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HABITAT II PREPCOM II HIGHLIGHTS WEDNESDAY, 26 APRIL 1995

Plenary continued the general debate Wednesday morning, and the Informal Working Group reconvened in the afternoon, to continue work on the Draft Statement of Principles and Global Plan of Action. The two Committees of the Commission also met on Wednesday.

PLENARY

Zambia: Joseph Kaoma stated that 48% of Zambia's population lives in the urban areas. In response to Habitat II, Zambia has: set up a broad-based multi-sectoral national committee; prepared effective and functional documentation based on country-wide consultations; participated in the work of the regional committee; put in place a public sector reform programme; initiated a land reform programme to streamline legislation; and completed the first phase of research on construction materials.

Republic of Korea: Mr. H. Lee said economic development does not improve housing conditions without a housing policy. There is a severe shortage of housing, particularly low-income, which has necessitated the deregulation of the housing sector.

Romania: Deputy Minister Crisan Popescu outlined the national preparations undertaken so far. He said that a national committee has been created; responsibilities of the authorities have been widened; and the participation of populations has been institutionalized.

Slovenia: Mr. Alec Sarec stated that Slovenia has established a national committee, devised a national action plan and submitted a draft national report to the Secretariat.

Paraguay: Director Samudio said that Paraguay has implemented various action programs that give priority to the poorest segments and has invested 2.2% of its GDP in housing resources, but it has not stemmed housing problems. Paraguay has established a national action program, a national shelter strategy and submitted a report on best practices.

Bolivia: Mr. Adolpho Navarra Flores said that Bolivia is planning a national meeting on settlement issues for young professionals and students, an international meeting for regional states and possibly a preparatory meeting for Istanbul.

Spain: Amb. Sermin Prieto-Castro outlined the national preparations undertaken so far: a broad-based working group has been established; a structure for the national report has been adopted; national action plans are being prepared; a masterplan on infrastructure for 1995-2000 has been approved; and a water plan is being coordinated with Portugal.

Sudan: Rep. Elsir M. Ahmed said that Sudan has established a national committee with representatives from the private sector,

es. He added that the document for this Conference should increase its focus on the rural level, clarify international support for housing, reflect the ethics of cities, and assist those countries affected by war.

Chile: Vice Minister Sergio Galilea said that Chile has completed a national progress report and is finalizing a national action plan. Chile has doubled infrastructure investment in the last decade and has built roughly 100,000 housing units annually for the last five years.

International Union of Tenants (IUT): Mr. Nic Nilsson asked whether security of Habitat II delegates can be guaranteed, noting that since IUT objected at the last PrepCom to locating the Conference in Istanbul, civil war has broken out in Turkey. Housing rights are important, especially the right of tenants to security of tenure, non-discrimination and reasonable rents.

Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University: Ms. Sheetal Shah stated that habitat and human settlements is about addressing the quality of life, which is living a life that is humane, full of dignity, rewarding and productive.

OECD: Mr. Pezzini said the OECD is strengthening its assessment of the interaction between economic, environmental and social problems in cities and formulating comprehensive urban policies. He described four OECD initiatives that could provide a framework for consultation with new and non-member countries: the ecological city; urban and regional governance and monitoring; policies for distressed areas; and local development in a Global Economy.

International Labor Office (ILO): Mr. Steve Miller said ILO will submit a paper to the Conference on the changing structure of urban employment. He supported the basic principles of civic engagement, sustainability and equity, but efforts toward better employment opportunities and poverty alleviation must increase.

UNEP: Mr. K.A. Edwards, on behalf of Executive Director Elizabeth Dowdeswell, noted that past policies on human settlement problems placed too much emphasis on the "top-down" approach. Current policy needs the involvement of the stakeholders at all levels.

UNESCO: Mr. Tochtermann said that UNESCO intends to focus specifically on the civic and cultural aspects of habitat problems. Urbanization is growing rapidly and the focus is often on cities, but this Conference should reserve particular attention to rural problems.

World Bank: Mr. Michael Cohen outlined three tasks for the Conference: convince political leaders of the importance of urban issues; provide the best advice about habitat questions; and clear the foundations for local, national and global action. He noted that: the output of Habitat II should be understood by laypeople everywhere; the role of the international community needs to be acknowledged although it will be modest; the World

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Bank has contributed US\$1 million to support national governmental preparations and participation.

International Union of Finance Housing Institutions: Mr. Michael Lea elaborated on the role of the private sector in addressing housing issues. Legal systems that create, endorse and enforce property rights promote housing funds. There is a need to improve and develop linkages between the formal and informal sectors in order to improve funds for the low income sector.

International Council on Women: Ms. M. van den Boogert welcomed the reference in the GPA to the need to remove obstacles that discriminate against women. The document should also address discrimination against the elderly, and practical tools should be developed to measure performance in eliminating discrimination.

United Nations Volunteers: Ms. Dorothy Gordon, on behalf of the UNV Executive Director said the UNV hope to share their knowledge in building capacity for leadership management and to organize round-tables in Istanbul for the voluntary sector.

