



UN-HABITAT

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Commission on Sustainable Development
(CSD-12)**

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**Statement by
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Your Royal Highness, the Prince of Orange

Honourable Minister Borge Brende, Chair of CSD-12

Mr. Mark Malloch Brown, Dr. Klaus Toepfer, Mr. Ocampo,

Distinguished Delegates,

Excellencies Ladies and gentlemen,

I am honoured and privileged to participate in this inaugural session of CSD-12. The presence of His Royal Highness, the Prince of Orange bears testimony to the importance of the critical development issues to be discussed.

I would like to begin by first congratulating Hon. Borge Brende for bringing in new vision, vitality and innovation to the CSD process. The extensive consultations conducted with all stakeholders over the past months have generated a new political momentum and enhanced credibility. Thanks to his efforts, the CSD process is now much more broad-based and action-oriented than before. I am indeed gratified to have been afforded an opportunity to support him, albeit in a small manner, in this process.

The Millennium Development Goals and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation represent a global consensus and commitments. The core concern is to bring the vast majority of the world's population out of a poverty trap that robs them of their health, dignity and aspirations for fulfilling their human potential.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In a world where some 1.4 billion people lack access to safe water and 2.7 billion people lack access to basic sanitation, what could be a more direct attack on poverty than to enable the poor to access these vital, life-sustaining services that could protect their health and improve their productivity? (Goal 7 – target 10)

In a world where 2 million children die, needlessly, every year, for the lack of water or for its poor quality, what could be a better starting point to reduce child mortality? (Goal 4)

In a world where the poor pay more for water than the rich both within and between cities, and millions of girl children are forced to trade education for collecting water, or drop out from schools for the lack of even minimal sanitation facilities, what could be a better way to promote universal primary education (Goal 2) or gender equality and empowering of women? (Goal 3)

And in a world where nearly a billion people live in slums in overcrowded conditions without access to basic services, what would be a concrete way to make significant improvements in their lives (Goal 7 – target 11) other than by providing them with access to water and sanitation?

This approach was given further impetus in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. In paragraph 18 of the political Declaration adopted by Heads of States, the W in WEHAB (Water, Energy, Health, Agriculture, Biodiversity) was further amplified to stand for Water, Sanitation and Shelter. The world leaders recognized that MDGs have to be delivered in given geographical spaces or locality. This holistic approach has now been operationalized by the CSD by adopting *water, sanitation and human settlements* as an integral cluster. It is great progress and value added.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Human settlements provide a concrete context for this action. The Struggle for achieving the Millennium Development Goals for water and sanitation will have to be waged in human settlements - in our cities, towns and villages. It is at this level where actions have to be coordinated and managed. It is at this level that policy initiatives become an operational reality and an eminently political affair. It is here that local actions must and can deliver global goals.

Cities and towns will absorb 95 per cent of the world's expected population growth. With rapid urbanization, there is also growing poverty and feminization of poverty in cities. Women pay a heavy price in procuring water for their families through daily drudgery and lost opportunities.

Urban poverty is vividly manifested in the slums. At present 930 million people live in slums. If the trends continue, 1.5 billion people will live in slums by the year 2020. Most slum dwellers are excluded from the attributes of urban life that remain a monopoly of a privileged minority – political voice, decent housing, safety and the rule of law, education and health.

Provision of basic services and Slum upgrading must become core business for local and national governments alike, and should receive adequate support by international financial institutions and development agencies.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and gentlemen,

We all know that a business-as-usual approach will not be enough. We need a fundamental change in our approach – we need a strategy that is workable, realistic and will make a difference in the lives of the people.

Unquestionably, the commitment of policy makers to human settlements will be the first step. The goals may be global but they must be implemented locally in human settlements, where the people live and shelter and services are required. The United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs) and The Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) at country level need to prioritize water and sanitation and slum upgrading. At UN-HABITAT, we are moving to localize the MDGs at city and municipal levels.

Second, recognition of water as a right and one of the most fundamental conditions for survival is critical. UN-HABITAT is focusing on this issue through the Global Campaign

on Secure Tenure and through the Housing Rights Programme in cooperation with United Nations High Commission on Human Rights (UNHCHR).

Finally, I must come to the all-important question of financing water, sanitation and slum upgrading in our cities. The finance gap is huge, and requires close partnership of UN agencies with the international financing institutions to supplement domestic resources. The Water for Asian Cities Programme, announced at the Johannesburg Summit, between UN-HABITAT and the Asian Development Bank, is an example of such new types of partnerships, focusing on innovative investment mechanisms for the benefit of the 700 million people in Asian cities. UN-HABITAT and partners are also making efforts to emulate the ADB example in Africa and Latin America. Efforts are also underway to develop a slum upgrading facility to field test innovative pro poor housing financing mechanisms.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates,

The CSD 12 could turn a new page and become a global springboard for local action. This first Review Session under the Commission's new Implementation Cycle, provides us an important opportunity to catalyze this action. UN-HABITAT stands ready to play its role in this process. Under the able and inspiring leadership of Chairman Brende, the world is set to join forces in building a global consensus for meeting critical challenges of this century.

I wish you successful deliberations and thank you for your kind attention and support.