

**Inaugural Address by the Hon'ble Minister for Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation and Minister  
of Culture, Government of India**

**On the occasion of**

**Working Group on Urban and Rural Planning and Management of APMCHUD**

**Meeting of the Expert Group from Asia-Pacific Countries**

Excellences', Dignitaries and distinguished Delegates, Secretary, CMD HUDCO, Ladies and Gentlemen!

It gives me great pleasure to be here on the occasion of the Expert Group Meeting of the APMCHUD on the theme of 'Urban and Rural Planning and Management'. I would like to specially extend a warm welcome to all the Dignitaries and Delegates who have come here for this important occasion.

The importance of the Asia-Pacific Region in the global polity and economy is well established. This region accommodates more than 60 per cent of the global population and has registered an impressive and consistent economic growth in the last few years. At the same time, most of us are also facing a demographic transition. In the year 2010, 43% of the Asia and the Pacific population lived in urban areas, the second lowest urban proportion of a region in the world, however in the last two decades the Asia Pacific Urban portion has risen by 29%, more than any other region. Across the Asia-Pacific region, the urban proportion and urban population growth rates vary dramatically but studies indicate that the Region is becoming increasingly urban, and in the years to come, would lead the global demographic transition to an urban world.

In our countries, the growing urban agglomeration economies are facilitating an improvement in activity growth as well as the income levels. On the other hand, in many countries the rapid growth of urbanisation is also resulting in exclusion with a significant proportion of urban population of the urban areas having little or no access to the basic services including housing. The 'other-city' syndrome is real today. It would not be an exaggeration to say that most of the Asia-Pacific Region countries are experiencing a dualistic pattern of development which is not economically and socially sustainable.

It is in this context, the first Conference of the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development, held in Delhi in December 2006 resolved to foster collaboration amongst ourselves in the field of housing and urban development, towards achieving sustainable urbanisation in the region. The Conference evolved an Enhanced Framework for Sustainable Urbanisation in the Asia Pacific region. The Framework highlighted various areas for focussed attention and collaboration such as pro-poor urban governance and planning, slum upgrading and prevention, Delivery of millennium Development Goals on Water and Sanitation, and financing sustainable urbanisation. Recognising that the urban centres are the drivers of economic development, the framework specially highlighted that over half of the world's inadequate housing units are located in Asia-Pacific – at roughly 500 million units, and stressed upon the need to involve various stakeholders, to meet the growing demand for infrastructure and services especially for urban poor.

With regard to pro-poor urban governance and planning, the Framework identified the key challenge to be improving urban governance and management, through an enhanced local investment climate, that promotes economic growth and increases employment. It identified that for tackling rapid urbanisation, sustaining high economic growth, eradicating poverty and inequity, the key areas of focus are urban planning, working with the private sector, embedding a pro-poor policy orientation, inclusiveness and empowerment.

The Framework urged for inclusive processes in decision-making, with particular emphasis on involvement of women, the poor and disadvantaged groups through involving them in planning programme development, implementation and monitoring. It insisted that the new culture of planning process should be inclusive and provide a valid space for urban poor livelihoods and their living, through comprehensive and intensive utilisation of land. This is sought to be done by promoting innovative policies for formal access to lands by the poor, such as land sharing, land pooling, equal land and property rights to women. In addition the planning needs are to be guided by innovative, imaginative, entrepreneurial principles of land management and administration. The process should establish pro-poor planning standards and building and construction regulatory framework that overcomes the rigidities often characterising urban development and delivery of services especially for the urban poor.

The Framework has envisioned a Vision 2020 for the Asia-Pacific Region – that governance and planning processes should aim at achieving cities without slums, cities which are environmentally sustainable, liveable and economically viable, especially for urban poor.

The Delhi Declaration adopted by the APMCHUD established the mechanism of taking the collaborative agenda forward. India, as the first Chair, facilitated the way forward by establishing the permanent Secretariat in Delhi under the aegis of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation. As a vibrant Inter-ministerial forum, the APMCHUD progressed forward with the Tehran Declaration that firmed up the Action Plan for the Asia-Pacific Countries towards achieving the common objective of sustainable urbanisation. Further ahead, the Solo Declaration detailed out an implementation plan on the local areas. Setting up of 5 working groups on critical areas identified for concerted action is major step forward in the implementation process. India has taken the responsibility to lead the working group on *urban and rural planning and management*. I am extremely happy that you would together evolve recommendations that would facilitate in finalising the report to be presented in the next APMCHUD Conference scheduled to be held in December 2012 in Jordan.

