

## Tuesday English News Report

*Many Hongkongers unable to live in decent home*

Broadcast Date: 28th October

According to the United Nations, 1.6 billion people around the world live without decent housing; of these, more than 500 million people in Asia live in **slums**.

Poor housing affects health, education, physical security and poses lots of other challenges. A decent home provides a stable, healthy environment for our next generation; it also attracts economic investment and development. Extensive research demonstrates that improving housing helps break the cycle of poverty.

UN figures show that by 2050, 70 per cent of the world's population is projected to be living in **urban** areas, which may cause slums and unplanned settlements to **swell**.

The current situation is already **alarming**, given the fact that 523 million people in Asia are living in slums. Each day, another 120,000 people are added to the populations of Asian cities, requiring the construction of at least 20,000 new dwellings and supporting **infrastructure**. Housing demand is outpacing supply in Asia.

In Hong Kong, people live in a city that is home to some of the world's richest people as well as 1.3 million people - one fifth of our population - who live below the poverty line, according to government data published in 2013. Not all in this **prosperous** society are enjoying the same basic right of having a decent home.

Cleaning up the home, repairing a door or painting a wall are difficult tasks for the elderly and people with disabilities who are living in poverty. A small living space that has not been maintained properly for years may pose potential health and safety **hazards**.

A strong civil society in Hong Kong is stepping up to mitigate some of these basic social needs. Many volunteers, who are willing to contribute time and labour to **spruce up** or repair homes, can testify to the importance of a clean and safe home for the elderly and other people in need. It brings back joy and pride to them.

With the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals expiring in 2015, policymakers are encouraged to **prioritise** housing in the post-2015 development agenda.

The UN has an **obligation** to ensure that "sustainable cities and human settlements" is a goal in the post-2015 development agenda.

On United Nations World Habitat Day today, let us open the door to health, safety and opportunities.

Let us make Hong Kong part of a world where everyone has a decent place to live.