

Roundup

United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison (NGLS)
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4th Session of the World Urban Forum: Making Cities Work for Everyone

INTRODUCTION

The 4th session of the World Urban Forum (WUF IV) will be held from 3-6 November 2008, in Nanjing (China) with "Harmonious Urbanization: The Challenge of Balanced Territorial Development" as its main theme. The Forum, hosted by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) and the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Construction (People's Republic of China), will be supported by six sub-themes, discussed in a series of dialogues. Eight roundtables have also been scheduled, including for ministers; mayors; global parliamentarians; urban researchers; Habitat Partner University; gender and women; youth; and land and tenure.

WUF IV will also include networking events, training sessions, and an Exhibition that includes a General Exhibition and The Business Expo. A World Urban Youth Forum, being held from 1- 2 November, will allow youth leaders from around the world to exchange views on sustainable urbanization and their recommendations will be officially presented to delegates at WUF IV.

The number of people attending the World Urban Forum has risen sharply from 1,200 at the first World Urban Forum in Nairobi in 2002 (see *Go Between 91*), to 4,400 at the second Forum in Barcelona in 2004 (see *Go Between 104*) and over 11,400 at the third session held in Vancouver in 2006 (see *Go Between 110*).

PAST FORUMS

Past Forums have addressed a wide array of urban issues. Designated by the General Assembly as an advisory body to support governments and other partners in implementing the Habitat Agenda, the first Forum in Nairobi set out to strengthen the collective understanding of the key challenges of sustainable urban development.

A strong theme emerging from the first Forum was the idea that the empowerment of all Habitat Agenda partners is the best way to solve problems of the urban poor and to meet the challenges of sustainable urbanization.

At the Forum in Barcelona participants looked at the theme "Cities: Crossroads of Cultures, Inclusiveness and Integration?" The question mark in the theme implied that the world still had not yet arrived at an effective strategy to make cities work for everyone. Participants called attention to the fact that millions of people in cities around the world still lack access to safe water and sanitation, health care, education, shelter, and security of tenure.



World Urban Forum 4
第四届世界城市论坛
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The Vancouver Forum, which grew exponentially in numbers from the first Forum, addressed the theme "Sustainable Cities – Turning Ideas into Action." It also marked the 30th anniversary of the first UN Conference on Human Settlements. Participants commented on cities being at the forefront of the major health and nutrition challenges and emphasized the challenges developing countries faced in addressing sanitation, violence and unemployment. WUF III saw a growing willingness of government representatives and local authorities to engage with civil society in initiatives that improve housing and access to basic services. It also saw an increase in private sector participation and concluded with a call for the further strengthening of partnerships for urban development. WUF III endorsed a forward-looking paper entitled *Reinventing Planning* which examined the need for changes in urban planning in order to pursue sustainable human settlements for all.

Looking ahead, WUF IV will focus on "Harmonious Urbanization: The Challenge of Balanced Territorial Development" supported by six sub-themes discussed through dialogues.

WUF IV DIALOGUES

Dialogue 1: Territorial balance in urban development

Dialogue 1 will examine territorial balance in urban development with the main focus being on the role of urban planning and its ability to harmonize social, environmental and economic considerations in city development. Building on *Reinventing Planning*, the first segment of the dialogue will look at progress made since the last Forum in the context of growing global challenges and trends, such as climate change and the growth of exclusion and slums, migration, and internally displaced persons (IDPs).

Dialogue 2: Promoting social equity and inclusiveness

Dialogue 2 will contribute to the global debate on socially harmonious cities by creating a forum for citizens' representatives, local and central authorities, researchers and professionals across the world. The dialogue will encourage debate on: pro-poor land rights versus unlawful forced evictions; adequate housing for all versus exclusive housing markets; and city wide basic service provision versus service deprived neighbourhoods.

Register at www.unhabitat.org/wuf

Interview with UN-HABITAT Executive Director Dr. Anna Tibajuka

NGLS: This is the fourth World Urban Forum. Building on the past Forums, could you say that there has been an emergence of a larger movement around urbanization and its challenges?

