

UN HABITAT
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

Statement by
Dr. Markandey Rai
Chief, Global parliamentarians
UN-HABITAT

On the occasion of the meeting of the
Board of Directors of the
Global Parliamentarians on Habitat(GPH).
Rio de Janeiro, 18th March 2010

Honourable Peter Goetz, President of Global Parliamentarians on Habitat (GPH)
Honourable Members of the Board of Directors of the Global Parliamentarians on
Habitat,

Eloy Carlos Segovia, Oscar Lopez.
~~Honourable Margaret Zziwa, President of the GPH African Chapter~~

~~Honourable Marian Nalubega, Alternate President of GPH African Chapter,~~

~~Honourable Members of Parliament,~~

~~Your Excellencies,~~

~~Distinguished Guests,~~

~~Ladies and Gentlemen,~~

Mr. President,

It is a great privilege and honor for me to be here for the 6th Global Parliamentarians Forum's Board of Directors meeting. I wish to thank the President of the Global Parliamentarians on Habitat Hon. Peter Goetz and members of the Board for inviting me to speak today. Our Executive Director, Mrs. Tibaijuka, will address the GPH Forum on 20 March in the closing session.

UN-HABITAT is delighted that you have chosen to meet prior to the fifth World Urban Forum next week here in Rio de Janeiro- a beautiful city of Brazil.

Honorable Parliamentarians,

I would not take your much time and I will be brief because I know that you have heavy agenda to discuss the Sustainable urbanization and also the organizational matters of GPH. And I know too that many of you have travelled great distances to join here for this 6th GPH Forum and the fifth World Urban Forum.

Now more than ever humanity must learn to live in balance with our natural world before we do more irreparable damage. This goes beyond building smarter and more efficient buildings. It will touch how we structure our lives and how we organize our cities with the aims to help restore the harmony of human existence on Earth. This can be attained only by achieving Sustainable Urbanization leading to Sustainable Development.

The Global Parliamentarians on Habitat are our very crucial partners since its inception more than thirty years ago. You are the law makers and promoter of "Good Laws for Better life in Cities". You have always stood in support of our quest for greener, better, smarter and sustainable towns and cities. Your support to UN-HABITAT is most essential now than ever before especially in this crucial time of economic downturn and in the face of more and more climate change problems.

We are happy to learn that you are strengthening your contacts and network with parliamentarians all over the world including in the North America. Revitalization of the African and Asian chapters of Global Parliamentarians on Habitat could not be timelier and it is commendable not only for GPH but it is more support to UN-HABITAT in achieving our goals. *I am again delighted to see that the African chapter is so well represented here in this important forum which is discussing Sustainable Urbanization including climate change, city for all and urban –rural linkage which is the main theme of the World Urban forum next week also.*

The Fifth Session of the World Urban Forum (Rio 2010) meets in Rio de Janeiro under the theme banner of 'The right to the City - bridging the urban divide.' The Forum, established by the United Nations aims to exchange experiences among national governments, cities and their respective development partners through dialogues, roundtables and networking events. For the first time, the World Urban Campaign will serve as an inter-sessional mechanism to help capture the knowledge, expertise and experience generated by the Forum to further inform and improve policy development on critical contemporary urbanization challenges. Your support to our world Urban campaign is very important.

UN-HABITAT and GPH are coming more closure because of your increasing support, guidance and action oriented plans. We have seen your agenda for this forum and I can commend the president Hon Peter Goetz who is steering the forum to discuss the Strategy paper prepared by UN-HABITAT on working with parliamentarians and GPH has its future plans for developing the Charter of the Parliamentarians.

I am confident that very soon the GPH will have their action plans and revised and updated statute in the form of Charter of the Global parliamentarians under which they will promote more membership and secure funds for executing their plans.

Honorable ladies and gentlemen,

As you are aware, UN-HABITAT has adopted a Medium Term Strategic and Institution Plan for the years 2008-2013. This august body can promote and support our plan by sensitizing the parliamentarians to collect the legislation passed, tabled or under discussion on the housing and human settlements. It is important for us to share your initiatives with countries around the world.

Honourable Ladies and Gentlemen,

As the elected representatives of voters, Parliamentarians are close to the aspirations and wishes of the people. You have a direct and critical role to play in the improvement of the lives of the world's urban poor.

Indeed we at UN-HABITAT are only too aware that Parliamentarians hold the keys when it comes to legislating for a better urban future, for sustainable, cleaner, safer, greener, more caring inclusive cities that enshrine the rights of their citizens, especially women. In most countries it is you who set the laws and manage the funding.

Your duty is to hold governments accountable to their international commitments such as the Millennium Development Goals for poverty reduction. What is expected is coherent action by governments in delivering on their promises, and by parliamentarians in holding their governments to account.

For UN-HABITAT, this vital partnership with parliamentarians helps ensure that shelter and urban poverty reduction are addressed in national policies

Mr. President,

Your continuous support to UN-HABITAT is necessary.

Thank you for your kind attention.