Youth Caucus: Ms. M. Nyamongo said that today 84% of youth live in developing countries and most live in cities. Many young people have no access to adequate shelter, gainful employment or functional education, and many turn to crime and violence. She reiterated the need to include youth on national delegations and requested a youth meeting prior to PrepCom III.

League of Arab States: Mr. A. Salaheldin Noah said the League's preparations for Habitat II have included two regional meetings, and another is scheduled for October. The Arab Council of Ministers has decided that all Arab states should create national committees and most Arab states are preparing national reports.

Commission on Human Rights: Mr. Rajinder Sachar said that the right to adequate housing has been part of many international declarations, including Habitat I and the Global Strategy for the Year 2000. Despite this, no nation has achieved adequate shelter for all. He said that the right to housing was enforceable under international law and criticized World Bank policies that have effected housing problems.

INFORMAL WORKING GROUP ON THE GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION

The informal working group on the Draft Statement of Principles and Global Plan of Action (GPA) agreed Wednesday to organize a small drafting group to combine the Secretariat's draft of the GPA with a European Union (EU) outline for discussion distributed Tuesday and an African Group outline described during Wednesday's session. The Chair, G.A.C. Khonje (Zambia), suggested that delegates first deal with the GPA's structure and then discuss substantive issues.

The EU summarized its proposal, reiterating the need for the GPA to support Habitat II's agreed political aims. He suggested that the final GPA could be divided into two documents, one covering principles and commitments and a second containing the GPA. He suggested that most of the commitments in the Secretariat draft are contextual and should follow substantive commitments on settlements. The commitments should be between governments, while the action programme would include national or subnational elements. The African group said the final document should have four sections: a preamble; principles, strategies and commitments; the GPA; and a fourth section describing monitoring and evaluation programmes based on performance measures and indicators.

Several delegates supported the general structure of the EU outline and recommended additions or modifications. The suggestions include a section describing strategies and a timetable for their implementation, sections on financial resources and mechanisms, combining the preamble and principles, and that additional emphasis should be placed on national plans or international aspects. Delegates also noted the need to distinguish clearly between principles, commitments and strategies and to determine the sectors or administrative levels to which they should apply.

The Chair accepted the proposal by several delegates to establish a drafting group to combine the various texts. The group will consist of two representatives from each regional group, two NGO representatives, and a representative each from the EU, the African group and local authorities. The regional groups should submit their nominations by Thursday morning, and the group will begin meeting immediately thereafter.

The working group then discussed substantive elements. Several comments from delegates underscored the preamble's importance in setting the scope for the document: a new conceptualization of settlements and settlement problems; integration of rural and urban concerns; an evolutionary perspective on settlements; inclusion of people of all spiritual heritages; and a justification for the global conference encompassing the similarity of different countries' problems, ecological concerns, new human rights related to settlements and international responsibility for the solution. Regarding general substantive issues, delegates highlighted the need for: a plan that allows for national action; inclusion of rural as well as urban concerns; financial and fiscal issues; and development concerns related to both settlements and natural and human resources.

Several delegates stressed that the document should be written in simple language for politicians and the public to understand.

15TH COMMISSION ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

COMMITTEE I: During consideration of Agenda Item 7, Review of National Action To Provide Shelter For All Since Habitat I, the Committee issues related to Habitat II were discussed. Measurement tools were unavailable for Habitat I but they now need to be implemented, particularly through the global indicators programme. The urban poor should be integrated through a government credit policy so that this sector can save for their housing and other needs.

COMMITTEE II: The Committee continued debate of Agenda Item 4, Activities of the UNCHS: progress report of the Executive Director. Discussion centered on housing rights as described in document HS/C/15/2/Add.2, Towards A Housing Rights Strategy. The US said that while it supports the goal of shelter for all and the right of non-discriminatory access to housing, financing and other conditions that support adequate housing, the right to adequate housing should be deleted. The Netherlands, Sweden and the Holy See supported retaining the right to adequate housing. At the end of the morning session, the Chair requested that an informal consultative group chaired by the Philippines and including the US, Mexico, the Netherlands and Uganda propose a draft resolution on the right to housing. The consultative group recommended in the afternoon session that UNCHS should include the right to housing in its biennial work plan. Debate on specific language for the work plan's focus continued through the afternoon.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

PLENARY: General debate was not completed Wednesday morning as scheduled. The Bureau will decide when an additional Plenary meeting will be held. Look for announcements in the Journal.

WORKING GROUP I: The Group meets for the first time Thursday morning to begin consideration of Agenda Item 2, Progress report of the Secretary-General of the Conference on the activities of the Conference Secretariat.

WORKING GROUP II: The drafting group on the GPA is expected to hold its first session Thursday morning in Room M310. Also look for the African Group's draft outline and substantive recommendations for revising the GPA.

COMMISSION ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS: The Plenary meets in the afternoon and Committees will continue meeting throughout the day.

DELEGATE'S BRIEFING: There will be a Delegates Briefing on the Conference on Best Practices by the Municipality of Dubai and the Dubai International Conference Task Force on Thursday at 1:30 P.M. in Conference Room 2.