The enlargement of the movement around urbanization and its challenges can be noted when one does a literature search. Before the advent of the World Urban Forum, one could hardly find anything on the urbanization challenges that we are faced with and the process itself. Through the WUF campaign, a global awareness to the realities of urbanization, and the inevitability of it, is becoming almost common household knowledge. We recognize that the work is not yet complete; but we can already claim that we have made progress — as we now have a global movement of people who are aware of our urban future and that our task is simply to secure it.

NGLS: What would you say has been the greatest achievement of these Forums?

I think the greatest achievement of the WUF is to fulfil its purpose of promoting interaction and dialogue between the stakeholders of our sustainable urban future, namely governments, civil society organizations, and the private sector. The WUF, an official yet open-ended meeting of the UN, brings together Habitat Agenda partners to a dialogue wherein the three parties are placed on equal footing. Because of this unique process, developing mutual trust, building confidence, and sharing best practices irrespective of hierarchy and the pecking order can be considered as some of its very big achievements.

WUF has also served as a platform for generating ideas for input into the official system of the UN. For example, the first Forum (Nairobi, 2002) became a preparatory meeting for the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development held later that same year. A campaign originating from the WUF advocated that the issues of sanitation and shelter in addressing the needs of homeless be integrated into the agenda; and that all these were to be articulated in the Johannesburg Declaration and the Johannesburg Programme of Implementation. *Vis-à-vis* the Millennium Development Goals, they cannot be secured unless water, sanitation, and human settlements are secured as an entry point for the rest of the Goals.

NGLS: Do you see any new trends developing around slum dwellers' needs linked to climate change, food insecurity, environmental degradation, etc.?

First of all, there is a question here of cause and effect. A good number of slum-dwellers are also "environmental refugees," i.e. people who are in the slums precisely because of environmental degradation and climate change. This is the case of one-third of Nairobi's slum-dwellers. The city might be green but the rest of Kenya is very dry and is threatened with drought and an advancing desert frontier. People in the countryside have been put out of their livelihood (e.g. the pastureland farming system is slowly becoming not viable).

The example shows how complications from environmental deterioration, coupled with rising population pressure, push people into moving towards cities and towns. Regrettably, the implication is increased costs and pressures on urban areas. In this whole scheme of things, the most vulnerable — of course — are the low-income people.

In the countryside/upcountry, environmental degradation means less food production; therefore, people leave for the cities as they lose the power of self-subsistence. It is interesting to note that there is a correlation between rising food and energy prices and unprecedented rapid urbanization. These things are linked and that is why in UN-HABITAT, we normally recommend a package of interventions to address these issues. As economic thinkers have made it clear, if one has a multi-faceted problem, one needs a multi-pronged, holistic approach to solve it.

Vis-à-vis climate change and rising energy prices, the urban poor are the most vulnerable, even more so than the rural poor. In fact, this has implications in terms of peace and stability in governance because the urban poor, unlike their rural counterparts, have the capacity to riot.

We are now on our way to China where we shall be discussing rural-urban linkages, such as balancing territorial development: how do we promote secondary towns, how do we enhance rural and regional growth — so that people don't have to come and crowd in one place.

NGLS: What main efforts do you think are needed to promote the respect and dignity of marginalized slum residents?

First of all, there is the question of overall human rights. We have to uphold the values and principles as specified in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and to which we have a commitment to ourselves as a global community. Slum dwellers are hard-working and diligent people; but the trouble is that they work so hard to achieve so little. Therefore, it is a question of empowering these people: first of all, by recognizing them as an asset — that they are part of the city and they have rights to the city; and, after recognizing that right, we must try to unleash their energy by removing the institutional bottlenecks that keep them where they are (e.g. giving them rights to land and property, education, skills, credit, etc.).

NGLS: What kinds of partnerships are needed to promote the Habitat Agenda? Which are most effective?

