



WORKING WITH PARLIAMENTARIANS

STRATEGY AND ACTION



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United Nations Human Settlements Programme
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UN  **HABITAT**

Working With Parliamentarians - Strategy and Action

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Slum residents collect water in Nairobi, Kenya in Mathare slum where residents of Mathare slum are facing serious water shortage. Photo © UN-HABITAT/Julius Mwelu

FOREWORD



With over half of humanity now residing in cities, rapid urbanization continues to present itself as one of the biggest challenges of the 21st century. Many developing countries continue to struggle with the influx of its citizens from the rural areas into cities in search of a better life. More often than not, cities do not have the capacity to handle the necessities accompanied by the rural to urban migration, let alone handle the natural population increase generated by existing residents within cities. This causes stress on infrastructure and basic services. It results in inadequate housing, congested transport networks, poor water and sanitation. It also leads to higher energy demands and more urban pollution, a major contributor to climate change.

Cities are the social, political and economic hubs of countries. Yet with about one quarter of the world's urban population living in urban slums and other sub-standard housing conditions, the stresses will grow and grow unless we can find ways to help cities reduce poverty, and attract investors.

This is where networks between Parliamentarians and UN-HABITAT remain crucial to the implementation of the Habitat Agenda. Parliamentarians are the representatives of the people and they have an in-depth understanding of their problems. Parliamentarians have the mandate and are in a good position to influence governments' national policies and budgets. They can also help secure government funding for urban development projects that tackle urban poverty.

I recognize that through collaboration and partnerships with Parliamentarians that many of the negative impacts of rapid urbanization can be mitigated. The Habitat Agenda is more likely to be achieved with the help of Parliamentarians.

This publication provides an innovative strategy and action plan through which Parliamentarians and UN-HABITAT can help see to it that governments stay on course in their commitments to cities, especially in addressing the conditions of the urban poor. It is important reading for any Parliamentarians and other elected official working to achieve sustainable cities.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joan Clos', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the left.

Joan Clos,
Executive-Director, UN-HABITAT,
Undersecretary-General of the United Nations.

OVERVIEW

In many cities, especially in developing countries, slum dwellers number more than 50 percent of the population and have little or no access to shelter, water, and sanitation, education or health services. Nearly all future urban population growth will occur in Africa, Asia, and Latin America – the regions least prepared to deal with rapid urbanization creating disease, crime, pollution, poverty and social unrest.

Because human settlements is a state subject, every state is responsible for the formulation of policy with regard to programmes and approaches for effective implementation of human settlements schemes, particularly those pertaining to the poor, marginalized and disadvantaged in society.

Parliament is the organ that debates and approves the national budget which includes contributions to international organizations and local authorities by providing funds for their programmes and disbursements for services and projects set up by each country to implement international agreements and national policies. What better way to achieve the goal of sustainable urbanization other than through parliamentarians, who can achieve the biggest leverage with their governments? Although

UN-HABITAT has and continues to partner with community-based organizations and the private sector, the role of parliamentarians as the main actors in policy making cannot be underestimated.

UN-HABITAT is responsible for partnering with parliamentarians in the formulation of policies and strategies to create and strengthen a self-reliant management capacity at both national and local levels.

THIS PUBLICATION BROADLY COVERS:

- An overview of the UN-HABITAT and human settlements with a specific focus on its Partners and Youth Branch
- An outline of the role of parliamentarians in the achieving sustainable human settlements
- Recommendations on ways in which the Partners and Youth Branch can partner with parliamentary associations and parliamentarians in achieving sustainable human settlements development in an urbanizing world



Participating parliamentarians during the 6th Global Forum of the Global Parliamentarians on Habitat. 20 March 2010, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Photo © Peter Götz

INTRODUCTION

THERE IS NO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT WITHOUT SUSTAINABLE URBANIZATION

Towns and cities are growing today at unprecedented rates and setting the good and bad social, political, cultural and environmental trends of the world. Today, cities are home to half of humankind, and are the hubs of much national production and consumption, including the economic and social processes that generate wealth and opportunity. Partnerships with parliamentarians are vital in building support for the implementation of the Habitat Agenda and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and, in particular, the mainstreaming of issues of shelter and urban poverty reduction into national policies.

The Parliamentarians Unit of UN-HABITAT recognizes that parliamentarians are the key in developing synergies among the Habitat Agenda partners. Because parliamentarians act as the bridge between the people and their government, they are instrumental in advocating for the rights and needs of the people and have a direct and critical role to play in the improvement of the lives of slum dwellers. They set the laws and hold the key to funding, in addition to making governments accountable to their international commitments through passing relevant legislation and introducing policies to encourage decentralization and solve problems relating to land, housing, urban planning and poverty alleviation.

Everyone's right to an adequate standard of living, including housing, is recognized under article 25 (1)

of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and under Article 11 (1) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The right to adequate housing is relevant to all states, as they have all ratified at least one international treaty referring to this issue and committed themselves to protecting it housing through international declarations, plans of action or conference outcome documents. Despite the existence of these rights in the global system, well over a billion people are not adequately housed. Millions of people around the world live in life- or health-threatening conditions in overwhelmed slums or informal settlements or in conditions which do not uphold their human rights and dignity

UN-HABITAT has been mandated by the General Assembly of the United Nations to improve human settlements. Unit now this has largely entailed working with ministries, and other executive institutions, local government authorities and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). However it is also essential that policy makers understand the power of the city as a catalyst for national development. Given the inevitable role of towns and cities in the economic growth of most developing nations, it is clear that sustaining future development in developing countries will not be achieved without sustainable urbanization; this makes it one of the most pressing challenges facing the global community in the 21st century. This publication is a realization of the need to work more closely with parliamentarians because as the law makers, they are indispensable partners in the achievement of sustainable human settlements developments.

BACKGROUND

“There are millions of people suffering from a lack of affordable housing – all the facilities which make our life decent. We must work together and generate the political will to have a smooth implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and I will work very closely, and harder than before.”

Ban Ki-moon, United Nations Secretary-General, during a 2007 visit to the overcrowded slum of Kibera in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi.



*Kibera slum upgrading programme in Nairobi, Kenya.
Photo © UN-HABITAT/Julius Mwelu*

After the Second World War which left many cities in Europe and Asia destroyed and many people homeless and without shelter, the United Nations led a shelter programme that involved the distribution of blankets and later developed a housing programme in New York in 1950. During the late 1960s, environmental degradation threatened the destruction of flora and fauna and this became an urgent international cause.

The UN took the lead in convening its first major global Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972 at a time when the UN General Assembly had expressed concern at the ‘deplorable world housing situation’. The issue was taken up as priority by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and UN Center for Housing, Building and Planning (CHBP), leading to the HABITAT I conference held in Vancouver in 1976. At this time, urbanization and its impact were barely on the radar screen of a United Nations created just three decades earlier when two-thirds of humanity was still rural. However, by 1976 the world had witnessed the greatest and fastest

migration into cities and towns in history and one-third of the world’s people were by then living in cities.

Vancouver 1976 comprised two parallel meetings: the official conference of UN Member States and the NGO Habitat Forum. Both meetings debated the causes and consequences of urbanization that were manifesting themselves globally through squatter settlements, slums and lack of access to land, water, sanitation, infrastructure and jobs. The formal and informal HABITAT debates in 1976 underscored that no one can solve human settlement problems alone and that it required strong and continuing partnerships between all institutions of government (especially local authorities) plus NGOs, the private sector and all relevant UN agencies.

The outcome of the conference was the creation of the UN Commission on Human Settlements (CHS) and its Center for Human Settlements (UNCHS), which put all human settlements programmes under one agency. The Center became a substantive legacy and focal point for research and follow-up to HABITAT ‘76.

Twenty years after 1976, the UN Conference on Human Settlements (HABITAT II), which ran 3-14 June 1996 and was also called the City Summit, convened in Istanbul, Turkey. This led to the Habitat Agenda, which was adopted by 171 countries and contained over 100 commitments and 600 recommendations on human settlements issues. This was followed by the Istanbul Declaration on Human Settlements, also in 1996, which was a reaffirmation of the Habitat Agenda, agreed separately at the Habitat II conference. It reaffirmed the commitment of world governments to better standards of living in larger freedom for all humankind. The Declaration on Cities and Other Human Settlements in the New Millennium - the United Nations General Assembly Resolution S25.2 of 9 June 2001 - reaffirmed the Istanbul Declaration and the Habitat Agenda as the basic framework for sustainable human settlements development in the years to come.

