



**STATEMENT DELIVERED ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY MRS. SUHAYFA ZIA, COUNSELLOR, PERMANENT MISSION OF SOUTH AFRICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ON THE ELECTION OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE UNITED NATIONS HUMAN SETTLEMENTS PROGRAMME (UN-Habitat) (New York, 28 June 2006)**

The Group of 77 and China concurs with the Secretary General's decision to nominate Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka as Executive Director of UN-Habitat for another term of four years. Since her appointment as Executive Director of UN-Habitat, she has proven herself worthy of leading this important programme by working hard to analyse the issues and challenges to sustainable urbanisation – an issue that is of great relevance to the developing world.

Her leadership qualities which guided issues of sustainable urbanisation, prompted the General Assembly to upgrade the old Habitat Centre into a fully-fledged programme of the United Nations. The Group of 77 and China holds this decision dearly, as it was sponsored by the Group.

The Group of 77 and China commends the progress made in the first 4 years of UN-Habitat in its new capacity as a programme. Ms. Tibaijuka has untiringly raised the visibility and profile of both the issues and the programme. In particular, we have noted with satisfaction the active role being played by UN-Habitat in assisting Member States to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, especially Target 10 on water and sanitation and Target 11 on slum upgrading. In this regard, we urge our development partners to give the Executive Director of UN-Habitat the financial support required. The youngest programme in the UN system plays an important role towards achieving sustainable development. Unfortunately the resources dispensed to the programme are disproportionate to its task.

We are all acutely aware of the problems facing the world. Recently, at the Third World Urban Forum in Vancouver, Canada, we were once again alerted to the fact that one of the most pressing issues facing the world today is rapid urbanisation in a world where half of humanity lives in cities and where in the next 50 years that proportion is expected to reach two-thirds of the global population. Most of this urban growth is taking place in developing countries where the major challenge is to combat poverty and provide better access to basic shelter and services, like clean water and sanitation.

The Group of 77 and China would like to emphasize that, during the ongoing reform process within the United Nations, programmes like UN-Habitat, which have a clear and unique mandate, should not be sacrificed or diluted by this exercise. Instead such pro-poor programmes, which are so intricately linked to sustainable development in a rapidly globalizing world, should be bolstered and strengthened.

Once again, we wish to renew our confidence in the leadership of Ms. Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka, as she has proven herself in her last term to champion the cause of sustainable urbanisation. We particularly commend her participation in the follow up on the work on the Commission for Africa on urbanization in Africa.

Her humanity and humility were so aptly expressed during the Third World Urban Forum, when she introduced to the gathering her student as well as her old teacher, whom she attributed her professional success to, as it was due to her encouragement that Ms. Tibaijuka excelled in her debating team and so developed the requisite skills for promoting and creatively leading such a programme. We look forward to the next four years of her visionary approach around issues of sustainable urbanisation as well as on finding the balance between urban rural linkages so touchingly depicted by the little Kenyan Moipei sisters singing at the Third World Urban Forum.

The Group of 77 and China wishes Ms Tibaijuka all the success in her new term and we look forward to working with her once again.

I thank you.