I think that partnerships take us in full circle to where I started when I said that UN-HABITAT is the one programme among the UN family of programmes that is really a local programme — we are an agency that is really working at the local level to achieve global goals. As we work with local governments and communities, we are actually a community development agency. We concern ourselves as brokers. Our main mandate is not really to build houses for everybody; rather, it is to put up an environment within which the houses can be delivered, to develop inclusive cities and to help ensure that the environment can be made much healthier for everybody.



Dialogue 3: Making cities work and economically productive

A city cannot be harmonious if some groups concentrate resources and opportunities while others remain impoverished and deprived. The main objective of Dialogue 3 is to identify policy options that can contribute to reducing income disparities in cities around the world. Key themes to be addressed include: sustained infrastructure development; the provision of adequate finance for urban development; and measures to maximize income benefits of pro-poor employment policies.

Dialogue 4: Harmonizing the built and natural environments

Dialogue 4 will focus on reducing urban poverty and addressing the challenge of slums by improving environmental living conditions, protecting resources and achieving better access to basic urban infrastructure, such as water and sanitation. A special focus will be held on climate change.

Dialogue 5: Preserving the historical roots and soul of the city

Cities represent the way of living of a society and are hubs where different traditions interact and where trans-local identities are developed. Dialogue 5 will devote attention to exploring how heritage, culture and architecture can be deployed to foster urban sustainability at the level of the environment, society and the economy.

Dialogue 6: A city for all generations

Dialogue 6 will discuss how different generations can live harmoniously in a city as demographic and social changes are becoming apparent and demand action. Dialogue 6 aims to sensitize WUF IV and the public on the necessity of including different generations in the creation of harmonious cities. The conclusions and recommendations will be reflected in the Report of the Dialogue and inform interested professionals and policy makers.

ROUNDTABLES

Roundtables are organized by Habitat Agenda partners such as ministers, mayors, the private sector, youth, women, parliamentarians, and others. They are action-oriented events designed for peers to exchange views on key urban issues. WUF IV will include eight roundtables and their themes will be decided by the partners.

The Ministers' Roundtable, which is the High-Level Segment of the WUF, will consider the key issues raised in UN-HABITAT's *2008/9 State of the World's Cities Report (SWCR)*, see page 6, which will be launched during the Forum.

The Roundtable on Women and Harmonious Cities will examine the conditions of cities which exclude women's realities as reflected in their sustainable urbanization policies and practices. It also aims to strengthen linkages among partners working to promote women and gender concerns into the various planning processes, and to explore how women and gender awareness planning can help to create harmonious cities and address the differential impacts of urban development.

The Youth Roundtable, which aims to bring together various stakeholder groups to discuss and make recommendations for maintaining intergenerational balance and harmony for the management of cities, will look at a number of specific topics, including environmental harmony, socio-economic harmony, cultural and generational harmony, and the role of government and planning.

The roundtable will result in concrete recommendations that will be forwarded to UN-HABITAT and to governments; it also aims to promote the Millennium Development Goals World Youth Programme of Action.

NETWORKING EVENTS

WUF IV will include several networking events that are intended to help build knowledge, strengthen existing partnerships and create new linkages between partner organizations. These two-hour events enable a range of actors – including ministers, mayors, community representatives, civil society, academics or business people – to meet and discuss a broad range of issues related to the theme of the Forum in order to foster a better understanding of the challenges posed by rapid urbanization.

The networking events will address a wide scope of issues, such as: localizing global environmental change in South cities; innovative approaches to financing slum upgrading; making MDGs work at local government level; cities beyond oil; harmonious cities – food security and sustainable natural resource management; and housing microfinance: a scalable, market-based tool for improving the shelter conditions of the urban poor, to name a few.



