

LAGOS COMMEMORATES WORLD HABITAT DAY 2017, PLEDGES COMMITMENT TO PROVISION OF AFFORDABLE HOMES

World Habitat Day (WHD) 2017, with the theme "Housing Policies: Affordable Homes," was commemorated by the Lagos State Government in Nigeria on Monday, 9th October, at a well-attended event that attracted stakeholders from across the entire urban spectrum.

Lagos State Governor, Mr. Akinwunmi Ambode, who was represented by the Deputy Governor, Dr. Idiat Adebule, in his goodwill message at the event, said it was essential for governments to explore innovative ways to meet the call by the United Nations to provide housing that is within the reach of the common man. "This strategy must recognize the need to increase the local content in the construction of houses, ensure efficiency in land utilization as well as develop a financing system that is convenient, reasonable and economical," he stated.

Some of the schemes being adopted by the state government to address this challenge include its "Rent-to-Own and Rental Housing initiative; a 20,000 units housing programme spread across the three Senatorial Districts of the State, as well as several Urban Renewal, Slum Upgrading and Regeneration Schemes along with urban redevelopment projects all targeted at making Lagos a more livable city.

UN Habitat Programme Manager in Nigeria, Kabir Yari noted that the purpose of the yearly event was to enable stakeholders to reflect on the state of the towns and cities and the basic rights of all to adequate shelter, as a means of reiterating that all stakeholders have responsibilities to shape the future of our cities and towns. In line with the WHD's 2017 theme, the problem of housing shortages faced by Lagos State Government could be solved if the Government could make land more readily available for urban development and housing programmes.

Mr. Rowland Kayanja Director of Information Centre for UN-HABITAT in Nigeria, commended the State Government for its efforts in ensuring safe and affordable houses for the residents of the state. He stated the WHD theme was aligned to the targets set out to be accomplished by 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as outlined under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Among these are: to ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and upgrade slums; to provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all; and, to provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities.

Discussants at the event, led by the keynote speaker, Mr. Fola Arthur-Worrey a former CEO of the Lagos State Security Trust Fund, urged government to consider trends and disparities in income and wealth in policy formulation; put in place rent control mechanism to curb landlord's excesses while protecting their rights; promote economic growth; lower interest rate on housing investment; and, soften mortgage processes and Planning Regulations, with government research institutions supported to promote mass production of locally made building materials as a means of facilitating the production of affordable housing