On January 1 2002, governments strengthened the agency through the UN General Assembly **Resolution A/56/206**; this elevated the United Nations Commission on Human Settlements (Habitat) into a fully-fledged programme renamed the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT), under the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) which coordinates the work of all the United Nations' 14 specialized agencies.

UN-HABITAT's vision is anchored in a four-pillar strategy aimed at attaining the goal of 'Cities without Slums'. This strategy consists of advocacy of global norms, analysis of information, field-testing of solutions and financing. These fall under the four core functions assigned to the agency by world governments - monitoring and research, policy development, capacity building and financing for housing and urban development

The operational activities of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) are focused on supporting governments in the formulation of policies and strategies to create and strengthen a self-reliant management capacity at both national and local levels. This is done by providing technical and managerial expertise for the assessment of human settlements development constraints and opportunities, the identifying and analyzing policy options, in the design and implementation of housing and urban development projects, the mobilization of national resources and in external support for improving human settlement conditions.

This national capacity-building process involves not only central government institutions but also stakeholders such as community-based and non-governmental organizations, universities and research institutions, as well as local governments and

municipalities. Emphasis is also being placed upon strengthening governments' monitoring capacities in human settlement management.

WORLD URBAN FORUM (WUF)

The World Urban Forum is an important event for civil society and non-governmental organizations that work in the area of urban development as it provides them with a platform to express their views, share knowledge and strengthen their capacity to address issues of sustainable urbanization.

WUF1: The First World Urban Forum ran 29 April-3 May 2002, in Nairobi, Kenya. The overall theme was sustainable urbanization. Discussions addressed various issues, including the effect of HIV/AIDS on human settlements; violence against women; basic services and infrastructure, including provision of water and sanitation and the need for secure tenure.

WUF2: The Second World Urban Forum took place in Barcelona, Spain, and ran 13-17 September 2004. Participants discussed progress in achieving Goal 7 of the Millennium Development Goals on environmental sustainability, including Target 10 on water and sanitation, and Target 11 on slums. This included discussions on gender equality, urban culture, poverty, safety, disaster preparedness and reconstruction.

WUF3: convened in Vancouver, Canada and ran 19-23 June 2006 under the theme of "Sustainable Cities – Turning Ideas into Action." It marked the 30th anniversary of the first UN Conference on Human Settlements, which was also held in Vancouver and led to the creation of **UN-HABITAT**.

WUF4: This ran 3-6 November 2008 in Nanjing (China) with "Harmonious Urbanization: The Challenge of Balanced Territorial Development" as its main theme.

The WUF is used as an advocacy platform for UN-HABITAT to implement the Habitat Agenda and promote sustainable urbanization and adequate shelter for all. The results, ideas, outcomes and lessons learned during the WUF are used to sharpen the focus and improve the performance of UN-HABITAT's work programme including the Medium-Term Strategic Institutional Plan (MTSIP). The WUF is aligned with the priorities of the MTSIP and their objectives are mutually reinforcing in that they both seek to strengthen a shared vision and understanding of sustainable urbanization amongst networks of Habitat Agenda partners.

At the 4th World Urban Forum, the round table meeting of parliamentarians addressed cities and climate change and the role of parliamentarians. This

meeting realized the need for preventive action and planning to offset effects of climate change through mass action. Parliamentarians were sensitized on their responsibility to create public awareness and develop political goodwill towards harmonious urbanization.

WUF5: This ran 22-26 March 2010 in Rio de Janeiro on the overall theme of “the Right to City: Bridge the Urban Divide”. It was attended by more than 13,000 participants from 150 countries around the world, which gave a clear message that sustainable urbanization is very important.

The open and frank debate produced a fresh range of interesting ideas for policy and practice that enhanced the ideals enshrined in the Habitat Agenda. A highlight of the forum was the launch of the World Urban Campaign to elevate to a new level the drive by UN-HABITAT and its partners for better smarter, greener and more equitable cities. It forged effective partnerships between and with the public, private and civic society actors.

The Global Parliamentarians on Habitat (GPH), together with the Parliamentarians Unit of UN-HABITAT, organized a round table meeting of global parliamentarians on climate change and human settlements as a continuity from the previous WUF session in Nanjing, China in November 2008.

The parliamentarians’ round table was attended by a

large number of parliamentarians, ministers and other political leaders. The speakers were carefully selected from all regions of the world. Anna Tibaijuka, the Executive Director of UN-HABITAT, in her statement set the direction for parliamentarians to address the climate change vis-à-vis rapid urbanization. She called upon the parliamentarians to adopt climate change and set aside adequate funds. She put more emphasis on solar and renewable energy for use which is expensive and requires relevant legislation and subsidy mechanism.

The issues emerged from the round table discussion can be summarized as:

- Several participants raised the importance of giving local authorities the freedom to enact appropriate legislation to deal with issues related to climate change. At present, only the central governments have the legislative power.
- Introduce laws to ensure that in the preparation of the project plans and budgets, central and local governments allocate a certain percentage of the budget to environmental planning and disaster management
- Ensure that measures to address the impacts of climate change and its implications for human settlements such as proper urban planning, climate change adoption and mitigation measures contribute to right to the city and lower the urban inequity



WORLD URBAN CAMPAIGN (WUC)

The World Urban Campaign (WUC) provides a platform for sharing knowledge and practical tools among public, private and civil society partners to elevate policies and share practical tools for sustainable urbanization. It was unveiled during WUF 5 by Anna Tibaijuka, the UN-HABITAT Executive Director.

WUC will promote a positive vision for sustainable urbanization developed through consultation with cities, governments and UN-HABITAT partners. The Campaign will promote inclusive urban development by recognizing the needs of vulnerable and excluded groups, such as the working poor, including in the informal sector. Its 100 cities initiative promotes the sharing of living practices among cities. The next campaign steering committee meeting will be held in Shanghai during the UN-HABITAT week.

With the slogan, "Building Partnerships (for a) Better City, Better Life", WUC aims to reverse this awareness and action gap. It provides a necessary environment for collaborative effort at sustainable urbanization by all concerned actors in the urban world, from you and I to organizations of the urban poor, associations of local authorities, business forums, youth associations, media outlets, professional associations, women's groups, parliamentarians, ministerial conferences, and inter-governmental bodies. In this way, WUC seeks to position sustainable urbanization as a priority issue of

the international community and as a national policy priority for individual member states.

Tens of thousands of cities and towns are each in their own way grappling with how to manage rapid urban growth, be it in the form of urban sprawl, urban decay or slum formation. Some are achieving success against great odds. National governments, also in relative isolation, are beginning to promote national policies to make municipal and local action possible. Hundreds, perhaps thousands of organizations, are setting precedents, developing tools and offering policy options to meet the urban challenge. Yet these actions are disparate. Their work is not recognized or assessed and the collective impact of their actions is not realized.

The success of WUC will be measured by more sustainable urban policies at the national level and increased investment and capital flows in support of those policies. For this reason it focuses on providing governments and partner networks with an advocacy instrument to articulate a shared vision for a better urban future and to advance the urban agenda within their respective constituencies.

MEDIUM TERM STRATEGIC AND INSTITUTIONAL PLAN (MTSIP)

This MTSIP is a representation of the UN-HABITAT's response and contribution to the UN system wide reform and coherence that is driven by the commitment to partnership. MTSIP is aimed at creating the necessary conditions for concerted international and national efforts to stabilize the growth of slums and to set stage for the subsequent reduction in and reversal of the number of slum dwellers. It emphasizes on Advocacy and partnerships that involve education, communication and evidence based information as effective tools of realizing sustainable human settlements development and implementing the Habitat Agenda.

