Welcome – Andrew Nethercott, DFID Southern Africa

Andrew Nethercott opened the conference and welcomed the delegates. He began the conference with a brief overview of current concerns facing urban environments across the world. The problems of urban land governance weigh heavily on the issue of global poverty but the majority of world's poor do have one asset - the piece of land on which they live. Collectively, Africa's poor own a property portfolio worth billions. However, their inability to secure title means that they cannot use the land as collateral to secure loans and thus pull themselves out of poverty; the risk of eviction can be constant and it is more difficult to buy, sell and pass on the property.

Property rights are important to DFID. The UK's Secretary of State has made it clear that this is an area that DFID will invest in. Land governance also touches on DFID's core priorities of wealth creation, human development, and especially, climate change. The failure of land governance to make available affordable land in Africa's growing cities means that this continent's urban citizenry are forced to live in slums on the peripheries of cities, distant from services and employment opportunities. They are also often restricted to marginal land which will bear the brunt of climate change. If the poor living on the edges do find work, they face long commutes, which will increase their carbon footprint. Land governance is considered central to this problem, and as DFID develops a regional programme to address this issue, it is looking forward to drawing on the excellent work that Urban LandMark has completed in South Africa and the region.

Nethercott said DFID was very impressed by what Urban LandMark had achieved in South Africa, which was why DFID had just signed an agreement to extend its support for another year. Nethercott indicated that the objective was for Urban LandMark to contribute to work already being done or planned in a number of cities in South Africa to upgrade and/or formalise a number of informal settlements, while Urban LandMark's in-depth research around delays in providing beneficiaries of the capital subsidy with their title deeds will hopefully lead to Urban LandMark supporting provincial and national government to unlock the more than a million blocked title deeds to RDP houses, leaving millions of parents secure in the knowledge that they can pass their homes on to their children.

Nethercott expressed his thanks to Mark Napier and his team for all their work, and stated that DFID was pleased to be working with Urban LandMark in the future.