



**Statement by
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On behalf of

**Mrs. Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka
Under-Secretary-General and
Executive Director
UN-HABITAT**

**At
Fourteenth Commission on Sustainable Development**

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Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The magnitude of energy consumed per capita has become, for good or for bad, one of the key indicators of modernization, progress and economic development. And it is in our human settlements, our towns and cities, where the vast bulk of energy is consumed. If cities are the “engines of growth and development”, our engines, in turn, require energy. And it is in the cities of the current global economy that energy will be consumed more and more quickly than at any time in human history.

However, the benefits of modern energy supplies and services are unevenly distributed and have yet to reach over a third of the global population. People living in poverty have benefited very little from conventional energy policies. More than two billion people continue to use traditional fuels for cooking, while two billion more lack electricity.

The urban poor, and especially slum dwellers, are particularly hard hit by the lack of access to modern energy sources. The urban poor suffer direct physical harm from indoor air pollution. The urban poor spend a much greater share of their household income on energy than higher income groups. They have smaller and less predictable incomes, and their appliances are less energy-efficient. This situation applies particularly to urban poor households headed by women. Global evidence shows that most expenditure on energy services by the poor is on fuels for cooking, while the remainder is spent on fuels or batteries for light, typically in an 80/20 percent ratio. In general, fuelwood provides heating and cooking for the urban poor at a higher cost than LPG. Likewise, kerosene provides lighting for the urban poor at a higher cost than electricity. Both the direct cost and opportunity cost of acquiring energy for the urban poor is increased by having to collect fuelwood and buy charcoal and kerosene in small amounts. And this burden is disproportionately borne by women and children.

Ways and means to reduce the costs of energy services to the urban poor will be a crucial factor in our quest to reduce poverty and to meeting the MDGs. Let us be under no illusions. In 1950, one-third of the world’s people lived in cities. Just 50 years later, this proportion has risen to one-half and will continue to grow to two-thirds, or 6 billion people, by 2050. Make no mistake also. Our projections show that the rate of increase in urban poverty is far outstripping that of rural poverty and, unless urgent action is taken to reduce urban poverty, the one billion slum dwellers of today could easily reach two billion within the next 25 to 30 years.

Mr. Chairman,

Let me conclude by saying that we have an excellent opportunity to link our quest for more affordable, clean and safe energy for the urban poor with MDG 7 on sustainable development, water and sanitation and slum upgrading. Indeed, the plight of slum dwellers is that their homes are not legally recognised as houses. Without some form of de jure or de facto recognition, utilities are reluctant to provide their services, perpetuating a vicious cycle of poverty, low economic productivity, and missed opportunities for developing a robust energy industry. UN-HABITAT’s mission to provide secure tenure to the urban poor, as the condition sine qua non for slum upgrading and the provision of clean water and improved sanitation, must be seen in the context of our deliberations, as a key entry point for providing equitable access to affordable, clean and safe energy for the poor. It is high time that we stop considering energy as a sectoral concern and consider energy as a driving force for more sustainable and socially just development.

I thank you for your kind attention.