MTSIP has two main focus areas; Focus Area 1, centers on the active participation of the Habitat Agenda partners as the key to achievement of sustainable urbanization where sustainable urbanization is the fundamental principle driving towards making and implementation of development policy. Focus Area 6, centers on identification of keys areas of empowerment related to organizational and staff competencies towards the achievement of the overall mandate of the UN-HABITAT.



*World Urban Forum
5, Rio de Janeiro,
Brazil Closing session,
26 March 2010.
Photo © Peter Götz*

PARTNERS AND YOUTH BRANCH

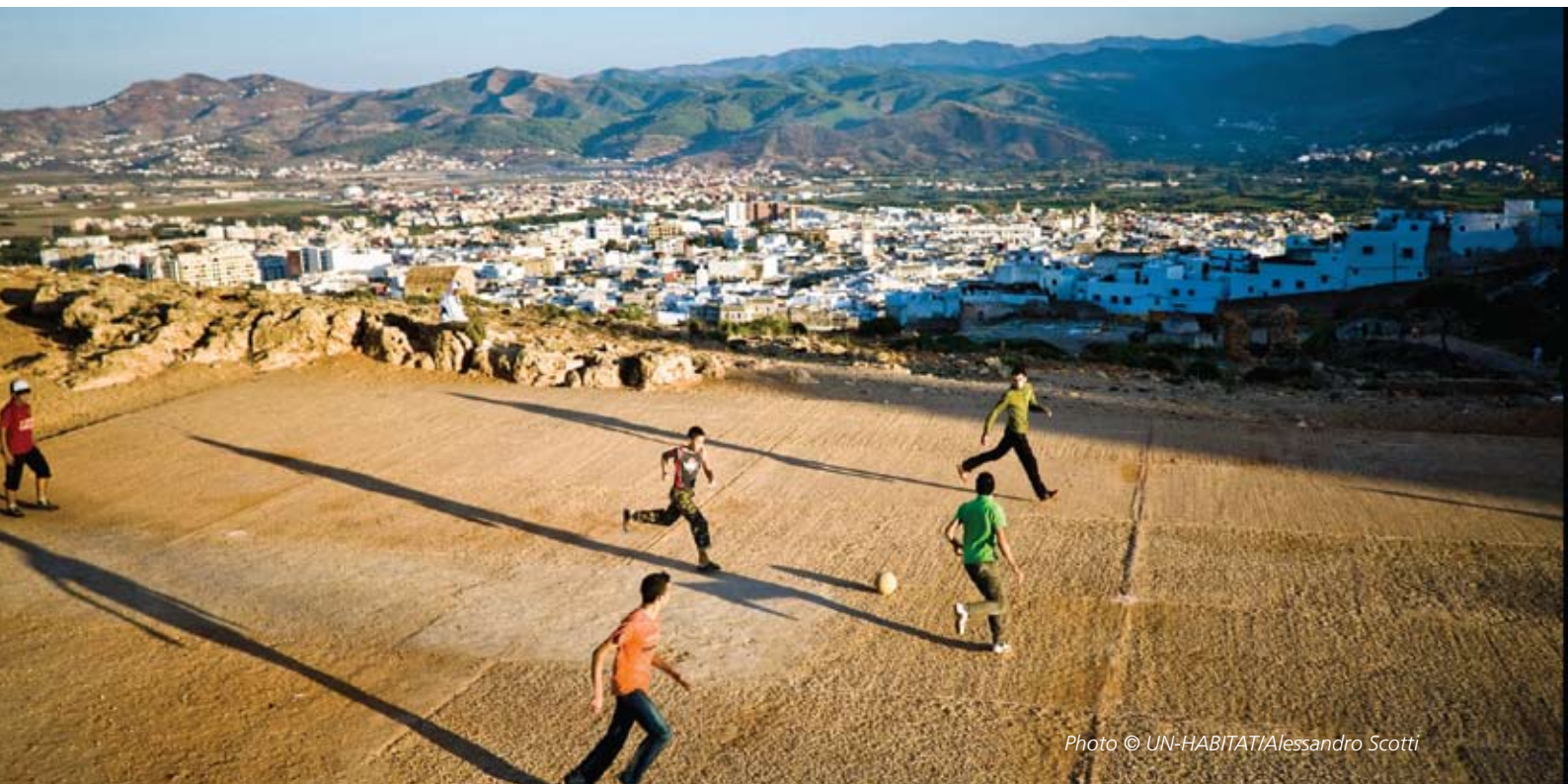


Photo © UN-HABITAT/Alessandro Scotti

The Partners and Youth Branch was formerly the NGO Unit of UN-HABITAT, became a section in September 2002 when the latter was upgraded to the Partners and Youth Section. Now it is upgraded to a Branch due to its important role in the MTSIP. The Branch reports to the Executive Director through the Monitoring and Research Division and works closely with all divisions, branches and regional offices in order to promote high quality and continuous engagement of partners in UN-HABITAT's work. The Branch deals specifically with the Civil Society Organizations and other Habitat Agenda Partners and takes an active role in implementing the youth programmes of UN-HABITAT.

The main function of the Branch includes:-

- a) Promote the participation of the UN-HABITAT agenda partners in implementing activities towards the achievement of the MDGS and the Habitat Agenda.
- b) Enhancing policy synthesis and dialogue.
- c) Facilitating political and social mobilization
- d) Facilitating the development of the full potential of youth in human settlements.

Youth and children constitute more than half of the world's population. Living in mostly urban areas, they constitute one of the largest groups to be adversely affected by unsustainable urban development patterns. Nevertheless, it should be remembered that youth with their energy, creativity, idealism and passion have the potential to help overcome problems we face today and tomorrow youth are key partners for implementation of the Habitat Agenda.

In response to the UN Secretary General's initiative on youth employment, particularly with a view to developing a Global Partnership Initiative on Urban Youth Development and to establish an interim youth consultative mechanism, UN agencies began to include youth in their programmatic objectives. The United Nations has declared the year 2010 as an International Youth Year and 12 August as International Youth Day.

For UN-HABITAT to achieve the objective of improving the quality of human settlements and targets 10 and 11 of the MDG 7 of integrating the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes, there was a need to enhance the engagement of youth in urban governance and address the problem of youth at risk, by focusing

on capacity building of youth organizations and mainstreaming youth empowerment goals into broader poverty alleviation programmes. The Partners and Youth Branch was formed in order to develop a strategy of enhancing youth engagement in the work of UN-HABITAT. The Branch has since extended to include other partners both inside and outside of governments.

PARTNERS AND YOUTH BRANCH AND HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

The Partners and Youth Branch has partnerships with local authorities, civil society organizations, parliamentarians and profit-based entities (private sector). Being at the level of governance closest to the people, local authorities play a vital role in educating, mobilizing and responding to the public to promote sustainable urbanization. Partnering with the NGOs and CBOs such as the civil society organizations helps to boost the involvement of the marginalized groups that have been left out by governments in their plans for development. Being the legislative body of societies, parliamentarians help in facilitating legislation that supports human settlement development.

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

Local governments are important players in the area of environment and heritage management as they have the responsibility to protect the environment, plan future landscapes, provide infrastructure, manage natural resources, and conserve or manage cultural heritage through a variety of mechanisms.

Many local governments have adopted the Local Agenda 21 - an approach that involves implementing

the tools of strategic and participatory planning, capacity building of the local actors, local consultations and setting up and implementing the projects in a bid to help local authorities in secondary towns to achieve more sustainable development. The Unit has been and continues to partner with local governments and/or authorities in helping them with strategies and advice on meeting housing needs.



Photo © UN-HABITAT/Alessandro Scotti

PARTNERING WITH PARLIAMENTARIANS

WHAT IS PARTNERSHIP?

Partnership is the engagement of like-minded organizations/institutions by seeking their active participation and cooperation with a view to pool wisdom, skills, knowledge towards achieving a common goal. This brings about complementary actions among like-minded organizations and mutual support of the common objectives, hence a reduced cost of implementation.

Parliamentarians are the elected representatives of the people in all their diversities, they have a responsibility to influence and help shape government policy. A partnership between UN-HABITAT and parliamentarians would help facilitate drafting and amendment of legislation and the restructuring of institutions and structures that support human settlements development.

