



Press Release - Press Release - Press Release

ComHabitat
Queens House, 16 Queens Road, Coventry, CV1 3DF, United Kingdom
Kim Mullard Canadian cell phone +1 604 724 3908
UK cell phone +44 (0) 7771 884489

For immediate use
19-Jun-06

Commonwealth statement on importance of human settlements in reducing poverty

On the eve of the third World Urban Forum, Commonwealth ministers met together with ComHabitat partners from civil society and local government to discuss their concerns about need to address urban poverty issues in national poverty reduction strategies. A summary of their discussions was delivered to the Forum by the Chair of the Commonwealth Consultative Group on Human Settlements (CCGHS), the Hon. Reginald Farley, Minister of Housing and Lands, Barbados.

The World Urban Forum, held every two years, was established by the United Nations to examine one of the most pressing issues facing the world today: rapid urbanization 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. ComHabitat research has shown that there is general lack of focus on urban poverty issues in Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers. This oversight prevents governments and donors being able to take advantage of the opportunities within urban areas to address poverty and meet the Millennium Development Goals.

Commonwealth Ministers recognized the critical importance of including concerns related to the provision of adequate shelter for all, with secure tenure and access to essential services, and sustainable urbanization, in policies and strategies aimed at reducing poverty and stimulating economic growth.

Ministers therefore called upon:

- Governments, donors and other Habitat Agenda partners to further the inclusion of human settlements concerns and the challenges resulting from the rapid urbanisation of poverty in PRSPs and other national development frameworks.
- Donors to recognise that adequate shelter for all, with secure tenure and access to essential services, good governance and sustainable urbanisation should be treated as central concerns within policies and strategies aimed at reducing poverty, localising the MDGs and stimulating economic growth.
- Donors to dedicate a substantial increase in resources to these concerns, providing reliable funding for sustainable human settlements development in the medium- to long-term.
- Donors to support efforts to localise the MDGs and to promote local democracy and good governance in line with internationally recognised standards such as the Aberdeen Agenda: Commonwealth Principles on Good Practice for Local Democracy and Good Governance.
- All Habitat Agenda partners to work together towards the rapid and comprehensive implementation of the Agenda, and the necessary investment in capacity to bring this about. An important element of such capacity is the creation of reliable, appropriate and timely data collection to support policy development and the monitoring of progress.

If you would like more information about the statement, or about ComHabitat more generally, please contact Kim Mullard, during the World Urban Forum on +1 604 724 3908 or +44 7771 884489 or see www.comhabitat.org

Notes to the Editor:

What is CCGHS?

The Commonwealth Consultative Group on Human Settlements (CCGHS) established by the Commonwealth Secretary-General in 1998. The CCGHS is an intergovernmental group made up of Ministers who are responsible for implementing the Habitat Agenda in their own countries. At its first meeting the CCGHS adopted a Commonwealth goal of: “Demonstrated progress towards adequate shelter for all with secure tenure and access to essential services in every community by 2015”.

What is ComHabitat?

ComHabitat is a partnership of the intergovernmental Commonwealth Consultative Group on Human Settlements (CCGHS) and agencies from government, local government, civil society and the private sector. ComHabitat aims to promote and monitor the implementation of the Habitat Agenda, the Commonwealth Goal and associated Millennium Development Goals within and between Commonwealth countries. It focuses on networking and sharing practical examples of progress in implementation. See www.comhabitat.org for more information.

What is the Commonwealth?

The Commonwealth is an association of 53 countries. Its 1.8 billion citizens, about 30 per cent of the world's population, are drawn from the broadest range of faiths, races, cultures and traditions. Members range from vast countries like Canada to small island states such as Vanuatu, but members share a common working language and similar legal, political and educational systems. The Commonwealth also has a tradition of working through consensus based on shared values. See www.thecommonwealth.org for more information.

What is the Habitat Agenda?

The Habitat Agenda is the main document that came out of the United Nations' 1996 Conference on Human Settlements in Istanbul. It has been adopted by all members of the Commonwealth. The Habitat Agenda contains commitments on adequate shelter for all and sustainable human settlements in an urbanising world.

What is the World Urban Forum?

The World Urban Forum, held every two years, was established by the United Nations to examine one of the most pressing issues facing the world today: rapid urbanization 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. Cities in wealthier nations also face problems of urbanization—like crumbling infrastructure, smog and social exclusion.

The Government of Canada is hosting the third session of the World Urban Forum, in Vancouver, from 19 to 23 June 2006. The main theme of the Forum is *Our Future: Sustainable Cities – Turning Ideas into Action*. See www.wuf3-fum3.ca for more information.