

ANNUAL REPORT 2010



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United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT)
P.O. Box 30030, Nairobi 00100, Kenya
Tel +254 20 762 3120
Fax +254 20 762 3477
www.unhabitat.org

Editors: Roman Rollnick, Thierry Naudin

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A WORD FROM THE UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY GENERAL

Urbanization continues to move to the forefront of the development agenda. With 52 per cent of the global population living in cities and towns, the world is increasingly urban. By 2030, the world is forecast to be 60 per cent urban, with 93 per cent of global population growth expected to take place in urban areas in developing countries.



The Shanghai Expo 2010 was a major highlight of the year. Under the theme **"Better city, Better life"**, the Expo helped us reach millions of visitors, policy-makers and ordinary citizens alike, with two crucial messages about our urban future. First, we must be ready for urbanization, not afraid of it. Second, cities must be better prepared to meet the challenges of climate change, for nowhere are large concentrations of people more vulnerable to disasters than in cities.

This means that addressing urban problems offers an opportunity to tackle wider development concerns such as employment, safety, social exclusion, the provision of basic services, gender inequality, climate change and environmental protection.

Development agencies, banks, foundations, donors, the private sector and non-governmental organizations are showing themselves receptive to this significant shift. More than ever before, they are incorporating the urban agenda in their plans and strategies. And more and more cities are beginning to understand the very important urban dimension of climate change.

UN-HABITAT, the UN agency mandated to work with local authorities and municipalities, strengthened its advocacy, policy work and field operations in 2010.

It helped to rebuild thousands of homes and lives – in post-conflict settings such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia and Sudan, in Pakistan and Myanmar after devastating floods, and in Haiti following that country's worst earthquake in living memory. As populations affected by conflict and disaster become increasingly urban, this work is likely to take on an even greater profile.

The theme of the UN pavilion at Shanghai, **"One Earth, One UN"**, showcased the many ways in which UN agencies are working together for a sustainable and equitable future for all. UN-HABITAT's efforts to build safer, more livable and inclusive cities, as detailed in this annual report, are a crucial part of that picture. I thank all partners for their support and look forward to working together for a sustainable urban future.

Ban Ki-moon
Secretary General



FOREWORD

Every city is like our planet Earth; a space to share. We move around, enjoy the built or the natural environment, and socialise – across borders or across the street, depending on time and opportunities. With half of humankind now living in cities, the street has turned into a powerful catalyst; the melting pot of individual, social and civic dignities that nurture human development in a variety of ways around the world.

The problem is that this most basic of shared spaces remains elusive to so many, in so many cities and towns around the world. Not just the space, but the multiple opportunities that come with it. Millions have seen their street razed to the ground by some natural or man-made disaster – floods, tsunamis, earthquakes, war or civil strife. Some hundreds of millions are denied the benefit of proper streets in cramped slum conditions. And too many others still must endure the street as their sole available abode, and ultimate indignity, being too poor to afford any sort of makeshift shelter.

For the more fortunate among us, streets are also the places where we unwillingly share the downsides of a questionable development model. We risk our safety when walking across poorly designed crossroads, or our security because too much inequality generates crime. We waste finite energy resources in the middle of the traffic, or precious time in public transport, because of bad planning. We inhale toxic fumes from motorized vehicles or uncollected waste. In our streets we pollute the atmosphere to the point of altering climate patterns



in a most dangerous way all around the world.

From the more deprived to the more fortunate, all these dimensions of early 21st century cities feature in UN-HABITAT's mandate; the promotion of sustainable urban development. We help reconstruct urban communities in challenging circumstances. We tackle slums at the root and reduce poverty.

We promote improved access to housing, water, sanitation, transportation and alternative energy sources. We update land-related systems in order to pave the way for social cohesion through better planning. We campaign for safer cities and promote relevant tools and methods. As countries become more prosperous, cities develop into ever-more complex or new configurations. At that stage we advise governments on the legal, regulatory and policy frameworks that will put them in a better position to pursue sustainable urban development. We strengthen their ability to make the most of the further opportunities which urbanisation has to offer to all.

UN-HABITAT is unique not just as the United Nations agency that is solely dedicated to matters urban. We are unique insofar as in our pursuit of sustainable urban development, we deal with the whole range of stakeholders. This includes not just central and local authorities, but also business, non-governmental organisations and even small grassroots youth groups. We recognise and promote the dynamic contributions which women and young people can make to urban life. We give them a voice in urban governance, as we do to all other stakeholders. We



support the reinvention of urban planning in the face of daunting threats to our cities' future, like social exclusion and climate change.

