

**REPORT ON THE GLOBAL PARLIAMENTARIANS ON HABITAT (GPH) AFRICAN CHAPTER CONFERENCE HELD ON 20<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2009, PARLIAMENT OF UGANDA.**

**1.0 INTRODUCTION:**

The Global Parliamentarians on Habitat (GPH) African Chapter conference was held on 20<sup>th</sup> August 2009, in Parliament of Uganda. The conference was officially opened by the Rt. Hon. Speaker of Parliament, **Hon. Edward K. Ssekandi** and was attended by several Members of Parliament from Uganda, the GPH Uganda Chapter Members and Members of Parliament from Kenya.

The **main objectives** of the Conference were to popularize the Habitat Agenda among parliamentarians; to assess the commitments made by UN member states towards human settlements and urbanization for better laws and for the GPH African Chapter and the GPH Board to prepare for the World Habitat Day 5<sup>th</sup> October, 2009.

The GPH President (Africa Chapter), **Hon. Margaret Zziwa** made introductory and welcome remarks and informed participants that: (attached as Annex 1)

Global Parliamentarians on Habitat is a forum for Parliamentarians under the umbrella of UN Member States which is committed to popularize and ensure good laws for the implementation on the Habitat Agenda. Habitat Agenda is the term adopted by the Second United Nations Conference on Human settlements that took place in Istanbul in June 1996 which preceded the one in Rio de Janeiro of 1992 committed to sustainable development. The earlier UN General Assembly in Stockholm on human environment in 1972 and Vancouver in 1976 had expressed concern at the 'deplorable world housing situation' and the challenges of rapid urbanization.

Habitat Agenda addresses broad principles and broad commitments on 'Sustainable human settlements' and 'Adequate shelter for all'. The two broad principles, the major indicators were adopted under the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to focus on issues of human settlement which include better housing, rapid urbanization, the state of cities and slum eradication among others. Through the provision of better planned cities, provision of utilities, and attending to the challenges associated with bad living like poor sanitation, poor garbage disposal, congestion, traffic jams, crimes, unemployment, Governments will be answering to the aspirations of Habitat Agenda. Respective governments who are UN member states signed commitments to fulfil the MDGs.

Facts and figures show the deplorable living conditions of people, the poverty and the sprouting slums in many cities still pose a challenge to governments and leaders alike. In Uganda for instance with a population of about 30 million people, 14% of this is urban but 93% of this live in slum areas. This remained a paradox whether the question of appropriate housing has yet been drawn into policy construction agenda in Uganda. The situation is not much different in many cities of East Africa. The continuous traffic jams which not only follow pick hours, the huge tonnes of garbage, the floods and poor drainage have become a daily occurrence in many cities of Africa. With this kind of scenario, the challenge of achieving the millennium development goals (MDGs) by 2025 still feels very far.

Housing economics were becoming contentious in the global financial crisis. There was need to appreciate the dynamics of mortgage markets, the cost of provision of housing and the complexities of access and affordability to housing because they are the major precipitants to poor housing and slums.

The GPH Executive Board (African Chapter) which was elected during the UN General Council in Nairobi in April 2009 includes:

Hon. Margaret Nantongo Zziwa (MP, EALA)	President
Hon. Mariam Nalubega (MP, Uganda)	Alternate
Hon. Theo Diegraant (MP, Namibia)	Vice President
Hon. Njoki Ndugu (MP, Emeritus Kenya)	Secretary
Hon. Tubwita Grace (MP, Uganda)	Treasurer

The Uganda Chapter is chaired by Dr. Chris Baryomunsi.

## **2.0 METHODOLOGY:**

Presentations were made by the following:

1. The President GPH Africa Chapter, Hon. Margaret Nantongo Zziwa,
2. The Rt. Hon. Speaker, Edward Kiwanuka Sekandi.
3. The Minister of State for Housing hon. Werikhe Michael,
4. The Commissioner for Urban Development, Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development, Mr. Mabala Shibuta Samuel,
5. The UN Habitat Program Manager, Mr. Peter Wegulo, and
6. The Treasurer GPH Africa Hon. Tubwita Bagaya Grace Bukenya.

### 3.0 PRESENTATION BY THE RT. HON. SPEAKER, PARLIAMENT OF UGANDA, HON. EDWARD K. SSEKANDI:

The **Speaker** informed the participants that: (attached as Annex 2)

- (i) The Forum provides an opportune moment to review progress made and challenges ahead to harness global partnership in the field of housing and urban development.
- (ii) The problem of human settlements was getting more serious because it was estimated that more than one hundred million people were homeless, while more than one billion people live in unhealthy settlements without clean water, sanitation and electricity.
- (iii) The UN estimates that 60percent of the world population lives in urban areas and majority of them live on less than one dollar a day. One third of them lives in slums without access to safe drinking water, overcrowded in shacks made of temporary building materials, no secure tenure so risk eviction from authorities often without notice. Most slum dwellers are under 25 years and have no prospects of meaningful employment.
- (iv) The combination of the factors stated makes the urban poor the most disempowered group in terms of poverty and access to health and education services, very vulnerable to HIV/AIDS.
- (v) The failure to come to terms with rapid urbanization, slum upgrading and raising awareness of the world to the issues is a collective failure by the leaders.
- (vi) Addressing the challenges depended on the ability by governments, local authorities and civil society partners coming up with concrete solutions.

