as in implementation of policies. Our efforts have involved greater representation of all sections of society in local authorities, expansion of their functional domain to focus on environment, local economic development, planning as well as innovative resource mobilization.

It is satisfying that the resource mobilization efforts of UN-Habitat have borne fruit. However, it is of concern that regular budget, which provides non-earmarked and predictable funding, remains low. We fully support the demand for enhanced budgetary resources for UN-Habitat.

Madam Chair,

We agree with the report of the Secretary-General that the urban poor are among the most exposed victims of the current food and energy crises. While it is perhaps simplistic to blame rapid urbanization for contributing to the rise in food and energy prices in 2008, as the report appears to do, the need for sustainable urbanization is inescapable, in both developed and developing countries. We agree with the report of the Secretary-General that rational land-use planning, green building codes and energy efficient transport options are key to reduce energy consumption and emissions. In this context, I am happy to highlight that India has been active in taking such steps, including the adoption of an Energy Conservation Act and an Energy Efficiency Code for new commercial buildings, as well as promoting use of compressed natural gas for public transport.

I would also like to emphasize India's efforts in promoting an integrated approach to urban development. A National Urban Housing and Habitat Policy was launched last year. The policy seeks to realize the goal of "Affordable Housing for All", through sustainable development of habitat, towards ensuring equitable supply of land,

shelter and services at affordable prices to all sections of 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. The programme is a fast track, demand-driven, community partnering mechanism with emphasis on public-private-people participation in urban planning and implementation. This is complemented by programmes to promote urban employment generation, with emphasis on gender equality. In addition, there is enhanced focus on urban safety.

However, India remains a country with a large proportion of rural population. Accordingly, India has also been actively promoting affordable rural housing. These include programmes like the "Indira Awaas Yojna", which provides direct support through grant-in-aid for construction of dwelling units and upgradation of temporary houses. Our integrated strategy also covers the issue of poverty eradication through targeted policies and interventions that aim to promote employment and enhance livelihood opportunities in rural areas, particularly through creation of economic infrastructure, and community and social assets.

Madam Chair,

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 by the developing countries. The holistic focus should be on generation of productive employment, creation of durable economic and physical infrastructure and ensuring food security.

Before concluding, Madam Chair, I would like to highlight that India has been privileged to share appropriate 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. The international community needs to support such South-South initiatives through triangular cooperation.

Thank You, Madam Chair.

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