People waiting for water, Tanzania, © UN-HABITAT

CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

Millennium Development Goals and urbanization

Urbanization and its surrounding issues have many links to the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). UN-HABITAT's *2006/7 State of the World Cities Report* revealed that slum dwellers are more likely to die early, suffer malnutrition and disease, be less educated and have fewer employment opportunities than any other segment of the population. Further, the UN Population Division estimates that by the end of 2008, nearly half of humanity will live in cities, meaning some of the most pressing social challenges of rural regions are simply shifting to urban. Ninety-five percent of all urban growth is occurring in developing countries.

Efforts are lagging to achieve Goal 7, which addresses the issue of ensuring environmental sustainability and calls for halving the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation (target 7.C) and achieving a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020 (target 7.D). However, half the population of the developing world still lacks basic sanitation. In order to meet the overarching goals of the MDGs, sustainable social and economic development and environmental protection will have to be rooted in sustainable urbanization, which should include strong government leadership, sound policies and practical strategies for promoting public investment, combined with adequate financial and technical support from the international community.

Food insecurity and urbanization

Earlier this year, over 30 countries around the world saw civil disturbances and food riots caused by food shortages that were triggered by higher prices and linked to escalating energy prices, an increase in biofuels, lack of investment in agriculture, increasing demand, trade distortion subsidies and recurrent bad weather. The World Bank estimates that about 100 million people have been pushed deeper into poverty, creating “newly-hungry populations.” The World Food Programme (WFP) finds that the new face of hunger that is emerging from this global crisis is more urban than it has been before. Hardest hit are the urban poor and UN-HABITAT figures indicate that 71.9% of urban Africans live in slums, 46% for Asia and a little over 30% for Latin America and the Caribbean.

The food crisis is putting at risk the achievement of MDG 1 – which calls for the proportion of people who suffer from hunger to be halved between 1990 and 2015 – as well as other internationally agreed development goals. At the same time, there is growing awareness that food security policies need to be mainstreamed across sectors. In April 2008 UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon set up a Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis. The Task Force recently established a Comprehensive Framework for Action (CFA) that identifies both immediate and longer term actions that need to begin now and operate in parallel to address the food crisis, to urgently meet immediate needs of vulnerable populations and to build longer term resilience, contribute to global food and nutrition security as well as poverty reduction within the context of the MDGs.

Climate change and urbanization

Climate change, primarily an urban problem, is a global phenomenon and its impacts are being felt locally—in cities, towns, and other human settlements in the rural areas. However, approximately 75% of the greenhouse gas emissions are generated by cities or for city consumers. Because of rapid urbanization, mainly in developing countries, cities are more at risk, as climate change impacts add to and reinforce existing environmental, economic and social problems, while bringing new challenges.

The challenge is to link climate change to local environmental and developmental priorities. UN-HABITAT and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) are working together in cities to address local environment issues that have global impacts. However, city-to-city partnerships between developed and developing country cities need to be established so that local governments can be working together globally to reduce climate change. In 2008 the Sustainable Urban Development Network (SUD-Net) was launched in order to help strengthen the performance of local governments to enhance climate change mitigation and adaptation measures in developing countries.

UN-HABITAT is also working in partnerships with international, regional and local financial institutions to mobilize requisite finance for investments into affordable housing and urban infrastructure so that climate change issues can be tackled within a broader framework of sustainable housing and urban development. This broader framework includes a holistic approach to participatory governance, urban environmental planning and management, and the harnessing of ecologically sound technologies. At the same time, it requires new forms of partnerships with all major stakeholders, not least the people and the communities themselves, and from gender and age perspectives.

WUF IV PRIVATE SECTOR CONSULTATION

On 4 November, from 9am to 12 pm, a Private Sector Consultation will be held under the theme of “Corporate Responsibility Towards Harmonious Cities.” Given the challenge of urban poverty, with 1 billion slum dwellers projected to rise to more than 1.4 billion by 2020, UN-HABITAT recognizes that the private sector is not merely a part of the solution, but instead is a vital partner that must be engaged if the world’s cities are to achieve sustainability.

The Consultation aims to bring together business entities committed to corporate responsibility and improving the lives of the urban poor towards harmonious cities. It also aims to identify key steps for improving the contribution to the

urban poor through bottom-of-the-pyramid market approaches and agree on core business principles to corporate responsibility for sustainable urbanization.