The **Speaker** observed that there is need to focus on critical issues which include:

- (i) Rapid urbanization and urban poverty;
- (ii) Water and sanitation challenges in cities and towns;
- (iii) Inadequate shelter culminating in slums formations;
- (iv) Land and property rights;
- (v) Need to engage the poor, the women and youth in addressing the urbanization problems.

**4.0 PRESENTATION BY THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR HOUSING, HON. MICHAEL WERIKHE:**

He informed the participants that:

- (i) Uganda was chosen to serve as the Vice President of the 21<sup>st</sup> Governing Council of the UN Human Settlement Foundation.
- (ii) Uganda ably chaired the 22<sup>nd</sup> Governing Council on behalf of the Minister for Housing in India who was the President then but could not attend because of elections in his country.
- (iii) Uganda was playing a key role in the family of the UN Member States. It has made friends with multilateral agencies such as Cities Alliance who have committed resources to support development of the National Urban Policy.

Furthermore, plans were underway to support the implementation of the strategy for transforming settlements for the urban poor.

- (iv) The process of reviewing the National Housing Policy was ongoing and was expected to be finalized in FY 2009/10.
- (v) Plans were under way to revive the Housing Cooperative Movement in Uganda. This will be a housing delivery mechanism for affordable housing for the majority Ugandans particularly in urban areas.
- (vi) The Ministry developed a slum upgrading strategy with support from UNDP. The strategy was to enhance improvement of living conditions in the existing slums but also halt emergency of new slums. The strategy was to be launched on the World Habitat Day.
- (vii) Government of Uganda sold off pool houses and the proceeds were retained in the Sector to increase access to mortgage financing. Some of the funds were to be used to finance a Public Servants Housing Loan under the Ministry.

**5.0 PRESENTATION BY THE COMMISSIONER FOR URBAN DEVELOPMENT, MINISTRY OF LANDS, HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, MR. MABALA SHIBUTA SAMUEL.**

He made a written presentation (attached as annex 3) but highlighted the following issues:

- (i) Urbanization is an irreversible process
- (ii) The rapid urbanization that Uganda was experiencing was placing immense demands on resources and services in the urban areas.
- (iii) There is need for adequate, decent and affordable shelter to ensure sustainable human settlement.
- (iv) Themes today should revolve around cities, that is, planning the urban future.
- (v) Slums form over 65 percent of the urban settlements.
- (vi) East Africa is the least urbanized in Africa at 22.7 percent. Uganda has only 15 percent urbanization, with 5.2 percent urban growth rate.
- (vii) Uganda's population growth is very high and will soon be one of the most populated countries. The population has tripled from 1969 – 2009.
- (viii) The population growth has led to high demand for land which is limited.
- (ix) Urbanization is a reactive process following where opportunities are and not proactive process considering physical planning as a prerequisite to urbanization.
- (x) There is a lot of piece meal implementation of physical planning which is not helping solve the problems associated with urbanization.
- (xi) There is need to bring people to where services are located as opposed to taking services closer to the people.
- (xii) Urbanization is closely related to economic growth because it leaves land for large scale agriculture in the rural areas.

- (xiii) Economic divisions breed restrictions to the flow of goods, people capital and delivery of services. Africa is the most divided hence integration is hardest because countries are distant from world markets.
- (xiv) Scattered settlements followed by gradual filling in of space without any plan leads to urban sprawl which leads to urban chaos.
- (xv) Made an overview of the theme of the World habitat day on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2009, in Washington and its implications to the legislators.

## **6.0 PRESENTATION BY THE UN-HABITAT PROGRAMME MANAGER, MR. PETER WEGULO.**

He made a written presentation (attached as annex 4) but highlight the following issues:

- (i) Housing is so central to the health of any economy yet there is so little attention paid to the ways in which low income housing can be integrated into the organization of the cities in Africa.
- (ii) There is need to avail sufficient land for low income housing.
- (iii) UN-Habitat signed an agreement with Development Finance Company of Uganda Bank to co-finance development and ownership of affordable housing under a pilot project initiative on a 5.2 hectares of land in Kasooli-Tororo Municipality. This project will benefit at least 125 low income households organized around cooperative organizations.
- (iv) The essential components to be considered under habitation program include availability of sufficient land for low income housing and servicing the land with proper access and basic infrastructure. There is need to upgrade land by drainage and grading it
- (v) The **paradox** that adequate houses are not affordable and affordable houses are not adequate.

