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HABITAT II PREPCOM II HIGHLIGHTS MONDAY, 1 MAY 1995

WORKING GROUP I

The Working Group completed consideration of national preparations for the Conference, discussed plans for committees and activities at Istanbul and began consideration of reports on the state of human settlements.

AGENDA ITEM II: PREPARATIONS FOR THE CONFERENCE: Liberia has developed a national settlement plan, established a task force for implementation of Habitat II, and is planning a national symposium and workshops. Nepal has established a national committee and completed its human settlements sector review and national settlements strategy for a national plan of action. Ghana has submitted a report from its national committee. He called for supporting the attendance of needy delegations and equity between rural and urban concerns.

Uganda, on behalf of the African States, noted common African priorities: rural-urban poverty, national development, land tenure, financial reforms, human resource development, environmental impact assessment, gender balance, civil and human rights, especially concerning refugees and human and natural disasters. He added that cities and countryside are not enemies. Nigeria's national steering committee will address best practices, urban housing indicators and hold a workshop for local councils.

Responding to questions from the Netherlands, the Secretariat said that in-country preparations would be supported in the event of a funding shortfall, but no decisions had been made. Regarding information flow, reports from about 40 upcoming international meetings will be consolidated into a progress report before PrepCom III.

PrepCom II Chair Martti Lujanen then introduced document A/CONF.165/PC.2/CRP.2, Organization of Work, including Establishment of Committees and Procedural Matters, which will be considered by the Group Wednesday.

The document addresses pre-Conference consultations, the election of officers, adoption of the rules of procedure, adoption of the agenda, organization of work, participation of local authorities and the report of the Conference.

The document highlights the role of NGOs and local authorities, based on GA resolution 49/109 of December 1994 and the decision of the PrepCom at its first session to involve all the listed sectors as full members of the national committees.

A two-day pre-conference consultation will be held in Istanbul to deal with organizational matters, with one representative from each delegation attending. This proposal needs endorsement from the GA in November. The section on election of officers and adoption of rules of procedure is based

on a standard UN format, and the agenda will be adopted in PrepCom III. One Plenary and two Main Committees are planned. Plenary will have two segments: general debate on the themes of the main conference and a high-level segment. Committee I will prepare the Statement of Principles and Global Plan of Action and address organizational matters. Committee II will conduct hearings between member States and participants from other sectors and possibly receive recommendations on thematic issues from round-tables. Representatives of Local Authorities' associations will have access at the level of government delegations without the right to vote. The Report of the Conference will include the hearings from Committee II.

AGENDA ITEM 4: STATE OF HUMAN SETTLEMENTS REPORT AND MAJOR REVIEWS: The Secretariat summarized the group of documents reviewing the state of human settlements. India said the documents did not sufficiently reflect developing countries' priority on international technical and financial assistance. He also pointed out problems related to inflexible regulations, the relations between public and private sector finance, equal opportunity for borrowing, and the abolition of rent control. He placed a reservation on A/CONF.165/PC.2/11's treatment of the human right to housing pending the decision of the CHS. The Netherlands said the Group should defer discussion on housing rights until the CHS completed deliberations.

Finland said the review of Agenda 21 implementation in A/CONF.165/PC.2/8 shows that development of viable indicators can ensure an efficient monitoring system. She called for consideration of relevant documents and goals from Cairo and Copenhagen.

Kenya said the reports do not address the needs of vulnerable groups. The rural-urban imbalance was not shown, and statistics were needed on regional levels of urbanization.

Spain said a statement in A/CONF.165/PC.2/8 that "the business of development is an eminently private affair" should be revised to say that government can help mobilize private sector resources.

The Chair said an informal, open-ended drafting group chaired by India would be formed to revise the documents.

WORKING GROUP II

The informal working group of Working Group II started discussions on the structure and content of the Principles section of the draft Statement of Principles and Global Plan of Action (GPA) being prepared by the drafting group.

STRUCTURE: The structure proposed includes a preamble, principles, goals and commitments, and the GPA. Benin, Nigeria and India noted that goals and commitments have been put together as a chapter heading, but goals and principles should be together and commitments should form a separate section. They

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sought clarification on whether the section on review and monitoring would remain in the draft. The Chair responded that the commitments are to goals, not to specific actions, and that monitoring is a chapter within the goals and commitments section. India, Benin and Nigeria stated that goals and principles should form one section so that commitments refer to both.

PRINCIPLES: Six principles were considered. Additional principles of Livable Human Settlements and Partnerships, proposed by Turkey and the African Group, respectively, will be drafted for consideration later.

Peace: India said the statement that "governments at all levels, the international community and civil society should collaborate to preserve peace," assumes that peace exists, and suggested they should also strive "to secure" peace. Israel suggested mentioning local authorities, but the Chair stated that "at all levels" includes these actors. Benin, supported by the Holy See, suggested including "to promote and preserve peace," rather than "to secure," deleting "collaborate" and adding "lasting" to the statement that "just and comprehensive peace is an essential condition." Sweden and Zambia questioned the inclusion of the qualifier "just." Benin, India, Nigeria and the Holy See stated that there are many examples where countries have experienced peace, but it is imposed and unjust.