WHAT IS STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP?

Strategic partnerships are voluntary and collaborative relationships between the government, private sector, civil society and other organizations in which participants work together to achieve a common purpose or to undertake a specific task, sharing risks, responsibilities, resources, competencies and benefits while committing to mutual accountability. UN-HABITAT is involved in several strategic partnerships that advance the Habitat Agenda and that help in achievement of Millennium Development Goals.

These partnerships must be:-

1. Efficient and effective
2. Transparent and accountable.
3. Diverse and Representative
4. Addressing the UN-HABITAT mandate

ROLE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS IN ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE URBANIZATION

Parliament is a vital institution in promoting good governance. It however does not operate in isolation from the Judiciary and the wider society;



Peter Götz, Member of the German Bundestag and und President of the Board of the Global Parliamentarians on Habitat (GPH) during the 6th Global Forum of the Global Paliamentarians on Habitat 20 March 2010, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Photo © Peter Götz

it is the relations among these that provide the overall governance framework of a given country. In fact, governance goals of greater accountability, transparency and participation are directly related to the primary functions of parliament which include:

1. Making policies and laws
2. Overseeing the executive
3. Representing citizens

Partnerships with Parliamentarians assist in mainstreaming issues of shelter and urban poverty reduction into national policies. What is expected is coherent action by governments in delivering on their promises, and by parliamentarians in holding their governments to account. Parliamentarians are in charge of making governments, particularly the executive branch, accountable to their international and policy commitments and they play a direct and critical role in the improvement of the lives of slum dwellers through the adoption of the laws and policies in their respective countries.

The networks Member of Parliament have access to be particularly well positioned to address the potential for violent conflict caused by rapid unplanned urbanization by driving legislative change and enforcing early action by their governments towards taking preventive measures. The most critical issues affecting population growth concerning urbanization relate to people's rights of access to natural resources, especially land. Parliamentarians can also call on their governments to do the following:

- Increase capacity building and share best practices across countries that have succeeded in achieving sustainable urbanization
- Provide basic services to the poor: land tenure, affordable shelter, water, sanitation, education, affordable health, and social security
- Initiate projects which identify and tap local capacities for sustainable development
- Tackle bigger issues of corruption which hamper and distort progress towards economic development

RATIONALE OF WORKING WITH PARLIAMENTARIANS

Parliamentarians debate and approve the national budget and this includes the funding for services and projects. Parliament is often called upon to ratify international agreements and translate them into national legislation as well as generate laws of its own initiative. Parliaments are also responsible for overseeing the executive branch of government and making sure that it lives up to its policy commitments.

Parliamentarians have been elected to represent the people in all their diversity. They have a responsibility to influence and help shape government policy. They monitor international negotiations and are in close contact with government negotiators. In many instances it is parliament that grants the negotiating mandate. Here again, much important work takes place in the legislature and is intrinsically linked to the institution's agenda.

Parliamentarians can utilize the opportunities through debate and question to ensure that policy is focused on delivering the development of adequate human settlement. The backbenchers – members of parliament who do not have ministerial roles - can speed the process of response to their questions by keeping the ministers on their toes with demand of updates.

Most parliaments have structured committees that deal with different legislative and policy matters. UN-

HABITAT will find that engaging with, and building the capacity of, the committees that deal with housing, land, environment, water, health and sanitation will go a long way in accelerating bills for legislation on human settlements issues.

UN-HABITAT typically works more directly with the executive arm of government. While most programmatic initiatives tend to get stuck in ministries, the actual delivery is in the making of laws and policies which is a preserve of parliament. The application and interpretation of laws is the work of the judicial system, hence the need to partner with the three arms of government.

In order to approach human settlement in a holistic manner, it is imperative to engage the three arms of Government equally by:-

- a) Organizing training workshops for the parliamentarians
- b) Drafting model legislation on human settlements from which parliamentarians can borrow from
- c) Lobby for serious steps on human settlements related cases in Courts

CHALLENGES OF WORKING WITH PARLIAMENTARIANS

The nature of elections in many countries makes it unlikely for a parliamentarian to serve for two consecutive terms or more since the voters dictate who their representative in parliament becomes. This has resulted in a high turnover of parliamentarians in many parliaments. New parliamentarians affect the continuity of projects and progress of draft legislation can be delayed while they acquaint themselves with the ongoing projects and become familiar with the rationale and aims.

Parliamentarians also have limited time to go through reference materials and therefore any material that is for their use should be brief and easy to read. Information and statistics should be put in a way that Members of Parliament can understand. Materials and engagement with members of parliament should therefore not be academic but based on practical experiences coming out of their own constituencies.

Being a highly educated professional is not among the requirements to be a member of parliament in most countries, even though legislation should be made from a point of knowledge. This leads to a dearth in viable policies and laws and sluggishness to move bills where issues are not clearly understood.

Further, although democratization of governments swept the world over in the 1990s, the development of good governance remains a challenge, particularly with parliaments, many of whom are not fully independent and rely on the Executive arm to bring information and ideas to the floor. There is need to create a linkage between the concepts of good governance and service delivery by parliamentarians in order to have effective oversight of governments on human settlement.

PARLIAMENTARIANS AND HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

It is crucial for the UN-HABITAT to partner with members of parliaments since they are the institutions through which the biggest leverage with government can be reached.

Essentially, members of parliament are a huge determinant on whether human settlements receive a prominent position on the government agenda and support of the parliament with matching funds allocated for implementation. This is because parliament is the organ that debates, approves and sets the programme priorities and allocates funds for their execution. They attract international organizations and donors to provide funds to cover the deficit in the national budget and to implement international agreements and national policies. Although UN-HABITAT has and continues to partner with community based organizations and the private sector, the role of this primary policy making Institution cannot be underestimated.

A member of parliament is the link between the people, the legislature and the executive and is responsible for ensuring that the government protects the rights of the electorate by providing essential services. S/he represents the citizens by contributing to the formulation of policy

Parliamentarians are crucial in the field of human settlement because, unlike other partners, they can influence the formulation and revision of public policies, the enactment of laws and regulation and the strengthening of the capacity of public institution at all levels.

A member of parliament is the constituents' representative. She/he receives and deals with many requests for assistance which could be transport, local councils, environmental issues, youth and community services, the police or objections to land tax and water and sewerage rates.



Photo © UN-HABITAT/Alessandro Scotti

COMPONENTS OF HUMAN SETTLEMENTS WHICH AFFECT PARLIAMENTARIANS DIRECTLY

A. SHELTER INCLUDING; SLUMS, LOW COST HOUSING, SECURITY OF TENURE AND EVICTION

Human settlements in developing countries remain overwhelmed by the dysfunctional aspects of rapid urbanization and by fragmented approaches to tackling its irreversible impact. Very few countries have managed to direct and harness the developmental attributes of towns and cities.

Urbanization is accompanied by unequal resource allocation between slum dwellings and planned neighborhoods and, by default, unequal access to basic economic and resource opportunities such as shelter. The current trend of urbanization has led to the urbanization of poverty; slums are a physical and spatial manifestation of increasing urban poverty in intra-city inequality. This poses potentially serious implications for both human security and conflict prevention efforts as situations of instability arise as much from absolute natural resource scarcity as from perceptions of deprivation, marginalization and abuse by the ruling elite.

Homelessness and lack of adequate shelter is common in many countries. In most developing countries,

poverty, rapid urbanization, lack of housing credit facilities, proper legislation, lack of good governance and planning are among the reasons that aggravate the problem. Women and children are mainly affected as a result of poor planning and bad governance at the grassroots level.

It is necessary to improve low-income communities, to build and improve their living and housing conditions by providing education, training and technical assistance on land rights, housing construction, savings and credit schemes and self-help in both rural and urban areas. It is the work of the parliamentarians to ensure that the laws are enacted to address these issues.

B. LAND

Land is essential for the provision of food, water and energy for many living systems. In rapidly growing urban areas, access to land is made increasingly difficult by the competing demands of housing, industry, commerce, infrastructure, transport, agriculture and the need for open spaces and green areas plus the protection of fragile ecosystems. There needs to have specific urban and regional policies addressing the various legal, economic, financial and cultural needs of the population. Innovative methods need to be created for urban planning, design, development, revitalization and management.

