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HABITAT II PREPCOM III HIGHLIGHTS WEDNESDAY, 7 FEBRUARY 1996

Delegates to PrepCom III for Habitat II began paragraph-by-paragraph negotiations in the two Subgroups of Working Group II. The Plenary met during the afternoon to consider outstanding issues and to hear from local authorities.

PLENARY

The Plenary deferred consideration of an additional list of NGOs recommended for accreditation (A/CONF.165/PC.3/2/Add.3) until Friday when a similar document (Add.4) will be considered. India and the US expressed reservations about two NGOs accredited Monday (A/CONF.165/PC.3/2) and served notice that they would question their status, given the opportunity. Nicholas You, Coordinator of the Global Best Practices Institute, introduced the demonstration of the Best Practices Database to which 100 countries have already contributed 587 examples. He said the database, developed by the UNCHS with the Together Foundation, will serve as a user-friendly tool for people in education, training, public awareness, policy development and technical cooperation. Spain announced a \$0.5 million fund for developing countries interested in participating in the best practices project.

Egypt described as undemocratic a decision by the Secretariat not to reschedule meeting times to accommodate Muslim delegates taking part in the Ramadan fast. He said there had been a breach of agreement. In a formal statement, Prof. Jonathan Ng'eno, M.P. (Kenya) said the GPA would require enhanced international cooperation, strong institutional arrangements and the updating of the UNCHS mandate.

Nat Nuno-Amarteifio, Mayor of Accra, Ghana, said that a colloquium held for mayors in Accra from 2-4 November 1995, considered how regional municipalities could become creditworthy, since cities now must compete with each other for international funding. Prem Lal Singh, Mayor of Kathmandu, Nepal, said that the regional meeting of the South Asian Mayors, being held in Kathmandu from 8-10 April 1996, will deliberate on the urban challenges and issues of the region in order to enhance the region's competence to sustain urbanization. Yousef Hiasat, Director General of Housing of the Municipality of Amman, said that one of the main thrusts of the Regional Conference on the Future of Arab Cities, to be held in Amman from 11-14 March

1996, will be horizons of partnership between central government, municipal government, NGOs and the private sector. Santiago Apunte, Counsellor for the Mission of Ecuador to the United Nations, said that the Municipal Action Seminar held in Quito from 6-8 November 1995 showed that municipalities can carry out successfully a large number of tasks for economic and social development.

WORKING GROUP II SUBGROUP A

PREAMBLE: Subgroup A of WGII reconvened to begin negotiations based on two documents from the Secretariat containing proposed amendments from delegations and suggestions from NGOs for the Preamble to the draft Statement of Principles and Global Action Plan. Following a brief adjournment, Chairman Glynn Khonje (Zambia) re-opened discussion on NGO participation, stating that they had played a very important role throughout the preparatory process. Algeria said NGO participation should be in accordance with standard UN rules and procedures. He was surprised that NGO proposals for the Preamble had been distributed in a document prepared by the Secretariat, given UN budget constraints. Algeria would treat the NGO document as invalid. Conference Secretary-General, Wally N'Dow, said collaboration with NGOs and local authorities is essential for the implementation of Habitat II. A new era in partnership must be supported. Canada disagreed with a Pakistan suggestion that diplomacy was being privatized. The US said it may be premature to proclaim a new era, the issue is evolving. Poland and Burundi underlined the priority and separate status of national delegations. Chairman Khonje said the finance for the NGO document prepared by the Secretariat had come from extra-budgetary resources.

The Subgroup began the afternoon session with discussions on proposed amendments to the Preamble. However, following several statements, the Chair proposed forming a small drafting group composed of representatives from the States that submitted proposals. Delegates raised concerns on the drafting group's size, composition, location and scope. Some said redrafting the entire text could jeopardize the completion of work. An informal session was convened, following debate about the room's size, with the Chair of the Subgroup continuing as Chair.

Paragraph 1 of the Preamble notes a sense of great opportunity and hope that a new world can be built in which social and economic progress, environmental protection and better standards of living can be realized through global solidarity and cooperation.

