



Global Parliamentarians on HABITAT

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UN-Habitat
22 nd Governing Council

Welcoming Remarks

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**Excellencies,
Honourable colleagues,
Dear friends,**

I would like to extend a warm welcome to you all and thank you for your interest in the activities of the Global Parliamentarians on Habitat (GPH). The intention today is to discuss not only substantial issues concerning urban development, housing and climate protection, but also issues related to our own work.

On behalf of the Global Parliamentarians on Habitat, I would like to thank Ms. Anna Tibaijuka very much for her invitation to the 22nd Governing Council of UN-Habitat. My heartfelt thanks also go to Mr. Markandey Rai, Coordinator for Parliamentarians at UN-Habitat, for his cooperation and support provided during the preparations for this parliamentary meeting.

Unfortunately, due to important parliamentary obligations in Germany, I have had to cancel my participation in this meeting at short notice. I deeply regret that I cannot be here today. The Vice-Presidents for America, Senator Eloy Cantú Segovia, for Asia, Senator Rodolfo G. Biazon, and for Europe, Senator Traian Constantin Igas, have also had to express their regrets at not being able to attend.

I am nevertheless convinced that this GPH-Meeting will take place successfully, since I know that the Chairmanship is in good hands. I have asked our colleague, Hon. Mariam Nalubega, Member of Parliament in Uganda, who has acted as

spokesperson for Africa over two years now, to represent me here today.

Parliamentarians are representatives of the people and as such carry a special responsibility. But they are also granted special powers which allow them discharge this responsibility effectively. On the one hand, they pass legislation, which is in itself the most essential form of implementation of the goals of the Habitat Agenda. The implementation of a structure for the financing of affordable housing is just one example of many. On the other hand, they control the budget of their country and are thus able to ensure that the necessary financial resources to achieve the objectives of the Agenda are available, at national as well as international level. In the same way, they determine which expenditures of public funds have priority.

I am convinced that international catastrophes, such as the current world financial and economic crisis, but also climate change, can only be overcome through good international cooperation.

But for a successful cooperation, we require clear structures. The Global Parliamentarians on Habitat are composed of regional Chapters for Africa, America, Asia and Europe. At the moment there exists no elected Board of Directors for Africa.

For this reason, it is very important to me that a Board of Directors for Africa is elected today. We need to prepare the next World Forum of the Global Parliamentarians on Habitat in order to determine our future course. After the Istanbul

conference in 1996, the Global Parliamentarians on Habitat have signed important declarations, in Forums held in Cancún, Mexico, in Manila, the Philippines, in Berlin, Germany and in Rabat, Morocco. These declarations were an important basis for subsequent parliamentary discussions. The European Global Parliamentarians on Habitat have initiated a study which compares legislation, ten years after the signature of the Habitat-Agenda, in order to discover in which areas there is need for the legislator to intervene. The results of this study were presented at the World Urban Forums III and IV in Vancouver and Nanjing. The study can be forwarded to those who are interested in it.

All Parliamentarians are invited to contact their regional presidents or myself, should they wish to join the Global Parliamentarians on Habitat. Together we want to enforce the goals of the Habitat-Agenda, which was signed in 1996 in Istanbul during the Habitat II conference, in our national legislations. Our cooperation with UN-Habitat is very close to my heart.

Honoured ministers, distinguished delegates,

I thank you very much for coming here today and I hope you have a stimulating, enriching discussion.