The principle difficulty associated with the provision of housing in developing countries is the problem of ensuring land supply. In poor countries, strong evidence links the combination of high population growth, rapid urbanization and land scarcity to the potential for violent conflict. Struggles for natural resources such as land have repeatedly been accompanied by social and political violence as perceptions of unfairness stemming from subsistence desperation and a sense of helplessness triggers violent uprisings. While high population density and low natural resource availability do not automatically engender violent conflict, if not managed properly they may well become one of its major driving factors.

When developing housing and urban policies, parliamentarians can ensure that the adopted framework is based on land property rights which recognize security of tenure especially to the urban poor. In case eviction of persons is being considered, the member of parliament should ensure that it is done according to the law without rendering individuals homeless or violating their basic human rights.

C. ENERGY AND TRANSPORTATION

Transport is the structural element of an economy that facilitates the flow of goods and services between buyers and sellers and includes assets such as roads, railways, airports, ports, power systems. Rapid urbanization poses great challenges to the efficiency and effectiveness of transportation systems and the energy sector that powers most cities. In many instances there is overcrowding in bus stations and heavy traffic during rush hour which adversely affects the performance of cities.

Transport remains a necessary condition for and catalyst to urban development, as it facilitates for the exchange of goods and services which in turn contributed to the economic growth of cities.

Urban transportation makes possible the expansion of cities and provides their inhabitants with access to employment, services, shelter and other opportunities essential for their economic and social advancement. Development of urban transportation should be made a key priority by governments of developing countries. Few large cities in developing countries are able to meet the expenses associated with the demand for transport infrastructure and services. In the cities of many developing countries traffic congestions and space constraints further inhibit the possibility of massive infrastructure development.

Parliamentarians are the leading force to help develop the infrastructure by mobilizing local and international resources. They can introduce regulatory legislation as well as lobby for support by the citizens of their countries living abroad in development of their country of origin either by providing capital or the much needed talent and skills.

D. CITIES AND CLIMATE CHANGE

The severe ongoing change in climatic patterns faced by a majority of cities in developing countries has adverse effects on the well being of their citizens. In parts of Africa and Asia climate change has presented itself in the form of severe floods which cause many problems for many of the informal settlements that continue to sprawl. With the floods come diseases such as cholera, malaria and diarrhea which can cause death, especially in children, despite the fact that they can be easily treated. Floods also damage many of the poorly-constructed homes in the slum, deteriorating even further the deplorable living conditions.

In addition, smaller coastal cities, especially those in developing countries and in small island nations

such as Tuvalu, will suffer most due to their limited adaptation options. This will increase urbanization. In many parts of the world, climate refugees from rural areas that have been hit by drought or flooding aggravate the migration to cities.

E. HIV/AIDS

Given the oversight role of parliaments with regard to budget expenditure, parliamentarians can enact legislation that protects the rights of those affected and infected by HIV and AIDS; oversee the proper implementation of national HIV and AIDS programmes, including education programmes that inform the youth

about the use of condoms, abstinence, faithfulness in relationships and Antiretroviral (ARV) drugs, play a supervisory role in overseeing the proper, efficient and effective allocation of resources and advocate against the stigma of HIV and AIDS and promote greater awareness of the disease.

F. WATER AND SANITATION

Water is life and lack of it equals death yet it is taken for granted in the developed world while almost two billion people lack access to an adequate supply or can only obtain it at high prices in developing countries.

In many cities, households in informal settlements are rarely connected to the water network and can only rely on water from vendors at up to 200 times the tap price; as a result they lack adequate water provision. Improving access to safe water means less burden on people, mostly women, to collect water from available sources. It also means reducing the global burden of water-related diseases and the improvement in the quality of life.

Sanitation is dignity. The lack of sanitation is a major public health problem that causes disease, sickness and death. Highly infectious, excreta-related diseases such as cholera still affect whole communities in developing countries. Diarrhea, which is spread easily in an environment of poor hygiene and inadequate sanitation, kills about 2.2 million people each year, most of them children under five. Inadequate sanitation, through its impact on health and environment, has considerable implications for economic development. Moreover, lack of excreta management poses a fundamental threat to global water resources.

The sheer volume of waste does not constitute the problem; it is the inability of governments and waste-disposal firms to keep up with it that is the issue. Waste management broadly constitutes of collection, transportation and disposal.

To provide safe water for all plus proper sanitation, parliamentarians and other stakeholders must move this crisis to the top of the agenda. They must ensure that policies and institutions for water supply and sanitation service delivery, as well as for water resources management and development, respond equally to the different roles, needs and priorities. Legislation on water and sanitation target must focus on sustainable service delivery, rather than construction of facilities alone. Any developing nation intending to rip the benefits of urbanization must plan ahead through proper mechanisms and legislature to manage its waste and consequently avoid environmental degradation.



Photo © UN-HABITAT/Julius Mwelu

HOW THE PARLIAMENTARIANS UNIT CAN PARTNER WITH PARLIAMENTARIANS

1. Most parliamentary work is done in the specified parliamentary committees and these should be the Unit's target. The Unit could organize capacity building seminars and invite relevant committees to sensitize them on their role in provision of adequate human settlements as well as work directly with the committees.
2. The Unit could create a network of the chairs of the parliamentary committees whose mandate relates to human settlements. This could allow for parliaments to learn from other parliaments on what is being done elsewhere, such as best practice, especially if the meetings are held in different member countries every other time.
3. Invite parliamentarians to educative forums on human settlement and provide a wide range of relevant information of potential interest to the parliamentarians.
4. In many instances the statistics of the UN-HABITAT and the statistics that members of parliament work with differ so it is necessary for the accurate and actual statistics to be availed to the parliament.
5. Work with parliaments to intensify efforts to enhance the role of youth in decision-making processes. Through the establishment and the support of youth councils or parliaments, the cooperation between youth, civil society organizations and the governments at all levels should be further developed. In order to ensure the broad participation of the youth, governance should be made attractive to young people.
6. The Unit could organize training for the new parliamentarians.
7. The Unit could work with parliamentary groups such as Global Parliamentarians on Habitat (GPH), Commonwealth Parliamentary association (CPA), Association of European Parliamentarians for Africa (AWEPA) and the Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU).

STRENGTHENING PARLIAMENTARIANS TO DEAL EFFECTIVELY WITH HUMAN SETTLEMENTS AND MDGS

1. Parliamentarians can be linked with the universities which have relevant departments such as a strategic planning department; this could help to inform and advise the parliamentarians on

facts and the impact which constructions already completed or to be built could have on sustainable human settlements.

2. There should be interlinking between parliamentarians and the local government players in housing, water and sanitation.
3. There should be working groups for parliament and professional associations for inter-sector consultations towards solutions.
4. UN-HABITAT should make provision for debate on model legislation and the option of adoption.
5. Expert group meeting should be organized to develop a check list on the compliancy of the laws with the MDGs.
6. UN-HABITAT managers in different United Nations Development Program (UNDP) countries can study development policies in different countries and be used as link between parliaments.

HOW THE PARLIAMENTARIANS UNIT CAN BUILD THE CAPACITY OF PARLIAMENTARIANS

Partnering with parliamentarians allows the UN-HABITAT Global Parliamentarians Unit to engage directly with governments through parliamentarians, creating a linkage between parliamentarians, the local government and private sector players in housing, water and sanitation.

The strategic partnership between UN-HABITAT and parliamentarians is a collaborative relationship between the two in which participants work together to achieve a common purpose or to undertake a specific task, sharing risks, responsibilities, resources, competencies and benefits while committing to mutual accountability.

The Unit will do the following to build the capacity of parliamentarians:

- Working through Habitat Programme Managers, the Unit could emphasize the importance of re-introduction of UN-HABITAT Committees in countries with the aim of lobbying for a resolution of the Governing Council to restore the National Habitat Commissions that once were in every country.
- The Governing Council adopted new procedures which allow the NGOs to take part in meetings in a consultative status and the Unit could make recommendations for the involvement or representation of parliamentarian group in the Governing Council forums.