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The compilation of written submissions notes that Canada proposed language stating the quality of human settlements profoundly affects the well-being of people. The US offered ideas on putting people at the center of development, empowerment of men and women and sustainable development. The Holy See requested including ethical and spiritual vision among the goals to be realized. The EU proposed deleting the paragraph because it did not fully reflect the goals of the Conference. During the informal informals, language was discussed on human rights and the right to development. Suggestions were made to delete references to global solidarity and environmental protection. It was agreed the Chair should re-draft the paragraph based on delegates' comments

Paragraph 2 states that the purpose of Habitat II is to address two themes of global importance: "Adequate shelter for all" and "Sustainable human settlements development in an urbanizing world." According to the written proposals, the EU proposed language on sustainable development and full respect for human rights. The G-77/China noted the human right to housing as recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international instruments. Canada offered a detailed paragraph describing current human settlement problems and the need for urgent action. The Holy See suggested a sentence stating that human beings are at the center of concerns for adequate shelter for all. The US proposed that sustainable development is critical for the viability of human settlements. During informal informals, delegates debated the right to development and the relationship of sustainable development to economic development. One delegation said the paragraph must specify that the right to housing does not imply a justiciable right, while another thought it warranted a separate discussion.

WORKING GROUP II SUBGROUP B

IV. GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION: STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION: Chair Hermosilla (Chile) opened the Subgroup's consideration of Section A (Introduction). In paragraph 36 (changes since Habitat I), delegates agreed to the Holy See amendment to add "families" to the list of actors working to improve settlements conditions. An EU-proposed reference to the fact that "one billion human beings still lack adequate shelter..." was amended to note that they "are living under unacceptable conditions of poverty, mostly in developing countries." The G-77/China stated that the sentence noting "many societies have changed their views on the appropriate role of government" was controversial and it was deleted. A Holy See-proposed additional paragraph regarding the number of people without safe and healthy shelter was bracketed.

In paragraph 37 (growth of world population), the EU deleted "mega-cities" because it did not want to create a series of identifications. The G-77/China, supported by the US, proposed "towns, cities and megacities." Delegates accepted the US proposal that of the 5.7 billion people nearly one-third would be under 15 years of age. The US supported the Holy See's proposed ICPD language for the beginning of the paragraph. Egypt supported the reference to megacities. Local Authorities, the Marshall Islands and Egypt supported a Holy See amendment noting the need to address the root causes of rural to urban migration. The US said there are many factors. An informal group met during lunch and agreed to note the rapid urbanization of towns, cities and megacities, as well

as to note the "need to address the root causes of these phenomena, including rural to urban migration".

In 38 (globalization of the economy), the US proposed including "rapid population growth" and "violations of human rights" as additional critical factors, and suggested working from the informal drafting group's text. The G-77/China stated that its redraft reflected the situation as seen from developing countries. An evening informal group was to continue discussion on this paragraph.

In 39 (local communities at the front line to achieve Habitat goals), delegates agreed to the Canadian and EU proposal to remove the reference to "recent global conferences" and to add a revised EU reference to "non-governmental and community-based organizations" as groups on which progress depends.

In 40 (UN series of world conferences), delegates noted that UN conferences over the last five years addressed important issues of "people-centred sustainable development, including sustained economic growth and equity..." They also added a US-proposed reference to "disability issues" to the list of strategies that will have to be implemented, and agreed that they should be implemented in "rural as well as" urban areas, "particularly" where problems are acute and generate tension. The US noted that its acceptance of the word "equity" in this paragraph does not mean it will accept the word in other contexts.

In 41 (implementation of Habitat II), several delegates, including the EU, suggested that the Malaysian proposal to note the role of "international bodies, especially UNCHS (Habitat)" would be better placed in other parts of the text. The G-77/China objected to EU-proposed text noting that "capacities and commitment of individuals and communities can be enhanced..." An evening informal group was to continue discussion on this paragraph.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Some NGO representatives have expressed disappointment and confusion after exchanges in which a small number of delegations raised questions about the modalities of NGO contributions to the PrepCom. Secretary-General N'Dow has met with a number of delegations to press Habitat's commitment to breaking new ground in drawing the NGOs and local authorities into a partnership, in accordance with its General Assembly mandate. It has also emerged that a number of delegations have specific reservations. One delegation hopes to raise questions about an accredited Libyan NGO. Another delegation has suggested that NGOs have an anti-Islamic bias.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

WORKING GROUP II SUBGROUP A: Informal informals are expected during the morning and afternoon in Conference Room 3. Consult the Journal for last minute changes. Discussions are expected to continue on the Preamble.

WORKING GROUP II SUBGROUP B: The Subgroup is expected to meet during the morning and afternoon in Conference Room 2. They will continue discussing Section A (Introduction) and may begin Section B (Adequate shelter for all).

ACCT: ACCT is organizing a consultation for francophone participants Thursday, 6:15 pm in Room 6.