Expected outputs include a set of recommendations to UN-HABITAT and other partners on steps for improving the contribution to the urban poor through bottom-of-the-pyramid market approaches; and a set of core business principles on corporate responsibility for sustainable urbanization. The Consultation will bring together leaders from the business and industry, policy experts, representatives of communities and other stakeholders working with the business sector.

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WUF IV CSO/NGO CONSULTATION

Historically, 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. Importantly, CSOs/NGOs constitute the largest partner group of WUF.

A three-hour CSO/NGO Consultation will be held on 5 November from 9am to 12 pm that addresses the theme “CSOs/NGOs: Partners and Catalysts for Sustainable Urbanization and Harmonious Cities.” The Consultation aims to provide an interactive platform for CSOs/NGOs to discuss issues of sustainable urbanization and the goal of harmonious cities and to strengthen their capacity. Another objective is to discuss and comment on a draft CSOs/NGOs strategy paper prepared by UN-HABITAT.

The Consultation will also address a number of questions, including, among others: How can CSOs/NGOs be engaged in order to influence sustainable urbanization policies and strategies? What is the role of South-South and North-South cooperation in exchanging experiences and building capacity? The Consultation will allow participants to establish collaboration and strategic partnerships and will bring together umbrella CSOs/NGOs from Africa, Asia and Latin America as well as from other regions, namely Northern America and Europe.

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WUF IV CIVIL SOCIETY INTERVIEWS

In the lead-up to World Urban Forum IV, three civil society organizations working on sustainable urbanization issues were interviewed. Below, they provide their perspectives and views on WUF IV.

HABITAT INTERNATIONAL COALITION

NGLS: HIC has been active since the early 1970s pressuring governments to follow up on the recommendations they have endorsed around urbanization. Looking back over the past 30 years, what areas would you say have seen real progress, and in what terms?

Some progress has been made in the following areas, notably in what concerns a greater worldwide awareness of the existence of these major problems, but much work still has to be carried out in order to reach a satisfactory solution:

- The progressive recognition by the States of economic, social and cultural rights (ESCR).
- The development of the right to adequate housing (RAH) to facilitate the defense and reparation of the victims of violations.
- The awareness on the planet’s progressive global environmental suicide to protect the habitat of the most vulnerable social sectors.
- The progressive implementation of the gender-justice approach in housing policies to facilitate gender equity.

- The confirmation that people's assets are indispensable in providing housing and formulating sound housing policies, as has been verified by the social production of habitat (SPH).
- The capacities of social organizations and movements to resist the negative social, material and spatial impacts of the neoliberal housing and urban policies.

NGLS: The Women and Shelter (WAS) Network is one of the networks that helps carry out the Coalition's work. Going into WUF IV, what are some of the main issues this Network will be mobilizing around?

The HIC WAS Network is working on women's equal rights to adequate housing and their access to and ownership of land. This because women all over the world – in high-income as well as low-income countries – still experience violations of these rights.

Drawing from the seven Consultations on Women and Housing Rights [held from 2002–2006 that aimed to identify obstacles that impede women's enjoyment of their right to housing] and from the reports of the UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing, a number of issues can be identified that seem to be of general importance in the international field of women and housing.

The following list can be understood as possible intervention axes to improve the housing and land rights situation with a gender perspective in mind. The ten main issues are: structural discrimination; women's legally protected rights to adequate housing and land; intersectional/multiple discrimination; gender-based violence; globalization and economic liberalization; forced evictions; environmental destruction and disasters; urbanization and migration; armed and ethnic conflicts; and knowledge and understanding of contexts.

NGLS: Cities are faced with constant challenges. Has the Coalition found creative ways to overcome some of the problems urbanization poses?