- The Unit should work with other units of the UN-HABITAT in the development of capacity building materials to determine of what assistance specific units would be.
- There is need to develop training kits for the parliamentarians based on best practices and to do capacity building and training of parliamentarians and local authority officers on human settlement. The Training and Capacity Building Branch of UN-HABITAT has been supporting local government capacity building for over 15 years by building partnerships with national training and capacity building institutions, and working with them to undertake strategic planning workshops, development and dissemination of tools, adaptation of training materials to local and national contexts, and supporting national training activities. This methodology can also be used for parliamentarians.
- The Parliamentarians Unit could, in consultation with the Sections, Branches and other divisions, draft model legislation or generic bills that could be used by parliamentarians to formulate laws.

Setting up working groups for parliamentarians and professional associations for inter-sector consultations towards solutions and developing a check list on the compliancy of the laws with the Habitat Agenda will ensure that MGDs are achieved. This in turn allows for cooperation on projects touching on the Habitat Agenda with the aim of achieving the MGDs, through combined knowledge and the pooling of resources towards a common objective which subsequently reduces the overall cost of implementation.

WHAT SHOULD A LAW ON THE PROVISION OF THE HUMAN SETTLEMENTS COVER?

- Provision for adequate shelter for all through access to primary health care, clean water and sanitation, and primary education.
- Provision for security services to protect individuals and their property including police, fire service, courts and prisons.
- Provision for adequate level of social services and a social environment which facilitates and encourages social cohesion, collective and individual responsibility aimed at lowering the overall and particular levels of violence in the communities.
- Enhancement of the level of services to improve occupational safety, safety on the sea, roads and in our airspace.
- Tracking progress in the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG)

Experts from the UN-HABITAT's Partners and Youth Branch could identify and select a set of time-bound and measurable indicators.

These indicators could include:

- a) Financing housing for more than 10% slum dwellers yearly
- b) Access to clean safe drinking water
- c) Availability of basic sanitation
- d) Community participation
- e) Complete settlement recovery.



*Board of Directors of the Global Parliamentarians on Habitat during the World Habitat Day on 5 October 2009, Washington DC, USA.
Photo © Peter Götz*

INTER-GOVERNMENTAL PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATIONS

Apart from working with parliaments in the different member countries of the UN, it is possible to influence how they operate, through different global and regional associations to which they belong. The Parliamentarians Unit can achieve this by participating in awareness-raising meetings on the basic facts of the situation of human settlements on how to advocate more effectively for legal and policy frameworks to better address sustainable settlements.

The Unit can also encourage political accountability by monitoring government compliance with international commitments, obligations and other measures as well as initiating parliamentary debates on the level of budgetary resources available for development cooperation and holding government accountable resource allocation.

Tracking and sharing information with parliamentarians on resource allocation to human settlements in best practice countries and identifying opportunities at international meetings and discussing the positions of countries on human settlement, with

a view to assist them in improving their policies and to adapt good practices from other countries are other possible methods.

Some of these important institutions through which the above can be achieved include:

GLOBAL PARLIAMENTARIANS ON HABITAT (GPH)

The Global Parliamentarians for Habitat was inaugurated in 1987 in Yokohama during the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless. It is the only international parliamentary group that is committed exclusively to promoting the development of sustainable human settlements by maintaining close cooperation with UN-HABITAT. The group promotes international cooperation, especially in the development and application of relevant legislation to enhance the implementation of the Habitat Agenda with the help of its regional chapters.

The Group appreciates that, to achieve the MDGs, good relations with parliamentarians with human settlements issue in their agenda is inevitable. In this regard, it organizes conferences to review achievements of parliaments and make new strategies and programmes for the implementation of the Habitat Agenda at global, regional and national levels. Parliamentarians have the role of ensuring that commitments made at Global Forums for Parliamentarians are kept.

Global Parliamentarians on Habitat could lobby for the formation of national groups of 'Parliamentarians on Habitat' in each country, to promote and/or examine ways of assisting the implementation of the Habitat Agenda as well as organize meetings for all these groups to facilitate the exchange of information and experience.

THE WORLD URBAN FORUM (WUF) AND THE GLOBAL PARLIAMENTARIANS ON HABITAT (GPH).

In collaboration with the parliamentarians of the World Urban Forum hosting country, the group organizes a parliamentarians' round table, a session that provides parliamentarians with an opportunity to take stock of key successes and their challenges in their contribution to human settlements.

The WUF IV round table strengthened the working relations between the GPH and the UN-HABITAT and brought out a positive aspect of globalization. The parliamentarians present underscored importance of legislation that was favorable for sustainable urbanization and felt that parliamentarians should use their oversight role to ensure resources are used for the intended purpose and they should be pro-active in ensuring that the policies they enact are implemented and adequate budgetary allocations are made.

The GPH should promote dialogue at all levels, together with the exchange of experience and the collections of "good practice" since this are highly important in engaging parliamentarians.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE GPH

1. The GPH has organized six global fora of parliamentarians and several regional councils that have been used as platforms for parliamentarians to share success stories good practices and policy

approaches

2. It has maintained collaborative links with the Latin American and the European Parliaments
3. African and Asian chapters are revitalized and becoming more active in promoting the Habitat Agenda in their regions

THE INTER PARLIAMENTARY UNION (IPU)

The IPU is the international organization of Parliaments of sovereign States (Article 1 of the Statutes of the Inter-Parliamentary Union). It was established in 1889. The IPU is the focal point for worldwide parliamentary dialogue and works for peace and cooperation among peoples and for the firm establishment of representative democracy. A total of 150 national parliaments are currently members of the IPU.

For the IPU the concept of sustainable development encompasses such other vital issues as human development, social and economic justice and advancement of democracy. Protection of the environment has long been a concern of the IPU, and its actions in this field are carried out in the framework of sustainable development.

The first worldwide Inter-Parliamentary Conference on Environment held in 1984 in Nairobi advocated the inclusion of environmental protection in the development process. Environmental problems such as water, waste management or measures required to change consumption and production patterns have been considered by statutory conferences of the IPU.

The IPU supports the efforts of the United Nations, whose objectives it shares, and works in close co-operation with it. It also cooperates with regional inter-parliamentary organizations, as well as with international intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations which are motivated by the same ideals.

ASSOCIATION OF EUROPEAN PARLIAMENTARIANS FOR AFRICA (AWEPA)

AWEPA is an international organization that supports and strengthens effective functioning of parliaments in Africa and works to keep Africa high on the political agenda in Europe. AWEPA works to reduce poverty, improve livelihoods and defend human rights in

promoting an African-European partnership.

While in partnership with UN-HABITAT, AWEPA will serve as an umbrella body for parliamentary mobilization towards sustainable human settlements by promoting information exchange and sharing of new research, best practices and regional and thematic expertise. With AWEPA as a mediator between Africa and Europe, a flourishing parliamentary dialogue would create, implement and monitor concrete actions plans of parliamentarians and hence the revision of legislation and policies, budgets and oversight frameworks on sustainable human settlements.

Formulation of effective human settlement policies and strategies requires cooperation, consultation, negotiations and decision making at all levels of society. AWEPA helps facilitate cooperation between parliamentarians and decision makers as well as technical experts and other stakeholders.

COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION (CPA)

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (or, as it was originally called, the Empire Parliamentary Association) was founded in 1911. Active CPA Branches now exist in 169 national, state, provincial and territorial Parliaments, with a total membership of approximately 16,000 parliamentarians.

The CPA strengthens the capacity of parliamentarians to play a leadership role in preparing their constituencies for addressing climate change as a human settlements issue through: -

- a) Organizing workshops of technical experts to identify acceptable, scientifically-based, climate scenarios.
- b) Developing a programme of workshops to build technical capacities in member states in support of adaptation to climate change
- c) Supporting small states in accessing experts and teams of advisers to help national assessment and adaptation strategies.

UN-HABITAT should seek and develop innovative approaches and frameworks for international cooperation in the development and management of human settlements to facilitate the active participation of all the parliamentary association in decision-making, policy formulation, implementation and evaluation and in the allocation of resources.

