

**COMMUNIQUE OF THE A ONE DAY STAKEHOLDERS FORUM TO MARK
THE WORLD HABITAT DAY ORGANIZED BY WOMEN ENVIRONMENTAL
PROGRAMME ON THE 3RD OCTOBER 2006 IN ABUJA, NIGERIA**

WORLD HABITAT DAY 2006

Theme *CITIES: MAGNETS OF HOPE*

The World Habitat Day which is usually every first Monday in the month of October is set aside by the United Nations, a day they Reaffirm that human beings are at the centre of their concern for sustainable development and that they are the basis for their actions in implementing the Habitat Agenda;

They stressed that the World Habitat Day is special moment in the development of human settlements, when half of the world's six billion people will be living in cities and the world is facing unprecedented growth of urban population, mainly in the developing world and it was in this regard that the **Women Environmental Programme (WEP)** whose mission is to address the environmental injustices, social and economic rights of women and children in the society organized a one day stakeholders forum to mark the 2006 World Habitat Day..

The one day stakeholders forum brought together participants from the Civil Society Organizations, people affected by the on going demolition exercise embarked by the Minister in the Presidency and Chairman of the Federal Capital Development Authority, the faith based organizations as well as representatives of the United Nations on Habitat (UN-Habitat) and the media who brainstormed on a number of issues regarding the state of our urban environment especially in the FCT.

The forum had its major focus on these thematic burning reform issues in the FCT;

- Demolition of legally or illegally acquired structures and land
- Demolition of houses in Kubwa as a result of the water channel crisis
- Worsening water supply in Abuja characterized by poor quality and irregularities
- Marginally improving electric power supply as a result of demolitions
- Phasing out of Okada riders
- Revalidation and Certification of land titles

The forum noted that the implications of the most famous reform agenda of the FCT is the ever increasing poverty level, which is attributed to loss of over 4.5 billion Naira revenue during the demolition exercise of more than 1500 shops, increasing risk of HIV spread resulting from rape, hundred of children have been dropped out of school, sexual trafficking in exchange for Shelter by many women and men, the increasing unemployment level and security risks of burglary and

armed robbery. The forum also deliberated on the implication of the phasing out Okada riders and agreed that it is a positive move as Okada riders were responsible for over 65% of the registered road accidents as a result of careless ridding and disrespect of traffic regulations in the FCT, however, the government would have done it by putting in place all necessary institutional arrangements such as enough available buses, taxis and construction of bus stops.

The forum also observed some gaps in the implementation of the urban renewal agenda by both the government and the Civil Society Organizations, the citizenry as that of the;

- a. disregard for the rule of law
- b. policy inconsistency and lack of adherence and implementation
- c. lack of trust by both the CSOs and government to establish a working and collaborative relationships
- d. lack of capacity building for all parties for the common understanding of the issues at stake

The forum however in a quest to mitigate the identified problems agreed on the following;

- that the city renewal program should be done in phases and that other City renewal programs should be withheld till adequate consultation of stakeholders is done
- That there is the need to engage the government for a temporary resettlement shelter for the displaced people.
- That more buses should be acquired, create more routes, bus stops and zebra-crossings.
- Adopt the bottom to top approach in addressing issues that concerns the citizens as well as partnership with the government, CSOs and the private sectors
- A conflict sensitive agenda should be put in place especially at the resettlement areas
- Revalidation and Certification of land titles should be backed by law
- The forum noted that it has not been possible to meet the challenges of generating sufficient employment, providing adequate housing and meeting the basic social needs of the citizens; however, it is the responsibility of the government to partner with its citizenry on how these problems can be mitigated
- The forum re-emphasize that rural and urban areas are economically, socially and environmentally interdependent, and that cities and towns are engines of growth contributing to the development of both rural and urban human settlements. Half of the world's inhabitants live in rural settlements; the population in the rural areas represents a majority. Integrated physical planning and balanced attention to rural and urban living conditions are of crucial importance for Nigeria. Full advantage must be taken of the

complementary contributions and linkages between rural and urban areas, by giving appropriate attention to their different economic, social and environmental requirements. While addressing urban poverty, it is also essential to eradicate rural poverty and to improve living conditions, as well as to create employment and educational opportunities in rural settlements and urban cities.

The forum applauded WEP for taking the bold step and for leading the processes of environmental and urban issues in Nigeria.

Signed on behalf of all participants

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