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HABITAT II PREPCOM III HIGHLIGHTS TUESDAY, 6 FEBRUARY 1996

On the second day of PrepCom III for Habitat II, Working Group I discussed arrangements for the Habitat II Conference. Subgroup A of Working Group II convened for a morning session and discussed Section A of the Global Plan of Action (GPA). Subgroup B met in the morning and the afternoon. Delegates gave general comments on several sections and submitted written amendments.

WORKING GROUP I

The Chair, Pamela Mboya (Kenya), opened the second session of Working Group I to complete Agenda Item 3 (Conference preparations). She said the informal consultations on financing Habitat II will report to the Group. The informal Australian proposal that States and intergovernmental organizations commit to action on the Habitat II agenda by 2000 was sent to the Plenary for discussion under Agenda Item 5 (provisional agenda). India said part of the proposal was already covered by the requirement that States prepare national action plans.

Chair Mboya invited representatives of Conference partner organizations to explain their activities. Mr. Drew Horgan, Local Authorities Steering Committee for Habitat II, described plans for a World Assembly of Cities and Local Authorities and a declaration in Istanbul. Mr. Zekai Baloglu, Vice President, Third Sector Foundation of Turkey, said the Foundation Forum at the Conference will initiate global dialogue, accept a foundation declaration, and set up a task force. Ms. Seyhan Erdogdn, International Federation of Building and Woodworkers, described preparations for the Trade Union Forum. Mr. Jorge Wilhelm, Habitat Secretariat, explained that two sets of external parallel activities will take place alongside the Conference. Other activities will include exhibitions, a trade fair, and major cultural events at the opening and closing of Habitat II.

WORKING GROUP II SUBGROUP A

Subgroup A of WGII first deliberated on negotiation procedures. Many delegations preferred immediately beginning a paragraph-by-paragraph discussion. The Subgroup agreed to hear general comments on each section, and then submit written amendments to the Secretariat for compilation.

I. PREAMBLE: Many delegates said the Preamble should specifically refer to enabling efforts, partnerships, strategic urban management and sustainable development. Delegates frequently mentioned the need to strengthen the language on the links between rural and urban areas and to include specific references to other UN Conferences. Some delegates noted the lack of specific references to the vulnerability of women, children, the elderly and indigenous peoples. Many developing countries said their needs must be an essential element. Specific comments during the debate included:

The EU expressed concern about references to human and social rights, and planned to submit amendments referring specifically to previous UN conferences. He proposed amendments to clarify the link between urban and rural areas. The EU will also recommend specific references to the gender perspective by using language previously agreed to in Beijing. Canada stressed that the Preamble should state the goals and rationale for the Conference in paragraph 1, and state the problems related to human settlements in paragraph 2. Norway emphasized the need to address gender and the concerns of children and youth.

The US highlighted the specific principles of sustainability, enablement and partnerships. Regarding the adequate standard of living, he said this principle derives from the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The agenda must properly cite these agreements, rather than recast them in terms that may cause problems, legal and otherwise. A representative of Local Authorities stated that more than 1300 authorities from 31 countries have established local Agenda 21s and Habitat II should give further support to this effort. The Philippines proposed reference to the needs of migrants.

UNICEF noted that the Preamble does not make reference to children's rights. Colombia said that the references to civic engagement should be replaced with references to citizens. India said the Preamble treats the problems of human settlements as problems of transition from rural to urban areas, and overlooks the problems of the remaining rural settlements. The Women's Caucus said that many of the problems related to human settlements are caused by changes in the world economy, which disproportionately affect women. The list of the most serious problems confronting cities should include the increase of violence against women.

II. GOALS AND PRINCIPLES: In their general comments, delegates mentioned several sections in need of more specific language, such as the eradication of poverty, peace, the family,

This issue of the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* © <enb@igc.apc.org> is written and edited by Chad Carpenter <ccarpenter@igc.apc.org>, Peter Doran <PF.Doran@ulst.ac.uk>, Richard Jordan, Kira Schmidt <cjs28@columbia.edu> and Lynn Wagner <grund@usc.edu>. The Managing Editor is Langston James Goree VI "Kimo" <kimo@pipeline.com>. The sustaining donors of the *Bulletin* are the International Institute for Sustainable Development <iisd@web.apc.org> and the Pew Charitable Trusts through the Pew Global Stewardship Initiative. General support for the *Bulletin* during 1996 has been provided by the United Kingdom, Denmark, Australia and Iceland. The authors can be contacted at their e-mail addresses and by phone at +1-212-644-0204 and fax at +1-212-644-0206. IISD can be contacted at 161 Portage Ave. East, Sixth Floor, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 0Y4, Canada. The opinions expressed in the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of IISD and other funders. Excerpts from the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin* may be used in other publications with appropriate citation. Electronic versions of the *Bulletin* are automatically sent in English and French to e-mail distribution lists (ASCII and PDF format) and can be found on the gopher at <gopher.igc.apc.org> and in hypertext through the *Linkages* WWW-server at <<http://www.iisd.ca/linkages/>> on the Internet. For further information on ways to access, support or contact the *Earth Negotiations Bulletin*, send e-mail to <enb@igc.apc.org>.

civic engagement and partnerships. They also highlighted several issues for inclusion or further elaboration, such as gender equality, social diversity, the role of science and technology, the importance of communities and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

General comments included the following: The EU expressed concern about equal rights between men and women, access to economic resources, and the right to inheritance for everyone. Canada stressed peace, human rights, open spaces, gender and participatory decision making. The US stressed the principles of sustainability, enablement and partnership. Hungary suggested a paragraph dealing with the role of science and technology. Nigeria said "eradication of poverty" appears utopian and suggested using a more achievable target such as alleviation. Brazil stressed that partnerships should encompass the link between public and private sectors and suggested a reference to common but differentiated responsibilities. India said that development contributes to peace, while the document notes that peace contributes to development.

