

**Statement by Mr. Jamil Ahmad, Director (UN II) Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Islamabad, on Agenda Item 53: Implementation of the Outcome of the Second UN Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat-II) and Strengthening of the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) - 01 November 2005**

**Mr. Chairman,**

My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the Representative of Jamaica on behalf of G-77 and China.

2. We thank the Secretary-General for his report on Implementation of the outcome of the Second UN Conference on Human Settlements (-Habitat-II) and strengthening of the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT ) as contained in document A/60/168.

3. Since its transformation, a few years ago, from the UN Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) to the UN Human Settlement Programme, UN-HABITAT is growing as the lead UN agency on international efforts concerning human settlements. Among the developing countries who favoured this transformation, Pakistan was prominent.

4. We recognize UN-HABITAT's contribution in work relating to disaster mitigation and post-conflict assistance. Activities of UN-Habitat in areas of technical assistance and cooperation at the country level are also proving useful.

**Mr. Chairman,**

5. The Secretary-General, in his report, has correctly pointed out that slum upgrading provides a unique opportunity for attaining the MDGs. Security of tenure and improvements in shelter water and sanitation have salutary effects in other areas, in particular health and nutrition, reduction of vulnerability to HIV/AIDS and other diseases.

6. A lot more needs to be done if we are to realize significant improvement in the lives of 100 million slum dwellers by 2020. Like other areas, in this one too accelerated and concerted efforts at the international level are required. Pakistan has, therefore, stood for strengthening UN-HABITAT, so as to better place it in playing its part in facilitating progress towards achieving the MDGs targets.

7. The need for pro-poor policies with a focus on tenure security in particular for slum dwellers, and access to affordable housing is now even greater in view of the growth in population and increase in the number of slums. The CSD-13 and the World Summit 2005 have underlined the adoption of an integrated approach to Human Settlement Development, water and sanitation involving multiple actors and multiple sectors. The World Summit 2005 has also emphasized urgent provision of increased resources.

**Mr. Chairman,**

8. For such an integrated approach to be result-oriented, it will be necessary to:

1) Further expand technical assistance to developing countries including training and capacity building,

2) Identify disaster prone areas and formulate mitigation strategies, rapid response to post-disaster and pos-conflict situations, and

3) Provide sustained technical assistance in reconstruction efforts.

9. We also believe that in order to strengthen UN-HABITAT, the following steps will be crucial:

Introducing an effective balance in the normative and operational activities of UN-HABITAT. Given its limited resources it is important for UN-HABITAT to identify and focus on a few critical areas of its mandate for operational activities.

Improving Inter-agency cooperation in the field of Human Settlements and other cross-cutting issues; for this purpose, it will be helpful if UN-HABITAT becomes a member of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee.

Strengthening the capacity of UN-HABITAT for providing prompt assistance in post-conflict and post-disaster situations. To avoid growth of new slums, Human settlement experts should be involved as early as possible in post-conflict and disaster assessment and reconstruction.

For governments, in a position to do so, to strengthen UN-HABITAT by providing non-earmarked, predictable funding and regular budget resources for its core programme activities;

Mobilizing support for the UN Human Settlement Foundation and its Slum Upgrading Facility

Streamlining the functions of various branches/divisions of the UN-HABITAT Secretariat to ensure better coordination on cross-cutting issues. The recent appointment of the Deputy Executive Director, which was long due, we hope will address this issue.

Giving balanced and proportionate representation to the developing countries in the recruitment of personnel, while keeping in view the principle of equitable geographical representation.

**Mr. Chairman,**

10. Pakistan is faced with challenges of urbanization. Out of its more than 150 million population, urban population constitutes about 33% and is increasing at the rate of 4% per annum. This has resulted in overcrowding of cities, taxing further, the already inadequate civic amenities and services. It is estimated that about 40% of the total urban population lives in katchi abadis/slums. Currently, there is an acute shortage of housing units. According to estimates, the number of housing units required is 5.5 million with an annual increase of 270,000 units. The Government has taken several measures to address the problem. These include:

Regularization of katchi abadis/slums and slum upgrading programme by granting ownership rights to dwellers at the same location, if possible;

Consultation with and involvement of local communities in development of physical infrastructure in slum areas targeted for upgrading.

Establishing new housing projects for middle and low-income people.

Encouraging private sector to invest in the housing sector.

11. Apart from national activities, Pakistan is also involved at the regional level in supporting several initiatives. Pakistan will be hosting the Second South Asian Conference on Sanitation (sacosan-2005) in Islamabad in the near future.

**Mr. Chairman,**

12. The devastating earthquake that struck parts of Northern Pakistan and Azad Kashmir on 08 October, has left behind a trail of death and destruction. Beside killing more than 55,000 people and injuring many more, it has completely destroyed physical infrastructure of the affected region. More than 3.5 million people have been rendered homeless and shelter-less. It will require a Herculean effort to restore normalcy. The damage is colossal and the challenge of reconstruction even bigger. With the assistance and support of the international community, and with a strong resolve, we are determined to undertake the reconstruction task through a coordinated effort. We would like to emphasize early involvement of human settlement experts in the assessment and reconstruction of the affected areas.

**Mr. Chairman,**

13. The World Urban Forum of UN-HABITAT provides a useful forum for interaction of all stakeholders to discuss and refine strategies relating to human settlements. We are, therefore, looking forward to a fruitful third session of the World Urban Forum in Vancouver, Canada in 2006. We hope the World Urban Forum will help increase global partnerships and enhance implementation of targets of MDG 7.

14. Pakistan remains committed to implement its international obligations in order to attain sustainable development. With the support of the international community we shall strive for providing safe and healthy living conditions for our people.

**I thank you Mr. Chairman.**