Since the start of the millennium, HIC has been working on the "right to the city," a worldwide strategy for the democratic and equitable planning, production, management and enjoyment of the city, through the strengthening of community coexistence and the rescue of public space, based on the social function of the city. We have been contributing to the implementation of this strategy, which we consider to be the cornerstone of collective, social and economic interests, especially of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, while respecting the different urban cultures and the urban-rural balance. We are seeking the equitable usufruct of cities within the principles of sustainability, democracy, equity and social justice.

We are seeking for the human rights in the city based on the overriding principles of self-determination, nondiscrimination, interdependence and indivisibility of rights, equality, gender equity, nonregression and progressive realization, priority attention to persons and collectives in vulnerable situations, solidarity and cooperation, responsibility in accordance with capacities and resources, transparency, and accountability. WUF IV could be a small step in the long run for the implementation of housing rights and the human rights in the city.

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SHACK/SLUM DWELLERS INTERNATIONAL (SDI)

NGLS: Can you give us some background on SDI and how it operates?

SDI works with organized communities of the urban poor in 33 countries to open spaces for a more politically informed and financially equitable approach to urban development. Recognizing that slum dwellers, especially the women in these communities, have always been the authors and architects of their settlements, SDI has developed a set of rituals that enable communities to broker deals with governments and to participate in the design, innovation and construction of pro-poor cities.

The federations developed these rituals for mobilizing communities and building their capacity to negotiate with the city government. These include collecting community savings (which is more than microcredit and includes savings for their future house as well), mapping urban poor settlements, creating cadastre maps, gathering data at the settlement and household level, and building life-size house model exhibitions. An important element of the house construction process is a joint reflection on costs and affordability. This homework is essential if the community is to design a financial plan that is within their means.

NGLS: Can you tell us about SDI's Urban Poor Funds and how they operate?

The Urban Poor Fund International (UPFI) is a financial facility for slum upgrading and relocation that can weave together monetary packages to support the development initiatives of the most vulnerable members of every city – the unbankable poor. For SDI it is just one more ritual to mobilize communities to change their relationship with cities and other actors in their cities. Having access to flexible funding gives them the space to negotiate more confidently with banks and housing finance institutions and build advantageous partnerships. This fund has provided SDI affiliates with US\$4.5 million, which has been leveraged in turn to over US\$35 million of infrastructure and housing stock. It has also generated considerable social and political capital for SDI affiliates.

NGLS: How do you bring the voice of the urban poor to global forums?

So much of the development sector is made up of professionals who speak on behalf of the poor. For SDI, the primary goal of all international forums is always to bring the voice of the urban poor into the global development arena, by creating spaces for slum dwellers to speak about their issues themselves. Significant energy continues to be invested in exploring and developing more equal partnerships between slum dwellers and their agencies, which have direct relevance and impact on tenure security and settlement upgrading.

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SHELTER FORUM (KENYA)

NGLS: Shelter Forum has been active since 1990 to champion the cause of shelter, particularly to ensure the marginalized groups get better access to decent and affordable housing in Kenya. In the Forum's experience, what are some of the current issues affecting marginalized groups the most?

Marginalized groups in urban areas in Kenya are faced with many challenges. Low income is one of the major challenges facing these groups. It is a key problem because it makes it extremely difficult for them to effectively deal with other challenges facing them. With low income, they find it difficult to get to meet other necessities such as adequate food and decent housing. Many live on a meal a day, and sometimes go to bed hungry.

Lack of basic amenities including water and sanitation in addition to poor housing are other major issues. The informal settlements (slums) are characterized by poor housing, made of mud and wattle, rusty iron sheets or even carton paper. The settlements have no drainage systems and no places for garbage disposal. Where they do exist, a few pit latrines serve hundreds of people, forcing many to use other very unhygienic ways to dispose of their waste, such as polythene paper.

Access to the informal settlements is another major issue. The paths are narrow and muddy presenting a real challenge especially to people with disabilities and children. In the absence of toilets, many people throw human waste on the paths, compounding the situation.

