



STATEMENT BY MR. T.C. GEHOLT, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT AND MEMBER OF THE INDIAN DELEGATION, ON AGENDA ITEM 55: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OUTCOME OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS [HABITAT II] AND STRENGTHENING OF THE UNITED NATIONS HUMAN SETTLEMENTS PROGRAMME [UN-HABITAT] AT THE SECOND COMMITTEE OF THE 62<sup>ND</sup> SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON OCTOBER 31, 2007

Madam Chairperson,

We thank the Secretary-General for his report on this agenda item. We associate ourselves with the statement made by the Chair of the Group of 77.

Madam Chairperson,

We welcome the adoption of the Medium-term Plan of UN-Habitat for 2008-2013. We look forward to early implementation of the resource mobilization plans. India has always highlighted the importance of housing finance to the poor. We hope that UN-Habitat will now be able to provide longer-term finance to domestic financial institutions.

We also express satisfaction at the adoption by the Governing Council of guidelines on strengthening of local authorities. India has always involved them in decision-making and implementation. Our efforts have involved empowering local authorities, with greater representation to all sections of society.

Madam Chairperson,

In the year 2007, global urban population has overtaken the global rural population for the first time in history. A majority of the world population now lives in cities and towns. This trend is expected to continue. It is estimated that by 2025, more than two thirds of the global population will be in cities. Our ability to address urban poverty, urban pollution, urban planning and urban governance will influence our overall well-being in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Madam Chairperson,

India has recently launched an integrated programme to promote sustainable development of cities. Titled "Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission", its implementation includes development of seven basic services to the poor, namely, land tenure, affordable shelter, water, sanitation, education, health and social security.

There are also a number of programmes that promote affordable housing in rural areas. For example, the "Indira Awaas Yojna" aims at reaching out to the rural poor with grant-in-aid for construction of dwelling units and upgradation of temporary houses. We also recognise that the problem of shelter is intricately linked to the eradication of poverty. Policies and programmes of the Government of India give a special focus on improving employment and livelihood in rural areas. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, the Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojna (Golden Jubilee Village Self-Employment Plan) and other programmes aim to generate rural employment opportunities.

Madam Chairperson,

Within the framework of South-South cooperation, India has been sharing appropriate technology, particularly in the field of cost-effective, environment friendly and disaster resistant construction. Further, India was happy to host the first Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development last December.

Allow me to conclude, Madam Chairperson, by expressing our support to UN-Habitat.

Thank You.

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