

Agenda Item 21. Implementation of the Outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and Strengthening the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)

M. President,

First of all, I would like to congratulate you on your election as President of the 2nd Commission. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Secretary General and the Secretariat for the excellent report on the implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements and strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat).

M. President,

Today, one out of two inhabitants on earth is an urban dweller, and this irreversible trend is bound to continue in the future. In 2030, all developing countries, notably in Asia and Africa, will count more urban than rural dwellers. These figures clearly demonstrate that urbanisation is increasingly becoming the chosen way of occupying space and, therefore, should be managed and planned with the utmost attention.

In this respect, we notice that on the one hand, dynamic urban agglomerations in developed countries are booming as centres of multiple economic transitions and progress, on the other hand, in developing countries, we witness an unbridled expansion, mainly resulting from rapid and uncontrolled population growth.

These cities, in particular those in the developing world, are far from providing equal opportunities and fair conditions to their respective communities. The increase in social inequalities is particularly acute in those cities, combining in many cases extreme wealth and poverty and leading to social instability and insecurity, not to mention the social and economic costs that exceed by far the means and capacities available to these urban poles.

This urban sprawl, which led to slums' expansion, is often connected to – and is often the consequence of – a rise in poverty, as well as an erosion of social cohesion and traditional production and consumption models.

However, thanks to appropriate policies and the support of UN-Habitat in particular, a number of countries managed to curb slums expansion and improve the living conditions of their populations.

According to UN-Habitat, the living conditions of 227 million people in developing countries have significantly improved between 2000 and 2010. In other words, the target 7-D of the Millennium Development Goals, which consists of '*Significantly improving the living conditions for at least 100 million slum-dwellers by 2020*', has largely been achieved worldwide, and well before the set date of 2020.

Nevertheless, these important achievements must not mislead us, so that we forget the wide disparities at regional, national and sub-national levels. For this reason, a new strategy should be developed and adapted to the different national contexts, to ensure that every country is enabled to reduce by half, by 2020, the proportion of population living in substandard housing.

I would also like to point out that urban development and planning should integrate risk management strategies, since urban poles are increasingly facing two interconnected phenomena, namely population growth and environmental degradation. This task should, however, be addressed in a concerted way, between governmental decision makers, local authorities and civil society, in order to optimize the implementation of the development projects in the cities.

M. President,

Since its Independence, the Kingdom of Morocco has experienced an accelerated urbanisation process, which has resulted, in some cases, in urban planning deficiency in large urban agglomerations. This situation has resulted in the emergence of anarchical constructions and large slum areas.

To cope with this situation, Morocco has implemented appropriate policies aimed at eradicating slums and better managing urban areas. Among the most important initiatives taken in the context of these efforts include:

- Morocco has initiated, during the last decade, various structuring projects and major reforms, including a government strategy regarding urban development and an urban planning code. The Nationwide Programme called 'Cities without Slums', launched in 2004, aims to improve the living conditions of more than 1,700,000 inhabitants of inadequate and unsafe settlements. This Programme has reached today an achievement rate of more 70%.
- The implemented programmes have led to the eradication of 50% of slums, and managed to reduce by more than half the slum population (from 378.000 to 180.000 households);
- The creation of new urban poles to increase the cities' capacities and promote a sustainable and environmentally sound urban planning, and this, in harmony with the spirit and objectives of the National Chart of Environment and Sustainable Development, adopted in April 2010;
- Pursuing this active policy, Morocco aspires to create 15 new cities by 2020. The creation of new urban centres is a fundamental pillar of the national programme aiming at addressing the challenge of inadequate housing;

Morocco's experience and efforts in the field of urban planning, notably in the fight against inadequate housing, have been recognized internationally. In this respect, the report entitled '*State of the World's Cities 2010/2011*', ranked Morocco second in the world for the percentage of urban population lifted out of substandard housing conditions during the 2000-2010 period;

Likewise, Morocco's efforts were rewarded by the '2010 UN-Habitat Scroll of Honour' in recognition of its *'delivering one of the world's most successful and comprehensive slum reduction and improvement programmes'*.

The Moroccan urban development model has been also praised by various countries facing similar difficulties in the fight against substandard housing. To share its experience, the Kingdom of Morocco stands ready to strengthen South-South Cooperation, through the involvement of its urban agencies network, in order to contribute in setting the basis for a fruitful cooperation in the field of territorial planning and urban policies.

M. President,

Building on this experience in the fight against substandard housing, Morocco will host in his capital city, Rabat, from 26th to the 28th November 2012, in collaboration with UN-Habitat, an International Conference entitled *"Making Slums history: a worldwide challenge for 2020"*. This meeting is part of the follow-up to the MDGs Target 7.D, aimed at improving the living conditions of slum dwellers. It is expected to assemble delegates and experts from 40 countries willing to exchange their best policies for the improvement of the living conditions of urban marginalized populations.

M. President,

Before concluding, my delegation wishes to take this opportunity to:

- Welcome the holding in 2016 of the Third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) to boost the global campaign in favour of sustainable urbanization;
- Praise the support of UN-Habitat in order to promote cities that are socially and ecologically sustainable and capable of providing adequate housing for all;
- Reiterate its support to UN-Habitat, and encourage it to work towards optimizing its functions and decisions to the new global challenges.