- (vi) There is need for collaboration between the global and local levels financing to help the poor.
- (vii) The economic crisis which is coupled with global warming is affecting mainly the poor.
- (viii) Need to mitigate environmental issues because climate change is inevitable. With most of humanity now living in towns and cities the greatest impacts of disasters resulting from climate change begin and end in cities.
- (ix) Among the world's economic problems are the continuing problems of affordable housing in the African countries.
- (x) Financing affordable housing was the overall theme of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Governing Council of the UN Human Settlements Program.
- (xi) UN Habitat approach is to complement micro-credit, which is largely limited to short term loans with provisions for longer term finance for land acquisition. This is aimed at empowering the urban poor.
- (xii) Credit facilities are becoming less affordable as a result of high interest rates, which are leading to the low income housing on the market.

## **7.0 PRESENTATION BY HON. TUBWITA BAGAYA GRACE, TREASURER GPH-AFRICA**

She made a written presentation (attached as annex 5) but highlighted the following issues:

- 1) The need to urgently review certain laws related to housing, for example, the Town and Country Planning Act which does not cater for the dynamic developments of the urban settings in Uganda for example.
- 2) National governments, through each of the different Arms need to work towards enabling communities improve human settlement conditions.
- 3) Parliaments have a role to play and should be at the forefront of providing an enabling environment through appropriate legislation,

advocacy, networking, encouraging research, and carrying out oversight functions.

- 4) Sensitization of communities on the facts of human settlement.
- 5) The existence of multiple tenure rights on land which was affecting the would-be potential developers.
- 6) The high cost of infrastructure development and services was minimizing the potential of their provision.

## **8.0 OBSERVATIONS:**

The participants observed as follows:

- 1) The legislative and policy gaps on issues of Habitat Agenda require adequate and immediate attention. The provisions for human housing in Human rights frameworks like the Uganda Constitution and The Constitutive Act of the African Union (2002) need to be operationalized.
- 2) There are adverse effects of climate change today which are not only vivid in cities but also the rural settings. There is urgent need to address this issue of climatic change.
- 3) There are a lot of challenges in Africa regarding human settlement and urbanization.
- 4) Plans should always be formulated as a policy before any settlements are established.
- 5) There is need to address the fast growing population in Uganda as a way of checking urbanization and settlement problems.
- 6) Components of human settlements which require parliamentarians' direct involvement include shelter, land, transport, water and sanitation, HIV/AIDS.

Homelessness and lack of adequate shelter is a common scene in many countries. In most developing countries, poverty, rapid urbanization, lack of housing credit facilities are among the reasons that cause lack of housing rights.

Participants observed that it was necessary to improve housing conditions of low income communities, to build and improve their



living conditions by providing education, training (skill acquisition) and technical assistance on land rights, housing construction, savings and credit schemes and self help in both rural and urban areas.

- 7) The rapid growing urban areas have rendered land accessibility increasingly difficult by the competing demands of housing, industry, infrastructure, agriculture.
- 8) Enforcement of plans by cities and local governments need to be coupled with sensitization of the populations so that the need for healthy environments and habitat is appreciated.
- 9) There is increased water scarcity in cities.
10. The paradox of need for urbanization and high population growth need to be put in proper context.

## **9.0 RECOMMENDATIONS:**

### **The participants recommended as follows:**

GPH African chapter should ensure that the resolutions made during the UN General Assembly 22 are followed by monitoring the successes and the failures within member States.

- 1) Continue to raise the issues on the Habitat Agenda.
- 2) GPH African chapter should ensure that the resolutions made during the UN General Assembly 22 are followed by monitoring the successes and the failures within member States.
- 3) Leaders and governments should commit themselves to providing better cities and settlements.
- 4) In order to cope with the rising demands, it is imperative to put in place appropriate policy, legal, institutional frameworks with adequate resources to support effective urban planning, development and management.
- 5) There should be political will to prioritize urban development to ensure a desired sustainable urban future.
- 6) Expedite review of the planning law and preparation of physical development plans for all urban areas.

- 7) Support to urban social and economic infrastructural development and management.
- 8) Promote land banking/readjustment/consolidation in urban areas.
- 9) Parliamentarians must demand appropriate housing policies which are not only good at conception and formulation (policies on paper) but must be comprehensive in implementation with adequate financial and human resources.
- 10) Government programmes and actions should be monitored and evaluated to ascertain whether countries were genuinely committed to the goals and principles of Habitat Agenda.
- 11) Leaders from member countries have a role to ensure that housing is kept on the Government priority agenda particularly in the face of the global financial crisis. Legislation is a useful indicator to a country's commitment to any cause and so parliamentarians have a role to play to ensure that there is effective action to mitigate any human calamities.
- 12) Parliamentarians need to become proactive, to ask questions to Ministers about the housing conditions of the people.
- 13) Where governments are not forthcoming, politicians should move Private Members Bills that favour better housing and urban development. They should demand substantial budgetary allocations to sectors that are responsible for the implementation of the Habitat Agenda.
- 14) Draft model legislation on human settlements from which to borrow from.
- 15) Parliamentarians can ensure that the adopted framework is based on land property rights which recognise security of tenure especially to the urban poor.