PARLIAMENTARIANS FOR GLOBAL ACTION (PGA)

Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA), works with the UN system and its intergovernmental agencies to effectively push policies at the national, regional, and international levels. The UN-HABITAT and PGA network exists in a bid to support the Habitat Agenda as well as the MGD's. PGA is a non-profit, non-partisan international network of over 1300 legislators in more than 100 elected parliaments around the globe. It aims to promote peace, democracy, the rule of law, human rights, sustainable development and population issues by informing, convening, and mobilizing parliamentarians to realize these goals.

PGA was established in 1978-1979 in Washington, DC, U.S.A. by concerned parliamentarians from around the world to take joint action on global problems, which could not be solved by any one government or parliament. Global Action today works on an expanded list of global issues such as fostering democracy, conflict prevention and management, international law and human rights population, and environment

PAN AFRICAN PARLIAMENT (PAP)

The PAP was established in March 2004 by Article 17 of The Constitutive Act of the African Union, as one of the nine Organs provided for in the Treaty establishing the African Economic Community signed in Abuja, Nigeria in 1991.



Hon. Par Granstedt, Secretary General of the European Parliamentarians for Africa (AWEPA) signing an MOU with Ms. Inga Klevby UN-HABITAT Deputy Executive Director.

The establishment of the PAP was informed by a vision to provide a common platform for Africans and their grassroots organizations to be more involved in discussions and decision-making on the problems and challenges facing the continent. The Parliamentary Committees on Health, Labour and Social Affairs consider strategies and programmes for the improvement of the lives of African and consider issues relating to regional and international cooperation in strategic planning and implementation of social development and health policies and programmes.

EAST AFRICAN PARLIAMENT (EAP)

The (EAP) is an intergovernmental organization comprising five east African countries. Currently, members of EAP are Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Burundi, and Rwanda.

There are many other similar institutions that can be found in Latin America and Asia.

- How the Parliamentarians Unit can work with parliamentary associations:
- Participate in awareness-raising meetings on the

basic facts of the situation of human settlements on how to advocate more effectively for legal and policy frameworks to better address sustainable settlements.

- Encourage political accountability by monitoring government compliance with international commitments and obligations and other measures.
- Initiate parliamentary debate on the level of budgetary resources available for development cooperation, and hold governments accountable for separate and additional resource allocation.
- Track and share information with parliamentarians on resource allocation to human settlements in best practice countries.
- Identify opportunities at international meetings to discuss positions of countries on human settlement with a view to assist them in improving their policies and to adapt good practices from other countries.
- Raise awareness and share information of the critical urgency and of related effects such as the real costs of water resources for food and crop production and of land clearances for food and crop production.



Global Parliamentarians on Habitat meeting in Nairobi 1st April 2009

GENDER AND HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

Assuring that the needs of women are met requires having adequate representation of their experiences, views and interest in human settlements, planning and management at community, local and national level. Importantly, at the 19th session of the Governing Council the participants agreed on the need to recognize the empowerment of women and their full and equal participation in political, social and economic life, the improvement of health and the eradication of poverty are essential to achieving sustainable human settlements (resolution 17/11 of 14 May 1999).

UN-HABITAT research indicates that female-headed households are on the rise in many settlements and that lack of security of tenure affects millions of people across the world with women facing added risks and deprivations. In this regard, for the needs of women to be adequately met, along with those of men and

children, both genders must participate equally in human settlements planning and management at community, local and national levels.

Furthermore, the Habitat Agenda calls for engendering of human settlements. It emphasizes the need for co-operative and complementary actions among interested parties towards sustainable human settlements development.

The mix of interested parties appropriate for participation may be different in each instance, depending on who has responsibility for or is affected by the topic being addressed. As a general matter, interested parties include women and men of all ages, government at the appropriate level, NGOs, community-based organizations, business, labor and environmental organizations.



Gender Forum of WUF5, Rio de Janeiro. Photo © UN-HABITAT/Julius Mwelu

SUCCESS CRITERIA

Success will be seen as the following points being achieved:

- 1) Development of strategy papers, publications and a tracker of good practices in legislation on human settlements.
- 2) The Unit's staff to attend parliamentarians' workshops and conferences to network Habitat Agenda goals.
- 3) The Unit to keep a record of best practices in human settlements legislation and serve as an information clearing house during the draft legislation on human settlements.
- 4) The successful reorganization and revitalization of the African/Asian Chapter and a follow up on existing chapters with details of what legislation has been passed and is in the pipeline.
- 5) Development of action plans for countries and the guided implementation of these plans.
- 6) An updated database of parliamentarians who have been trained in various human settlements related issues.
- 7) An agreement signed with parliamentary associations for commitment to promote human settlements in their regions and member countries.
- 8) Revival of the African Parliamentarians' Conference.





An aerial view of affordable housing in Uberlandia, Brazil.
Photo © UN-HABITAT/Alessandro Scotti

CONCLUSION

Countries have responded to the problem of rapid and unplanned urbanization with varying commitments, emphasis, efforts and achievements. For the poor, slums are often a solution in progress and a means of creating a home and better life in the city; as a result slums have been recognized as a viable solution to homelessness.

Currently, a wide gap still exists between commitments and performance when it comes to achieving sustainable urbanization. With the exception of a few developing countries, all efforts made have had little impact on shelter delivery, the provision of water and sanitation, availability of urban land amongst other necessities.

UN-HABITAT recognizes managed urbanization transforms societies making cities politically, socially and economically influential. Proper management of natural resources such as land and water, and the provision of affordable housing through Parliamentary legislation and government implementation of this legislation, is the key to maximizing the benefits and offsetting the negative consequences of urbanization.

In the future, UN-HABITAT's Parliamentarians Unit will work closely with parliamentary committees to organize capacity-building seminars and invite the members to discuss their role in the provision of adequate human settlements. The Unit will also seek to create a network of the chairs of the parliamentary committees whose mandate relates to human settlements and invite parliamentarians to educative forums on human settlement to provide a wide range of relevant information of potential interest to the parliamentarians. This will create a platform through which parliamentarians can learn from one another on what is being done elsewhere.

As a mechanism to gather best practices in legislation, the Unit could add as feedback for conferences of the UN-HABITAT a questionnaire that is inclusive of questions on legislation in represented countries. Working jointly with parliamentary associations and following in the footsteps of UNEP's Ecolex a database for best practices in human settlements can be developed from the information collected. The data could be used to outline specific channels through which human settlements issues can be

developed or addressed in different parliaments and parliamentarians association.

Working with lobby groups (not forgetting those that work toward the involvement of women in human settlement concerns) and planning systematic approaches to committees plus involving and training parliamentary staff in committees can help perpetuate institutional capacity. Furthermore, partnering with NGOs and Civil Society organizations working on human settlements can go a long way in achieving sustainable urbanization.

The organization and execution of the African and Asian Parliamentarians' Conferences in the recent past has been faced with financial impediments; there is clear need for adequate financial allocation for this conference. This problem may be solved through the creation of a compulsory contribution by member states represented at the conference, to help meet conference expenses.

With regard to human recourse, the Parliamentarians Unit is under staffed; there is a need for additional staff responsible for different tasks. There should be a dedicated member of staff to oversee logistics. In engaging parliamentarians, the Parliamentarians Unit should work closely with staff from all divisions, branches and regional offices in order to promote continuous engagement of the members of parliament in UN-HABITAT's work. The accomplishment of this may include:

1. The Monitoring and Research Division
2. The Training and Capacity Building Branch of UN-HABITAT
3. Country and regional Management Offices
4. Habitat Programme Managers

UN-HABITAT appreciates the value of parliamentarians as important and vibrant partners in promoting the cause of adequate shelter for all at the national and global levels. UN-HABITAT particularly recognizes the role of parliamentarians in promoting international cooperation and understanding which is an area that still require increased commitment from the international community.

Given the magnitude of the challenges that human settlements pose, society must value and take advantage of the wisdom, knowledge and skills of every person. Sustainable human settlements development requires cooperative and complementary actions among interested parties. Increasing the involvement of parliamentarians in preventing environmental degradation, promoting sustainable development and reducing threats to security is critical.

