



Press Release on the Opening of the UNHABITAT Office in Kuwait
27 November 2008

The Arab Towns Organization headquartered in Kuwait is celebrating today the official opening of the UN-Habitat Office in Kuwait, which will be hosted within the ATO premises. The UN-Habitat Office will partner together with ATO to promote sustainable urbanization and to achieve adequate human shelters for the growing population of city-dwellers throughout the Arab Region.

The United Nations Human Settlements Programme, or UN-HABITAT, headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya, is mandated by the UN General Assembly to promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities with the goal of providing adequate shelter for all.

As the United Nations Secretary General Mr. Ban Ki Moon recently reminded us on the occasion of World Habitat Day on 6th October, many of the world's most pressing challenges -- poverty, natural disasters, environmental degradation, escalating prices for food and fuel -- have important links with rapid urbanization. Urbanization changes forever the way we use land, water and energy. Planned and implemented well, urbanization can bring people choices and help them thrive. Done poorly, however, urbanization reduces safety, despoils the environment and exacerbates the marginalization of those who are already suffering and excluded.

The Millennium Development Goals call for a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020. This means that large investments will be necessary to provide access to water, sanitation, durable housing and sufficient living space.

Cities have tremendous potential to be places where balanced development prevails, where diverse people live in harmony, and where healthy living conditions coexist with low levels of energy consumption, resource-use and waste.

UN-Habitat calls on all partners and stakeholders to do their utmost to realize this potential, and to build decent living conditions for all women, men and children in a way that also preserves our natural heritage and promotes greener and smarter growth.

The Arab Towns Organization is a network of municipalities from Arab nations which exists to develop cooperation between Arab cities in order to promote their development, while preserving Arab identity.

The ceremony will be presided by the Secretary General of ATO Mr. Abdulaziz al-Adasani, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Kuwait, Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah al-Salem al-Sabah and UN officials.