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HABITAT II PREPCOM II HIGHLIGHTS TUESDAY, 2 MAY 1995

Plenary convened Tuesday morning to continue general debate. Working Group I considered draft decisions on preparations for the Conference. The informal working group of Working Group II completed consideration of the Preamble of the Global Plan of Action prepared by the drafting committee.

PLENARY

Plenary heard statements from 26 speakers. Most delegates reported on national preparations for Habitat II and the housing situations in their countries.

Editors Note: Coverage of Plenary statements made Tuesday will be carried in the summary issue of the Bulletin to be published following this session of the PrepCom.

WORKING GROUP I

Mexico and Sweden suggested amendments to document A/CONF.165/PC.2/2/Add.1. Mexico suggested a section on human settlements legislation since Habitat I. Sweden proposed guidelines for the selection of best practices and the establishment of a jury to make selections.

The informal, open-ended drafting group chaired by India reviewed a series of draft decisions contained in document A/CONF.165/PC.2/2/Add.3.

PREPARATORY ACTIVITIES

A. National objectives, activities and reporting: China, Sweden and Finland questioned the five-year national plan of action. China said the national plans of action should follow the Global Plan of Action (GPA), which will not be complete until Habitat II. Sweden and Finland said their national action plans are not on five-year scales. The Secretariat said the language is based on recommendations from the first PrepCom and that the national reports and GPA are to be developed in parallel. The Chair suggested that the decision could refer to "national plans and five-year plans." The Netherlands, supported by Sweden and Denmark, added that countries can formulate a plan and also give an overview of existing plans of action. Several delegations noted that different decisions designated either 1 August or 1 September as the deadline for national reports. They preferred 1 September. The decision was adopted.

B. Regional objectives and activities: Colombia said that a statement emphasizing similarities in regional cultures and economies should instead note their difference or diversity. France suggested "cultural, economic and social convergence."

Gabon suggested convergence and diversity. The decision was adopted.

C. International objectives and activities: Romania suggested substituting "housing" for "shelter" in a paragraph describing best practices. Swaziland said subregional organizations should be included in technical cooperation. The decision was adopted but a paragraph on the GPA was deferred, pending further discussions in the PrepCom.

THE NATURE OF HABITAT II

The decision was deferred because it is still under discussion.

Financing of the Habitat II and its preparatory activities: China added to a paragraph requesting funding from governments, "especially those of the developed countries and others in a position to do so, and to international and regional financial institutions." The decision was adopted.

The draft decision on the **State of Human Settlements Report, major reviews and other substantive documentation** was adopted.

Draft decisions on **accreditation and participation of local authorities, organizational arrangements for the conference, and activities parallel to the main activities of the Conference** were deferred until other discussions on these matters are complete.

Financing of Habitat II and its preparatory activities: The Netherlands and Italy asked for an explanation of the budget. Denmark and Uganda noted that the decision was nearly identical to an earlier one, except for inclusion of a specific budget of \$4 million. They suggested incorporating the two decisions. The decision on this item was deferred.

Date and agenda of the third session of the Preparatory Committee: Delegates noted that the dates in the decision are blank. The Secretariat said the dates depend on the availability of facilities in New York and on other arrangements to be discussed Wednesday. He said the third session is likely to take place between the second half of February and first half of March. Sweden said the decision could not yet accurately reflect the incomplete GPA work in Working Group II. Adoption of the subparagraph was deferred.

Japan said discussions had not been held on accreditation, so that portion of the decision should be deferred. Finland suggested adding a review of best practices to the status of preparations. The portion on the status of preparations and the remainder of the decision were adopted.

The Chair introduced a draft resolution from the Bureau stating that the PrepCom authorizes its Bureau to hold, as necessary, meetings between the sessions of the Committee to guide, *inter alia*, the Secretariat's work. Canada, China,

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Colombia and the UK said they would prefer to hear details on possible meetings. Until the details are provided, the resolution should be deferred. Japan said it had doubts about intersessional meetings because of the budgetary implications.

WORKING GROUP II

Working Group II chaired by Amb. de Silva convened Tuesday morning to hear the progress report of the informal working group. Dr. Khonje, Chair of the informal working group, reported that the group had completed consideration of the draft principles to be presented to the Working Group later in the week. The Working Group adjourned and the informal working group begun consideration of the Preamble to the Global Plan of Action, as contained in document A/CONF.165/PC.2/L.2.

Paragraph 1 recognizes the centrality of human concerns to sustainable development, as well as the human being's entitlement to a life in harmony with nature and shared spiritual and moral values. There was a brief debate on the need to include "ethical values."

