



## **What role can Trondheim play in the international community of UN-HABITAT**

**Statement by Mrs. Anna Tibaijuka  
Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations  
Executive Director of UN-HABITAT**

Your worship, Mayor of Trondheim, Deputy Mayor, director of Cultural affairs, Councillors, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honored to stand here in front of you in Røros, this picturesque 350-year old mining town which is found worthy of a place on UNESCO's Worlds Heritage List to talk about another historic Norwegian city and the role it can play in the international community of UN-HABITAT.

Yesterday, I was in Trondheim, a city with a rich and unparalleled position in the history of this nation. As the nation's first capital and a strong centre of trade for central Norway as well as the base of the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim indeed represents continuity and change.

### ***Local Authorities***

In April 2007, on the occasion of the 21st session of UN-Habitat's Governing Council, UN member States approved a landmark resolution on International Guidelines on Decentralization. These Guidelines were adopted after a decade of work involving consultations at the regional and local levels, with central and local governments and with associations of local authorities.

These guidelines are intended to provide a blueprint for enhanced and effective decentralisation by contributing to a clearer definition of the roles and responsibilities for and between local authorities, national governments and the international community so as to improve people's lives.

As a result of the adoption of these guidelines, on 17 September 2007, UN-HABITAT signed a comprehensive agreement of cooperation with the political leadership of United Cities and Local Governments (the UCLG). The UCLG serves as an umbrella organization of local authorities world-wide which aims to be the united voice and world advocate of democratic self-government. The agreement signed between UN-HABITAT and UCLG

provides both partners with a framework for a strengthened collaboration to achieve more tangible results for the benefit of the urban poor. The agreement focuses on ongoing governance activities, including: (i) a campaign on urban governance; (ii) a global observatory of local democracy and decentralization (GOLD); (iii) the localizing of the Millennium Development Goals; (iv) dialogue on decentralization; and (v) support to the Advisory Committee of Local Authorities (UNACLA).

Local government autonomy has obviously played a significant role in Norwegian towns and cities enjoying the highest quality of life in the world. The world has therefore a lot to learn from Norway's experience.

I therefore have some very specific ideas and proposals for the involvement of Trondheim and Norwegian local authorities in supporting our common cause at the international level.

### ***Raising awareness of the guidelines and organizing consultations***

The adoption of the guidelines on decentralization is a first albeit important step. We now need to ensure that they are widely disseminated so that local authorities and their associations around the world can begin to lobby for change.

I should therefore like to propose that Trondheim, in collaboration with the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS) and other Nordic local authorities, take the lead in promoting these guidelines with their local authority counterparts in countries with economies in transition. This would involve organizing consultations with national associations of local authorities to discuss the implications of these guidelines and to identify concrete follow-up action.

### ***Global Observatory on local democracy and decentralisation (GOLD)***

In a similar vein, the Global Observatory on local democracy and decentralization is intended to keep track of who is doing what in terms of decentralization policies and legislation and to document best practices in this regard.

We have developed and field-tested tools for assessing the effectiveness of decentralisation policies and legislation and we would like to propose that this tool be applied to countries and cities of interest to Trondheim and other Norwegian local authorities. The objective is to monitor progress and to document success stories resulting from effective decentralization, as well as to assess ongoing challenges.

We have found, for example, that in many countries the laws governing decentralization are complex, sometimes contradictory and very often confusing. This leaves many local authorities at a loss as to what their specific roles and entitlements are in such areas as planning and local economic development, not to mention taxation and revenue collection.

We would welcome your contribution to the Global Observatory in cities and countries where you are already active or about to be active in your normal bilateral relations and friendship agreements.

### *Dialogue on Decentralisation*

Both the consultations and activities carried out under the Global Observatory are intended to inform dialogue between local and central governments to promote more enabling policies and legislation. Here again, we are prepared to work together with you, the KS and Ministry of Foreign Affairs to explore in which countries we could organize such consultations and to bring the results of these consultations to our Governing Council.

### *Planning*

KS has already embarked on a number of international projects, helping sister organizations, local and regional authorities and organizations in various countries throughout the world with the development of service provision. By urging the KS National Congress to extend its international activities, Trondheim and other Norwegian towns and cities, can make this happen. Being a member of KS, I see the potential for Trondheim to establish and enhance partnerships with municipalities in the South where UN-HABITAT has programmes on the ground.

One of the key areas we have identified in our ongoing projects in, for example, water and sanitation is the lack of planning. Our Water and Sanitation Trust Fund is currently active in many cities in Africa and Asia. Our focus is on secondary towns which are growing the most rapidly. While we are busy trying to upgrade water and sanitation infrastructure, on strengthening the capacity of water operators, and embarking on water education with local communities, there is much to be done on urban planning in general.

Many of these cities have no urban plan or even a strategic vision to guide their future development. Our concern is that our efforts and the efforts of others in improving water and sanitation will be overtaken within a few short years by rapid and chaotic growth.

We therefore propose to the City of Trondheim and other Norwegian cities that they engage in direct cooperation efforts to help these cities in devising strategic urban plans. In many instances we are talking about basic mapping, data collection and situation analyses, and in envisioning their future.

As these are cities where there are already ongoing initiatives and solid working relations between various spheres of government and with local communities, UN-HABITAT can provide both guidance and support for Norwegian local governments to get involved quickly and efficiently.

### *Climate Change*

The year 2007 will see, for the first time, the majority of human beings living in cities. And by 2030, three-quarters of the world's population will be living in urban areas. This urban transformation is inseparable from the issue of climate change. Indeed, it is no coincidence that climate change has emerged at the forefront of international debate precisely at the same time, and virtually at the same pace, as the world becomes urbanized. Global warming exacerbates existing environmental, social and economic problems while bringing new challenges. The most affected today, and in future, will be the world's urban poor- and chief among them, the 1 billion slum dwellers.

It is crucial to recognize that cities and urban residents are not just victims of climate change but also partly responsible for the problem. And if cities are part of the problem, that means they must also be part of the solution. While Norwegian local governments have made significant in-roads in combating global warming they must share this expertise with other local governments.

Here again, we would be more than happy to suggest concrete ways in which Norwegian local authorities can work together with local authorities in developing countries and countries with economies in transition to help them assess their ecological footprints and to devise concrete measures to reduce their footprint.

### *Diversity*

2008 marks the year of diversity in Norway and I am aware that a number of discussions and celebrations of diversity will be taking place in Norway. I would like to invite you to another forum for diversity- the World Urban Forum taking place next October in the Chinese city of Nanjing.

The World Urban Forum is the product of a General Assembly resolution which called on UN-HABITAT to establish the World Urban Forum as a think tank on all things urban. With more than 10,000 delegates, the third session of the World Urban Forum, in Vancouver in 2006, proved that people are increasingly concerned about the future of human settlements. Ministers, local authority representatives, industrialists and slum dwellers, all recognized that their combined efforts are required to overcome the urban crisis.

For 2008, the theme of the World Urban Forum is on “harmonious cities”. Diversity is both an important ingredient and factor of harmony. I therefore suggest that you share the outcome of your discussions and celebrations with the anticipated 15,000 to 20,000 participants in Nanjing, and to inspire other local authorities from around the world to engage in similar discussions and celebrations.

I thank you for your kind attention.