



UN-HABITAT



## United Nations Human Settlements Programme

Programme des Nations Unies pour les établissements humains - Programa de las Naciones Unidas para los Asentamientos Humanos  
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Office of the Executive Director

11 October 2008

Dear Mr. Van Der Borght,

Re: Your letter Ref TIGO IOR 40/021/2008

Thank you for your letter of 6 October 2008 in which you and your co-signatories pointed out your apprehensions about evictions, housing rights and related violations in Angola, and in particular, your dismay at the decision to launch the global celebration of World Habitat Day 2008 in Angola.

I wish to respond to you by saying that UN-HABITAT did indeed use the occasion of World Habitat Day to raise the concerns you expressed in an atmosphere of constructive engagement with President José Eduardo dos Santos and members of the Government of Angola. It is the responsibility of the United Nations not just to condemn, but also to engage with and to encourage Member States to respect their international obligations. I have taken this responsibility very seriously in my discussions with the Government of Angola during the World Habitat Day celebrations.

In my meeting with the President and members of his Government, it was clear to me that they were aware of the need to take appropriate measures to provide decent shelter for their people. The seriousness with which the Government organized the World Habitat Day was a good testimony to this resolve. I was also encouraged by the seriousness with which the President treated the suggestions I made in my keynote address, a copy of which is enclosed here. I commented on the issues of housing rights and proposed that the Government consider allocating at least 10% of oil income for affordable, social housing and utility services for poor and low income people. The President not only personally assured me that sufficient oil resources will be set aside and allocated for social housing – but he added that it will exceed the 10 percent of resources for which I appealed in my address.

Mr. Erwin Van Der Borght, Africa Programme Director,  
Amnesty International,  
Peter Benenson House, 1 Easton Street,  
London WC1X 0DW,  
United Kingdom.

cc: Mr. Claude Cahn, Head of Advocacy Unit, Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions; Mr. Joseph Schechla, Coordinator, Housing and Land Rights Network, Habitat International Coalition;  
Ms. Georgette Gagnon, Executive Director, Africa Division, Human Rights Watch.



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Furthermore, I was able to use the occasion of World Habitat Day in Angola to go to a number of new housing projects in and around the capital, Luanda. I visited the resettled community in Viana with the Honourable Diekumpuna Sita José, Minister for Urban Planning and Housing, and he assured me that residents would soon be issued titles to the improved housing they received upon being relocated from the city centre. I also verified that this neighborhood is close to the industrial area and not far away from a new City Suburb being built by a Chinese Company, thus availing access to employment and to public services.

Challenges clearly remain but I was impressed at the progress being made so far in the period of six years since peace returned to the country. And in following up the offer of UN-HABITAT's full support to the new Angola Slum Upgrading Programme and the National Social Housing Programme, I am pleased to inform you that the Government has agreed to sign a Cooperation Agreement with UN-HABITAT at the Fourth session of the World Urban Forum to be held in Nanjing, China next month.

I need to clarify that our approach to slum upgrading involves engaging with the Government at the highest possible levels through a constructive dialogue in order to create a conducive policy environment so that pro-poor implementation can take place on a large scale. The issues involved are political, social and financial and unless the Government is engaged and in the lead, it would be difficult to make much progress.

I hope this puts into context our decision to hold World Habitat Day in Angola. It is my hope that this event proves to be a watershed for better times to come for the urban poor of Angola who will be the priority target group in our envisaged cooperation with the Government and civil society partners.

Let me close by inviting you to the Fourth Session of the World Urban Forum to be held in Nanjing, 3-6 November, where these issues will be discussed at even greater length. I would be happy to meet with you there to discuss these matters further.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anna Tibaijuka'.

Anna Tibaijuka,  
Under-Secretary-General and  
Executive Director

Encs.