Paragraph 2 reviews the state of urban growth and state of human settlements since Habitat I and notes that there has been no significant improvement in shelter conditions. Japan objected to this statement as it implies that all international efforts have been useless. India said that it was a fact that little change had been made. Agreement was reached that "despite the great effort by the international community and States, there have been no significant changes..."

Paragraph 3 notes that Habitat II has been preceded by other UN conferences whose contributions are reflected in the Global Plan of Action. Habitat II's function is to continue the process. Italy requested mention of the effects of technology on human settlements in developed countries. With few amendments, the paragraph was accepted.

Paragraph 4 underscores the importance of sustainable human settlements in an urbanizing world. Benin, supported by the Philippines, Kenya and the Holy See, said the word "human" should be deleted as the process aims at achieving "sustainable development."

Paragraph 5 describes the world situation since the end of the Cold War. After prolonged debate, a small committee was set up to provide consensus text, which now reads, "The current world situation is marked by prospects of hope and elements of concern. The end of the Cold War has provided opportunities for new patterns of international cooperation and has caused major structural changes in developing countries and countries with economies in transition. At the same time, many countries face many economic problems and, as always the poor, disadvantaged and other vulnerable groups, especially women and children suffer the most. It is recognized that the problem faced by human settlements in many regions are greatly influenced by international economic inequalities, the debt burden, negative impacts of certain effects of structural adjustment programmes and unsustainable models of development."

Paragraph 6 highlights the effects of poor housing and homelessness in particular in developing countries, noting that developed countries are also faced these problems. It acknowledges the "right to a place to live in peace and dignity." Forty-five minutes of debate produced no consensus on the "right" issue, despite delegates' warnings against reverting to discussions that took a week in the Commission without yielding consensus. It was agreed that the two options, "is equally entitled to" and "have basic human needs, including" will be left in brackets. Belgium noted that the issue here is a moral obligation referring to the right to dignity of living, not the right to adequate housing.

Paragraph 7 deals with industrialization's effects on the environment in developed countries and the lack of personal acceptance of responsibility. UNIDO said "indiscriminate industrialization" is the problem.

Paragraph 8 outlines the constraints facing local authorities in addressing human settlements. The International Union of Local Authorities provided alternative text on measures to strengthen the operational capacity of local authorities, which was endorsed.

Paragraph 9 highlights the role of cities in economic development as well as their negative social and environmental effects, which unless resolved will become an obstacle to stability, well-being and development. Delegates said the paragraph's orientation is negative. Hungary suggested it should be placed before paragraph 7.

Paragraph 10 focuses on international migration and stresses that education, housing, employment and social integration needs of migrants should be addressed by host countries. Croatia suggested additional text providing for international assistance for reconstruction of human settlements for refugees and internally displaced persons.

Paragraph 11 calls for preventive measures beyond the city-level, against natural, technological and other disasters. Benin added "man-made disasters" and introduced language referencing excessive military expenditures, arms trade and investment for arms protection and acquisition.

Paragraph 12 states the need to address urban-rural linkages related to economic development in rural areas. Several alternatives were given to eliminate the impression that urbanization is a negative process.

Paragraph 13 stresses the need for decision-making that is decentralized and includes participation of affected persons. There was debate on the meaning of "lowest local level possible." Denmark's proposal, "decisions made at the level as close as possible to those affected..." was accepted.

Paragraph 14 focuses on the status of women as a measure of a nation's development and stresses the need for equality in all aspects. Several delegates supported the approach to have a section on women. Several amendments were made. Delegates requested a new paragraph on children and youth.

Paragraph 15 underscores the justification of the preceding paragraphs and endorses the principles, goals and commitments in the document. **Paragraph 16** outlines the objective of the principles, goals and commitments adopted by Habitat II. Both were accepted with minor amendments.

IN THE BREEZEWAYS

The possibility -- or necessity -- is growing for an intersessional meeting or resumed session of the PrepCom to continue work on the Global Plan of Action. An informal drafting group formed late last week has made progress on a structure and some sections of the GPA, but it is unlikely that this session of the PrepCom will complete its work on a draft text. Large sections of the GPA, notably the programme areas, have not yet been discussed. One possibility is that the small informal drafting group will meet occasionally over the coming months. Another option is a meeting of the PrepCom in conjunction with the Second Committee of the General Assembly when it considers Habitat in its regular agenda in New York. The main question is how to pay for it. The GA has not authorized funds for an intersessional, and some delegations say they do not want to foot the bill.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

WORKING GROUP I: The Group will discuss the Organization of Work for Habitat II, including establishment of committees and procedural matters as contained in A/CONF.165/PC.2/CRP.2. The Committee also may consider an intersessional meeting.

WORKING GROUP II: The informal working group is likely to begin consideration of the two remaining Principles, Partnerships and Livable Human Settlements. They may also begin discussion of the Goals and Commitments.