

**Madame Chairperson,**

Let me begin by saying that UN-HABITAT is fully committed to the sustainable development agenda and the CSD process.

We all know that access to land is essential for human shelter, food production and other economic activities, both by businesses and natural resource users. More importantly, we have learnt at UN-HABITAT that securing rights to land and property encourages people to invest in improving both dwellings and the land itself. They can also enable people to access public services and sources of credit.

In order to do these things it is UN-HABITAT's view that is important to shift our strategic focus from land ownership to security of tenure. Forced eviction, which is increasingly sharply, is a dramatic consequence of insecurity of tenure. Evictions not only cause personal suffering, destroy livelihoods and investments, but also reduce available housing stocks just when they need to increase dramatically. We also know that when evictions occur, the poor, weak, women and children and other vulnerable groups suffer the most. Eviction often leads to the creation of new un-authorized settlements elsewhere, only moving the problem from one location to another at great social, economic, environmental, and occasionally political cost. We at UN-HABITAT believe that alternative solutions to forced evictions should be promoted. We can assist governments to provide these alternatives.

We also know that in cities, peri-urban and rural areas, insecure tenure and informal settlements combine with other factors – unplanned, congested development, safety concerns and social vulnerability – to reduce public revenues, infrastructure investment, employment and economic growth. We therefore believe that sustainable development cannot take place in a context where the bulk of human settlements are unplanned and populations are exposed to hazardous, unsanitary and insecure living conditions.

At UN-HABITAT, we are documenting a range of land and property rights that can also facilitate other rights and opportunities. These include the right to political participation, access to basic services and to credit. We are pleased to report that there is an increasing worldwide convergence of views that individual titling alone is not delivering security of tenure for all. Governments are therefore encouraged to investigate a menu of options to document land rights in their respective countries, including drawing lessons from *de facto* rights. We now know that no single form of tenure can meet the different needs of all social groups. It is clear that a range of land tenure options can enable both women and men from all social groups to meet their changing needs over time. Legal recognition for different forms of tenure can also strengthen the development of dynamic land markets in highly populated areas. UN-HABITAT's recent publication on "Secure Land Rights for All" launched during

CSD 16 explores a range of experiences and practices useful for policy-makers to make secure land rights for all a reality in their respective countries.

A number of governments have, to varying degrees, recognised a range of land rights including customary rights as legitimate. Also, some functional alternative systems to document land rights and transactions have emerged. Still, most governments continue to grapple with conflicting sets of tenure rules (and relevant institutions), particularly in Africa and Asia. These tensions can be exacerbated by multiple layers of legislation and fragmented institutional responsibilities for land allocation which leads to widespread uncertainty, insecurity and disputes, consequently inhibiting investment in land development and to reduced prospects for sustainable urbanisation.

I thank you for your kind attention