PRESS RELEASE

INNOVATIVE SOLUTION TO URBAN CONSTRUCTION CHALLENGES SHOWCASED IN MEDELLIN

Medellín, 11 April 2014: As a legacy of the World Urban Forum's presence in Medellín, a public building has been built in Juanes Park to showcase a low-cost, simple technique of building using local materials and resources.

The "thin tile vault", so called due to its structure of thin layers of interlocking tiles, was opened today in an inauguration ceremony by UN Under-Secretary-General and UN-Habitat Executive Director, Dr Joan Clos, Mayor of Medellín, Aníbal Gaviria and Secretary of Infrastructure for Medellín Javier Dario Toro Zuluga.

In a foreword to a publication describing the building technique, Dr Clos said that it could be used to contribute to the efforts to address the urban challenges created by rapid urbanization, population growth and unsustainable city growth.

Thin tile vaulting, also known as Guastavino vaulting or Catalan vaulting, is a construction technique traditional from Catalonia and Valencia, Spain, and patented in the US in 1885 by the architect and builder Rafael Guastavino (1842-1908). It is an economical, fast, ecological, durable, robust and aesthetic structure where thin layers of interlocking tiles and coats of mortar form self-supporting arches and vaults.

Its structural characteristics that allow wide spans using local materials without steel reinforcement, coupled with its low cost and the simplicity of its construction, makes it a suitable and cheap option for a number purposes such as communal buildings, innovative urban drainage design and affordable housing.

This technique could be used to help meet the urban construction demand in developing countries where suitable local materials are available. In addition, thin tile vaulting for urban basic infrastructure such as storm water drains and sanitation facilities may go a long way in alleviating the urban infrastructure challenges.

For more information, or to request an interview, please contact:

Ana Moreno, Spokesperson, UN-Habitat, +254 702 116 120, ana.moreno@unhabitat.org

Jeanette Elsworth (English), Head of Press and Media, UN-Habitat, +57 319 325 3385, jeanette.elsworth@unhabitat.org

Alessandra Pirera (Español), Colombia Press Officer, UN-Habitat, +573 315 563 8234, alessandra.pirera@unhabitat.org