"HABITAT SUMMIT PROPOSES NEW PARADIGMS FOR CITY MANAGEMENT"

1st HABITAT SUMMIT – A PLATFORM FOR DEVELOPING LIVEABLE CITIES IN INDIA

The third and the final day of the 1st Habitat Summit commenced with a unique forward-looking session on *Drivers for Sustainable Urban Development in India: Learning from Diversity*. Delivering the keynote address on the theme of 'Urban Reality: Where do we go from here?', **Mr. Keshav Varma, Head, Global Urban Programme, World Bank Institute**, recounted his experience as the Municipal Commissioner of Ahmedabad in Gujarat 12 years ago. He highlighted how bringing in professionals like business graduates and chartered accountants to the administration transformed the way the city was managed. The responsiveness of the administration to the people and vice versa underwent a sea change, he said.

Mr. Varma went on to explain the unique concept of 'Municipal Bonds' that was introduced in the city under his administration. Modernised systems were put in place with a system of accessing capital from local markets, through the introduction of credit ratings and Municipal Bonds, which established a new paradigm of city management with the local government freeing itself of any support from the central government, the state government or international agencies. "The practice of city management is considered a kind of lower administration. At the sub-national level, administrative systems are not in place to handle challenges. Cities have resources, which can be tapped if they are well managed", he said. In his interaction with the audience, Mr. Varma also discussed the sophisticated and progressive city management systems of China that can be adapted in the Indian context. "Seventy-three per cent of expenditure in China happens at the local level," he pointed out. Chinese Mayors are the drivers of sub-national investments. Levies and taxes at the local level contribute effectively to the setup, he added.

One of the discussion leaders, **Mr. Amitabh Kant, CEO, Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor Corporation**, laid down the framework for his talk by presenting some key statistics at the very outset of the discussion. India ranks a dismal 65 on the Travel and Tourism Index and happens to be one of the least tourist-friendly cities in the world, largely due to problems of poor infrastructure and sanitation. However, we are recognized as one of the richest in terms of our culture, heritage and authenticity of art. This heritage can be the biggest driver of growth, he pointed out. He further illustrated how some places such as Ajanta, Haridwar, Mahabalipuram and Agra have traditionally suffered from the lack of municipal and civic governance. The BRIC report claims that India will overtake the United States by 2030. This, however, will not be possible if we have garbage around us and no urban institutional

mechanisms, Mr. Kant emphasized. The need of the hour is to bring in more stakeholders to tackle the following issues: (i) Community involvement using resources from Community Development Fund (CDF), (ii) Government to provide baseline data and monitor performance, and (iii) Private players to execute the working plan and acquire revenues from entrance fees, refreshment centres, etc.

Dr. Amit Kapoor, Honorary Chairman, Institute for Competitiveness, India talked about how sustainability is all about resource productivity. "We are individually rational, but collectively irrational," he said. There are factor conditions involved in the creation of competitiveness. The most important of these is the way we use our roads, he added.

Dr. Shikha Jain, Director, Jaipur Virasat Foundation-Dronah Heritage Studio built on the idea that heritage is the key to good city management. "A heritage based economy will be pro-people, pro-poor, pro-progress, sustainable and unique", she said. She also called for the development of a new authority – a progressive new agency to singly promote a vision, engage people, facilitate funding, and mobilise multiple resources in the direction of urban planning.

Mr. Peter Drummond, CEO, BDP, brought in a new perspective to the discussion with his idea that a sustainable city is a shared and sharing city. "Good air, time, nature and heritage should be shared in the needs and desires of individuals and society," he said. We should be efficient in the use of our land, promote community space, social interaction and develop dense forest cover, he added.

The session was chaired by Dr. Partha Mukhopadhyay, Senior Fellow, Centre for Policy Research and Dr. Chetan Vaidya, Director, National Institute of Urban Affairs.

The other key sessions of the final day of the Habitat Summit include a Panel Discussion titled *Whose City is it Anyway?*, which will be chaired by **Mr. Arun Maira, Member, Planning Commission** and a session of *Creating 'Champion Cities': Delivering Enduring Urban legacies,* with a keynote address by **Mrs. Sheila Dikshit, Chief Minister, National Capital Territory of Delhi**.

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The India Habitat Centre was conceived to provide a physical environment which would serve as a catalyst for a synergetic relationship between individuals and institutions working in diverse habitat related areas and therefore, maximise their total effectiveness. (www.indiahabitat.org)

Mirabilis Advisory is an international economic development consultancy that works in the area of globalization, sustainability and entrepreneurship.

Urban Habitats Forum is a public awareness platform established by Mirabilis Advisory in partnership with India Habitat Centre, and designed as a collaborative network of multidisciplinary thinkers and change-makers to push for innovation in shaping the next generation of cities in India. The forum aims to mobilise action through intelligent discourse, impactful research and result-driven advocacy.