Family: Benin suggested adding the word "strengthened" to a sentence calling for states to recognize and enhance the role of the family. Supported by the Holy See, Egypt, Algeria and Sweden, he stated that the sentence "It exists in various forms in various cultures" should be replaced with language agreed to at recent UN meetings in Cairo and Copenhagen. Turkey noted that many statements in this principle are actually commitments and proposed moving them to the commitments section. She added that specifically including the family as a principle requires including other societal units such as the community and the individual. Many delegations responded that the family should be highlighted as a principle because of its importance, and suggested moving parts of the principle to the section on commitments.

International Solidarity and Cooperation: The three paragraph principle outlines the justification for human settlements, the rationale for international solidarity to meet the challenges of human settlements and the relevance of global terms of trade, technology transfer and extended economic cooperation to urbanization issues.

India, supported by Russia and Nigeria, said the title should include "Assistance." Nigeria suggested the addition of "substantial assistance." Sweden, supported by the US and Australia, said the main financial responsibility will lie with national governments and local authorities. The US then proposed: implementation of the GPA will require application of substantial resources, local or international...." Benin stated that international solidarity is needed and indispensable for responding to challenges of global urbanization. Following Kenya's suggestion, on behalf of the African Group, to include partnership, several delegates said this should be a separate principle. Brazil, supported by Australia, added "national" to "sound and effective international policies" as a prerequisite for international solidarity.

Government Responsibility and Civic Engagement: Delegations made several suggestions regarding the responsibilities of government including: settlement planning frameworks should be consistent with Agenda 21; mobilization of adequate financial and technical resources should occur within states; effective and just human settlement management should be ensured; and property rights should be established. Israel suggested an amendment that adds children to the section enabling women and men to participate in decisions that affect their living environment. Some delegates questioned whether the needs of children should be mentioned here. Australia proposed that civic engagement include provision of effective social protection mechanisms designed to assist the most vulnerable groups.

Sustainability: The Principle calls for all human settlements to be developed and adjusted to requirements of sustainability. The principle identifies three aspects essential to sustainable

human settlements: environmental sustainability, economic sustainability and social sustainability. Environmental sustainability requires planning that takes into account the ecosystems' carrying capacity. Economic sustainability deals with managed settlements that provide sustainable economic growth, in particular addressing consumption, transport, economic and development activities. Social sustainability ensures that settlements provide conditions such as, social welfare, solidarity and social cohesion in families and ethnic groups.

Substantive discussions centered on: whether to delete the actors mentioned in the principle; the need to replace "social sustainability" with alternative wording because the concept could not be defined at the World Summit for Social Development; deletion of the reference to debt; and the need to specifically identify the relevant government institutions. Several delegations, including Kenya, on behalf of the African Group, proposed additional texts. Japan, supported by the Philippines, wanted the impact of "natural disasters" recognized. Discussion on the economic aspect focused on the choice between "sustainable economic growth" or "sustained economic growth." Developing countries want the latter, arguing that it is the language used in the Rio documents.

Croatia suggested that the resettlement of internally displaced persons and refugees be covered under the social aspect.

Equity: Turkey suggested referring to equity between settlements, not just within settlements and suggested additional language. Sweden stated that the special needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged people warranted a separate sentence, and noted that the word "poverty" is not mentioned. Brazil, supported by many other delegations, commented that the idea of good governance should not be included because it is too controversial.

Benin recommended replacing "All people should equitably share the burdens of human settlements" with "common but differentiated" responsibility. Germany, supported by several delegations, disagreed with the change noting that equitable sharing is not synonymous with equal sharing. Other suggestions included deleting all brackets, mentioning physical and mental health needs, referring specifically to homeless people, and providing education and training for women and children.

COMMISSION ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

The 15th CHS adopted the reports and resolutions of its committees in HS/C/15/L.1(Nos. 1-11) and corrigenda and concluded its session.

Committee II's conclusions on the right to housing are contained in several documents. Chapter III of the draft report includes three paragraphs summarizing the debate over whether the right to housing is an established human right and whether it should be included in CHS documents. It notes that an informal working party draft resolution and other texts had not been accepted. Chapter VIII notes disagreement over inclusion of the right to housing in the biennial work programme, that the Committee deferred the decision to the Plenary and cites the draft resolution adopted by the Committee for further examination by the Executive Director. Plenary approved the UNCHS draft work programme and instructed the executive director to discharge his responsibilities regarding the right to housing subprogramme element, taking into full account the background of discussions and the resolution. The Executive Director said that he would attach a rider reflecting this decision to relevant documents.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

PLENARY: General debate will resume in Plenary at 9:30 a.m.

WORKING GROUP I: The drafting group on the state of human settlements report will meet at 9:30 a.m.

WORKING GROUP II: Pending the translation of the texts, the informal working group will begin consideration of the new texts on preamble, goals and objectives, at 9:30 a.m.