While several development agencies and private individuals have put up water points from which those in need can purchase water, the charges for this service are often quite high, higher than rates charged by official public agencies such as Local Authorities. Many are thus forced to get water from dangerous sources including contaminated ponds and streams.

The settlements are located on either public or private land. This poses another major challenge, i.e. insecure tenure. The land is owned by local authorities, government agencies, companies or private individuals who often evict the illegal squatters at will, without or with very short notice. The lack of tenure security, apart from exposing the marginal groups to violation of their human rights through evictions, also hinders them from improving their housing since they are reluctant to invest in housing knowing that they can lose all their investments at any time.

Finally, in terms of governance, marginal groups lack space to contribute to decision making in their areas and on issues that affect them directly. Governance institutions do not have space for them to make contributions and often decisions are made as if they do not matter.

NGLS: How do you work to redress inadequate policies on housing rights, specifically those that fail to protect the rights of women, children and other marginalized groups?

Shelter Forum works at different levels and through different methods in an effort to redress inadequate policies. It engages the communities themselves to mobilize them so that they themselves are in a position to champion their rights. This is done through coalition building and networking. Shelter Forum helps them to link up with other groups so that they have strength in numbers. Capacity building and sharpening of skills in diverse areas including advocacy and lobbying is also done so that they are in a better position to engage policy makers and service providers at both the local and national levels.

Shelter Forum also directly engages policy makers and implementers at the local and national levels to influence policy making and implementation. This is often done in collaboration with other civil society organizations. Shelter Forum actively participates in policy formulation and in the enactment of relevant legislation.

Shelter Forum also has frequent one-on-one meetings with relevant authorities to discuss specific issues affecting slum dwellers, ranging from evictions, pro-

vision of land and social amenities to providing space for their participation in decision making.

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State of the World's Cities 2008/9: Harmonious Cities

State of the World's Cities 2008/9, to be launched during WUF IV, challenges some general assumptions: capital and large cities do not host the most disadvantaged, slum neighbourhoods as conventional wisdom dictates, and not all secondary cities are more deprived than large cities, as recent studies have suggested. In general, the poorest regions of the world tend to host the largest slum populations who suffer from multiple shelter deprivations. These differentiated levels of social inequality and exclusion can adversely affect cities and regions' social and economic development.

State of the World's Cities 2008/9 adopts the concept of "Harmonious Cities" as a theoretical framework in order to understand today's urban world, and also as an operational tool to confront the most important challenges facing urban areas and their development processes. It recognizes that harmony in cities hinges on two key pillars: equity and sustainability. For that purpose, it focuses on three key areas: spatial or regional harmony; social harmony; and environmental harmony. The report also assesses the various intangible assets within cities that contribute to harmony, such as cultural heritage, sense of place and memory and the complex set of social and symbolic relationships that give cities meaning. It argues that these intangible assets represent the soul of the city and are as important for harmonious urban development as tangible assets.

UN-HABITAT and Youth

World Urban Youth Forum, 1-2 November 2008

Globally, children and young people under 24 account for roughly 40% of the global population. They are on the frontline of growing urban poverty, child trafficking, sexual exploitation, high unemployment, and the growing phenomenon of street children. UN-HABITAT argues that even simple improvements in the living conditions of slum families will enable children to reach maturity and give them the head start they need. Furthermore, working with young men and women and understanding their diverse abilities, realities and experiences is an essential element in achieving sustainable urbanization that promotes urban youth empowerment.

Child and youth-friendly policies are an effective tool to meeting the needs of ever-changing urban communities. Local governments that research, adapt, and utilize child and youth friendly policies invest in the long-term health and sustainability of their cities. Research indicates that when communities and local governments support the full and active participation of young people in their development, the benefits have a ripple effect, improving society as a whole.

Other activities around the World Urban Youth Forum and WUF IV will include the Youth Roundtable, networking events, the global network of young councilors, urban expressions, urban youth and sports, and a youth exhibition as well as a number of special events, including the launch of the Opportunities Youth Fund and the launch of the Youth Advisory Council.

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