Ultimately, streets are what we want them to be. This is why we need better control over them, wherever we are. Challenging as local circumstances may be, we must restore, maintain or redeploy what has become the eminent locus of human development. This is the privileged mandate of UN-HABITAT.

This report presents UN-HABITAT's main achievements in 2010. They range across the whole continuum of operational and normative projects, from post-conflict and post-disaster recovery to urban planning and climate change adaptation. We deal with the many aspects of reconstruction: physical in Haiti, social in Afghanistan, and socio-economic in Iraq. We restore peace when we provide for refugees and displaced persons in Somalia. We preserve peace when we provide for proper land management in countries recovering from civil strife like South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Liberia. We build better communities when we establish partnerships for poverty reduction in 30 towns and cities in Bangladesh. We pave the way for a more socially sustainable social future when we support promising slum-improvement projects launched by underprivileged young people around the world. We promote better informed urban planning when we establish urban observatories in all the major regions. We tackle slums at the root when we develop a new land administration model. And we provide safer futures for millions when we support adaptation to climate change from Ecuador to Mozambique to the Philippines.

We do all this, and prepare to do more, in the face of increasing financial constraints against an unfavourable global economic background. But then our objectives and our determination remain quite clear: we are determined to promote new urban planning; to support the improvement of local institutions, governance and urban legislation; and to promote the growth of urban economies and reform of municipal finance. Rapid urbanisation, including related problems such as climate change, is not just a daunting challenge. At UN-HABITAT, we also recognise it as an opportunity for a fresh start. A fresh start towards enabling legal frameworks and a 'green' economy. A fresh start for sustainable urban planning, building and transport. And a fresh start from the street towards a more sustainable urban future for all.



Dr. Joan Clos

Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations
Executive Director, UN-HABITAT



INTRODUCTION

UN-HABITAT MOVING WITH THE TIMES

OUR STORY

The first effective UN-led shelter programme was the distribution of blankets to those huddling in the ruins trying to survive the bleakest of winters at the end of World War II.

Another 30 years would pass before urbanisation and its impacts began to flicker on the radar screen of a United Nations created when two-thirds of humanity was still rural.

The United Nations convened the first Conference on Human Settlements (HABITAT I) in Vancouver, Canada, in 1976, as governments began to recognise the consequences of rapid urbanisation, especially in the developing world.

Twenty years later, the second UN Conference on Human Settlements (HABITAT II) was convened in Istanbul, Turkey. Governments meeting at what came to be known as the City Summit, adopted the Habitat Agenda and the Istanbul Declaration, committing themselves to the goals of adequate shelter for all and sustainable human settlements development.

After a special Istanbul+5 review session of the UN General Assembly in 2001, the human settlements body known as the Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) was elevated to the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT).

WHAT WE ARE

UN-HABITAT, the United Nations agency for human settlements, helps the urban poor by transforming cities into safer, healthier, greener places with better opportunities where everyone can live in dignity.

UN-HABITAT works with organizations at every level, including all spheres of government, civil society and the private sector to help build, manage, plan and finance sustainable urban development. Our vision is cities without slums that are livable places for all, which do not pollute the environment or deplete natural resources.

With most of humanity now living in cities, UN-HABITAT is at the frontline of the battle against fast growing urban poverty and the scourge of climate change caused by poorly planned urbanisation and which threatens the lives and livelihoods of entire cities and communities.

As the United Nations gateway for cities, UN-HABITAT is constantly improving its focus and responsiveness to the aspirations of cities and their residents. Our flagship publications are widely acknowledged as premier works of reference on the built environment, city trends and urban issues. UN-HABITAT supports governments and civil society in attaining the Millennium Development Goals on water and sanitation in urban areas and on improving the lives of slum dwellers.



WHAT WE DO

As part of the Secretariat of the United Nations, our work consists of two dimensions: field projects (operational work) and normative and policy work. UN-HABITAT's main products and services include:

- i. strategic field projects, including in post-war and post-disaster environments;
- ii. policy/advisory services and capacity building of national and local authorities and other partners;
- iii. strategic partnerships with public, private and non-governmental organizations;
- iv. research and publications to raise awareness and enhance knowledge of urban issues;
- v. advocacy of urban matters through the World Urban Forum, global campaigns, seminars and meetings;
- vi. pilot projects on innovative approaches; and
- vii. reporting to inter-governmental bodies, donors and other partners on progress towards the attainment of internationally agreed human settlements goals and targets.



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