Achieving sustainable development and alleviating poverty require the integration of economic, social and political objectives into a coherent overall framework. As the world becomes increasingly urban, it is essential for political will to make cooperation possible between governments, local authorities, private sectors, NGOs and professional groups. It is the political representatives of the people in parliaments who provide this necessary bridge.



The official launch of upgraded houses at the Kibera slum, Nairobi. Photo © UN-HABITAT

SCHEDULE 1:

EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICES IN LEGISLATION DEVELOPMENT

Country	Constitution	Law	Provision
Argentina	1994	Article 14bis,	The State shall grant the benefits of social security, which shall be comprehensive and un-waivable. In particular, the law shall establish: ... access to decent housing.
Armenia		Article 31	Entitles every citizen to an adequate standard of living, adequate housing and the State commits to enable the exercise of these rights.
Belgium		Article 23(3)	Gives every citizen a right to enjoy a life in conformity with human dignity; the rights include the right to adequate housing.
Bolivia			Mandates the Ministry of Human Development to promote the construction of subsidizing housing.
Cambodia		Article 30 of the Land Law	Allows one who has occupied a piece of land peacefully and without consent for five years or more to request definitive title to the land.
Canada	1981	Human Rights Code (1981). Statutes of Ontario (1981, chap. 53), as amended in 1984 (Chapter 58, s. 39 and 1986, Chapter 64, s. 18)	<p>Sec. 2. (1). Every person has a right to equal treatment with respect to the occupancy of accommodation, without discrimination because of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, same-sex partnership status, family status, handicap or the receipt of public assistance.</p> <p>Sec. 2. (2). Every person who occupies accommodation has a right to freedom from harassment by the landlord or agent of the landlord or by an occupant of the same building because of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, age, marital status, same-sex partnership status, family status, handicap or the receipt of public assistance.</p> <p>Sec. 3a. (1). Every 16- or 17-year-old person who has withdrawn from parental control has a right to equal treatment with respect to occupancy of and contracting for accommodation without discrimination because the person is less than 18 years old.</p>
Finland	Art. 8(2) Act No. 380/1987).	Child Welfare Act (No. 683/1983	Mandates the local government authorities to provide housing resources for the severely handicapped under certain circumstances.

Country	Constitution	Law	Provision
			Requires that local government rectify inadequate housing conditions or, as the case may provide for housing when inadequate or non-existent housing causes the need for special child welfare or constitutes a substantial hindrance to the rehabilitation of the child or family.
France:	1990	Article 1. Law 90/449 of 31 May 1990 (Law Aimed at the Right to Housing)	The guarantee of a right to housing constitutes a duty of solidarity for the nation as a whole. Any person or family finding difficulties because of the inability of his [or her] resources to meet his [or her] needs has the right to collective assistance under conditions fixed by law that will ensure access to decent and independent housing where he [or she] can maintain himself.
Germany		Article 1(1), Articles 20(1) and 28(1)	Gives rise to the homeless person's subjective right to be allocated accommodation enabling her/him to lead a dignified existence.
India		Slum Dwellers Protection Act	Confers tenure to landless persons in urban areas who had settled on land plots of less than 50sq metres for a prescribed period.
Korea		Housing Construction Promotion Act (1972)	Calls for provision of the construction and the supply of dwelling units for persons who lack housing.
Mexico		Article 4	States that every family has a right to enjoy decent and proper housing.
New Zealand			Protects tenants against unfair eviction and it provides housing for those on low incomes.
Nicaragua		Article 64	States that Nicaraguans have a right to decent, comfortable and safe housing that guarantees familial privacy.

Country	Constitution	Law	Provision
Peru	1997	The Peruvian Law for the Promotion of Access to Formal Property. Legislative Decree No. 803	<p>The Peruvian Law for the Promotion of Access to Formal Property – Legislative Decree No. 803 (Ley de Promoción del Acceso a la Propiedad Formal – Decreto Legislativo No. 803) declares that providing Peruvian citizens access to formal property, and providing a mechanism for the registration of property, are in fact matters of national importance.</p> <p>The law further recognises that such measures are necessary for the protection of the basic property rights of citizens. To this end, Title 1, Article 2 of the law provides for the creation of an autonomous Commission for the Formalization of Informal Property (Comisión de Formalización de la Propiedad Informal – COFOPRI) which has responsibility, inter alia, for formulating, approving and executing a Programme for the Formalization of Property (as stipulated in Title 1, Article 3).</p> <p>The law also addresses the reorganization of administrative procedures and processes for the formalisation of property (Title 2), the appropriation of state lands for the purposes of providing housing (Title 3), and other complimentary provisions (Title 4).</p>
Philippines		<p>Ejectment laws.</p> <p>Comprehensive and Integrated Shelter Finance Act;</p> <p>Urban Development and Housing Act</p>	<p>Rental Reform Act of 2002, Sec. 8. Prohibition Against Ejectment by Reason of Sale or Mortgage. – No leaser or his successor-in-interest shall be entitled to eject the lessee upon the ground that the leased premises have been sold or mortgaged to a third person regardless of whether the lease or mortgage is registered or not.</p> <p>Sec. 2. Declaration of Policy. — It is hereby declared a policy of the State to undertake, in cooperation with the private sector, a continuing program of urban land reform and housing which will make available, at affordable cost, decent housing and basic services to underprivileged and homeless citizens in urban centers and resettlement areas.</p> <p>Makes available to underprivileged and homeless citizens decent housing at affordable cost Provides for rational use and development of urban land; Regulates and directs urban growth and expansion towards a dispersed urban net and mobalanced urban-rural interdependence.</p>

Country	Constitution	Law	Provision
Portugal	1976 Constitution (1976, fourth Revision based on Constitutional Law No. 1/97 of 20-Sep 1997)	Article 65. Housing and Urban Planning	<p>(1) All have the right, both personally and for their family, to a dwelling of adequate size that meets satisfactory standards of hygiene and comfort and preserves personal and family privacy.</p> <p>(2) The state shall adopt a policy for the institution of a system of rents that are compatible with family incomes and for individual ownership of housing.</p> <p>(3) The state, the autonomous regions and the local authorities shall determine the regulation on occupancy, use and transformation of urban land, specifically by way of planning instruments, within the framework of laws relating to national planning and urban planning and shall compulsorily acquire such land as is necessary to satisfy the purposes of urban public utility.</p> <p>(4) Interested parties shall be guaranteed participation in the drawing up of urban planning instruments and any other instruments for physical planning of the territory.</p>
Russian Federation	1993	Article 40.	<p>(1) Everyone has the right to a home. No one may be arbitrarily deprived of a home.</p> <p>(2) Organs of state power and organs of local self-administration encourage home construction and create conditions for the realization of the right to a home.</p> <p>(3) Citizens with low incomes and other citizens, defined by law, who are in need of housing shall be housed free of charge or for affordable pay from the state, municipal and other housing funds in conformity with the norms established by the law.</p>
Slovenia			The Constitution of Slovenia states that the state shall create opportunities for citizens to obtain adequate housing.

Country	Constitution	Law	Provision
South Africa	1996	Article 26.	<p>(1) Everyone has the right to have access to adequate housing.</p> <p>(2) The state must take reasonable legislative and other measures, within its available resources, to achieve the progressive realisation of this right.</p> <p>(3) No one may be evicted from their home, or have their home demolished, without an order of court made after considering all the relevant circumstances. No legislation may permit arbitrary evictions. Article 28. Children</p> <p>(1) Every child has the right to shelter.</p>
Spain		Article 47	States that all Spaniards have the right to enjoy decent and adequate house.
Sri Lanka			The constitution guarantees the right to adequate shelter.
Uganda	1995		Confer security of tenure through ownership rights or perpetual lease rights on lawful and bona fide occupiers of land.
United Kingdom		Homeless Persons Act 1977	Mandates the Local Councils to provide accommodation to homeless families and homeless persons in priority need.
United states of America		New York City Human Rights Law	The Law prohibits discrimination in employment, housing and public accommodations.

SCHEDULE 2:

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