In the context of the working group which we are leading, it is important to understand the nature and character of urbanisation which is being experienced in this region. One important aspect in this regard is the growth of mega-cities – cities whose population exceeds 10 million. Of the world's 21 mega-cities in 2010, 12 are in Asia, including 7 of the largest 10 cities. Although mega-cities are often portrayed as the face of urbanisation in Asia and the Pacific, the reality is that most of the region's urban population lives in secondary cities and small towns which must also receive attention if we are to prevent them from facing the same problems which big cities are today facing.

I would like to take this opportunity to share with you in brief some of the important features of the approach, which we in India have adopted towards tackling the complex challenges posed by urbanisation i.e. provision of basic civic services, housing, social and physical infrastructure and

establishment of participative governance frameworks. We have built our programmes and schemes on the foundation of legal empowerment of local bodies – both urban and rural. To enable human settlements development to be based on a 'bottoms-up' approach, our 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendments empower the rural and urban local bodies to plan their habitats. In addition to the statutory master plans that exist and guide the city growth, in order to fast track and involve the citizens at large in the 'vision evolution process' for the growth of their cities we have adopted an approach of preparation of 'city development plans' for major cities under a National Programme 'Jawaharlal Nehru Urban Renewal Mission', which was launched in 2005. Under this programme, the Central Government provides assistance to States and Urban Local Bodies on the basis of their City Development Plans, to improve basic city level infrastructure like water supply, drainage, sewerage, solid waste management, public transport etc. About one-third of the total assistance given by the Centre is targeted towards a pro-poor component of providing basic civic services and shelter in slums and urban poor settlements. We through this component of about 7 billion dollars are supporting the construction of about 1.6 million houses across the country. The programme also envisages implementation of a pro-poor reform agenda including reservation of land for housing the weaker sections of the society, allocation of a specified portion of the municipal funds for the urban poor etc. Unique in this approach is the citizen's involvement as participants in city growth visioning, and also as partners in the entire development process. Learning from our experiences in implementing the above programme, we have recently launched a new scheme with the vision of ushering in a Slum Free India called Rajiv AwasYojana. Assignment of property rights to the slum dwellers and credit enablement of the urban poor are the building blocks of this scheme. This scheme envisages a whole city approach by planning for redevelopment/ upgradation of all the slums in the city in a time bound manner. My officers will be sharing details of all these initiatives during the course of the technical sessions and I am eagerly looking forward to learning about your schemes and programmes.

Another important aspect of the process of urbanisation is the growth of peri-urban areas or what are also called suburbs. These are transition areas, lying at the interface between urban and rural populations. Peri-urban areas particularly face special problems of rapid volatile land price increase, lack of spatial planning, lack of planned interventions and access to services and facilities. This underscores the need for Regional Planning or Integrated socio-economic and spatial planning. Rather than permitting an expansion of all towns our attention is now also shifting to setting a planning framework for a region. Within the region, the aim is to identify the towns or growing villages with locational or natural resource advantages in order to focus future socio-economic and spatial growth in such nodes, by the guided investment of funds for infrastructure. The scheme called Provision for Urban Amenities in Rural Areas (PURA) launched by the Ministry of Rural Development is one such planned intervention at the regional level. We are trying to implement the PURA schemes under a Public Private Partnership (PPP) framework between the village level rural local body and private sector partners. The scheme envisions building up of rural infrastructure along with providing livelihood enhancement projects through convergence of various Government of India schemes and several State Government schemes while also bringing in private investments and expertise in rural areas. The above interventions and schemes are steps in the directions of moving India towards a sustainable and balanced urban and regional development.

The aim of sustainable and inclusive development requires a reorienting of the existing planning paradigm and I am happy to note that many of the issues connected with this are being discussed in

the technical sessions. How do we promote inclusive cities? What kind of approaches would ensure the cities treat all its inhabitants as 'citizens' rather than leaving an 'other-half'? How do we and what all provisions should we incorporate in our plans that would ensure improved access to facilities and services to all people? What modifications and innovations in our building bye-laws would make our cities accommodate the requirements of weaker sections? How do we plan for integrated rural and urban development? What are the best practices in land management? Well, You are all experts in these fields. I am very sure when you interact amongst yourselves, and exchange your experiences and knowledge, we would be able to identify appropriate approaches and methodologies for addressing the concerns of urban and rural planning and management.

I look forward to receiving your recommendations, seeing the level of participation and enthusiasm here, which I am very confident, would go a long way in shaping the planning of human settlements in the coming years.

I also suggest to you that in addition to the hard work you are going to put in here, do take out some time to move around and see this beautiful historic city during your stay.

I convey my best wishes for intense, meaningful and successful interactions during the event.

Thank you,

Jai Hind