

UN HABITAT

FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

PRESS RELEASE

VOICES FROM SLUMS HEARD ON WORLD HABITAT DAY 2014

Nairobi, Kenya -- 1 October 2014: The United Nations has designated the first Monday of October every year as **World Habitat Day (WHD)**. The purpose of World Habitat Day is to reflect on the state of our towns and cities and to promote adequate shelter for all. It is also intended to remind the world that we all have the power and the responsibility to shape the future of our towns and cities.

The theme for World Habitat Day 2014 is 'Voices from Slums' and it will be commemorated all over the world on **Monday, 6 October 2014**. It aims to acknowledge the hardships of life in slums by giving voice to slum dwellers to air their own experiences and share their knowledge and ideas about improving their living conditions, as well as highlighting the efforts made towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

A quarter of the world's urban population is living in 'slums', informal urban areas characterised by inadequate and harmful living conditions. In some regions, this is as high as 70 per cent. In the developing world in particular, an estimated **one billion people** have few housing options but to live in unplanned settlements, creating communities of under-recognised citizens of which the **majority are youth**. As a result, the developing world has some of the least prosperous and most inequitable cities on earth. Considering that, in the world's least developed countries, urban population growth rate is higher than the total population growth rate and **vulnerable employment still accounts for about 80 per cent of total employment**, urban poverty is not just a present problem but an ever-growing concern posing development and humanitarian threats to humankind.

In response to this challenge, UN-Habitat has over the years focused in conceiving ways of improving the life of slum dwellers, such as the establishment of the Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme (PSUP) in partnership with the Secretariat of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States and the European Commission (EC). The overall objective of PSUP is to contribute to improving the living conditions of the urban poor by providing technical support for ACP country stakeholders to tackle the multi-dimensional nature of the challenge. This is done by improving the capacity of relevant urban actors, from concerned authorities to slum dwellers themselves, to collectively assess their urban development needs, devise city-wide strategies to improve living conditions, and to implement these solutions. A sustainable response to improving the living conditions of the urban poor can only be achieved through the concerted and coordinated efforts of all relevant urban stakeholders. Participatory Slum Upgrading provides an action framework for the mobilisation of the appropriate capacities and resources for the realisation of this goal. Participation starts with your voice being heard, as highlighted by this year's World Habitat Day.

UN-Habitat and the Habitat Agenda partners through various Ministries will partner with media houses to mark World Habitat Day which takes place every first Monday of October. For the first time ever, in October 2014, two important milestones of the urban calendar are celebrated in the same month. As every year, on the first Monday of the month, October 6, the world will be celebrating the World Habitat Day. And for the first time this year, the World Cities Day will be held on the last day of the month, October 31. This set of celebrations, combined with events and activities taking place in this context, will be grouped together under the umbrella of **Urban October**.

Urban October will gather advocacy, outreach and communications initiatives undertaken by UN-Habitat during the month. It represents an ideal setting for governments and partners to organize actions and activities to promote sustainable urban

development. Urban October is a month for raising awareness on urban challenges and opportunities with the media and communications networks. It is the month for stimulating debates and moving forward commitments.

The Urban Thinkers Campus will take place from 15 to 18 October 2014 in Caserta, Italy. The Campus is built on the outcomes of the deliberations of the Sixth and Seventh session of the World Urban Forum organized by UN-Habitat in Naples, Italy in 2012 and in Medellin, Colombia in April 2014. One month after the first Preparatory Committee for the Habitat III Conference, the Campus aims to gather urban thinkers and stakeholders to debate '**The City We Need**', initiated by the World Urban Campaign. Please find all information on the Urban Thinkers Campus on our website under: www.unhabitat.org/urbanthinkers/ and follow it on our social media channels under the Hashtag #urbanthinkers.

World Cities Day (WCD) 2014 will be commemorated on Friday, 31 October 2014. It will be celebrated under the theme '**Leading Urban Transformations**'. It is expected to bring to the attention of the international community the importance that urbanization plays in development and to promote cooperation between countries towards meeting opportunities and addressing challenges on a global scale. The city of Shanghai, China will host the main celebration of World Cities Day. Other countries and cities will celebrate through other events worldwide.

As such, Urban October is a month for stimulating debate and generate commitments from urban stakeholders in order to improve the lives of slum dwellers around the world. Moreover, Urban October is the perfect setting for governments and media houses to organize and promote actions and activities around the four pillars towards a New Urban Agenda: awareness, participation, knowledge and engagement.

Join us in celebrating World Habitat Day and Urban October!

World Habitat Day provides an excellent opportunity to highlight key human settlement issues. Each year, UN-Habitat calls upon its partners in central government, local government, civil society, the private sector and the media to take part in organizing activities to raise awareness and engage the public at large.

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