Several delegates, including Algeria, Iran and China, questioned the Secretariat's intention to include NGO amendments in the compilation document and expressed concern about its precedent setting nature. Some delegates, including Nigeria, Senegal and the US, spoke in favor of hearing NGO views. The Chair noted the consensus against including NGO input.

The Holy See recommended that parental responsibility be added to government responsibility in **19** (civic engagement and government responsibility). Norway proposed adding reference to cooperatives to public and private initiatives. UNESCO stated that the right to adequate housing should be recognized as a human right, and recommended that "human rights education" be added after "universal education" in **19**. The ILO stated that **20** (partnerships) should include workers and employers as actors, and recommended adding text regarding employment. The Republic of Korea suggested the addition of technical transfer and information exchange to "new and additional resources" in **22** (international cooperation and coordination).

III. COMMITMENTS: Italy proposed the inclusion of refugees in **25(h)** (shelter), and suggested that women and vulnerable and disadvantaged groups be emphasized in **27(b)** (informal sector). UNICEF stressed the need to incorporate the interests of children, and recommended the inclusion of people with disability in **25(h)**.

Morocco added references to improving rural, in addition to urban, areas. Japan supported the 0.7% ODA target but called for coordination on funding uses. The US noted that it would focus on ensuring nondiscriminatory, equal access to housing and would propose policies to solve shelter problems. India called for emphasis on international cooperation and, in **35** (UNHCS), for UNHCS to "assist" and not "monitor" implementation of the Habitat Agenda. In **27(i)** (impact of disasters), UNESCO added reference to "international and civil wars." In **25** (adequate shelter for all), Canada added references to indigenous people, people with disabilities, and use of energy efficient technologies.

IV. GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION: STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION: The Chair opened discussion on Sections E (International cooperation and coordination) and F (Implementation and follow-up of the Global Plan of Action). India, supported by Pakistan, noted an imbalance between the international commitments in this section and national commitments with other sections of the text. He called for a

document that specifically lists the abilities of the UNCHS in implementation. The Women's Caucus highlighted issues omitted from this section, including transnational corporations and multilateral and bilateral debt relief, reduced military spending and taxation of international financial transactions. The US mentioned that international conferences since Rio have focused on beginning work on the national level and broadening those actions State by State. Australia will focus on strengthening mechanisms for national commitments, and on regional follow-up.

WORKING GROUP II SUBGROUP B

IV. GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION: STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION: Chair Edmundo Hermosilla (Chile) opened the subgroup's consideration of Section A (Introduction). The Holy See added "families" to the list of actors. In **38** (economic sphere), the EU added a reference to "violations of human rights" as a critical factor. In **39** (enable local communities), the EU added a reference to partnerships with "the voluntary sector." In **40** (series of world conferences), the EU noted that the Conferences call for "strategic action on Human Rights..." Uganda noted that investment funds referred to in **38** are generally not "more often available," and those that are available are difficult for developing countries to secure. Japan stated that equal attention should be given to all segments of society and recommended adding "children" after "women and men" in **42(a)** (rights and responsibilities). The Philippines, in reference to **38** (globalization of the economy), commented that globalization has benefited a few but has marginalized many in developing countries. UNICEF stressed the needs of children and noted that a growing number do not have families.

Section B. Adequate shelter for all: The Republic of Korea replaced the first sentence in paragraph **44** (housing rights) with a reference to the basic human need for adequate shelter and governments' responsibility to attain the goal of adequate shelter for all and to promote good living conditions. Japan stated that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights should be followed. India preferred retaining the enablement language.

In **56(a)** (land delivery mechanisms), Senegal substituted "apportionment" mechanisms for "delivery." Croatia called for reference to war destruction. Mexico stated that the text does not reflect the diversity of land holding patterns. Argentina noted that paragraphs addressing access to land (55-59) should account for differing realities in various systems of landholding.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

PLENARY: The Plenary may convene today at 3:00 pm to consider, among other things, a demonstration of best practices and a document on accreditation of additional NGOs.

WORKING GROUP II: Subgroup A will convene at 11:00 am in Conference Room 2 to begin negotiations on the Preamble. An afternoon meeting is expected. Subgroup B is expected to begin negotiations on Section A (Introduction) to the Global Plan of Action at 10:00 am in Conference Room 3. An afternoon meeting is expected.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES: A daily briefing for local authority delegates is taking place at the Tudor Hotel at 6:30 pm. On Thursday at 3:00 pm in Conference Room 1 there will be a meeting convened by the International Association of Local Authorities.