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SECOND UN CONFERENCE ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS (HABITAT II) 3-14 JUNE 1996

The Second UN Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), meeting in Istanbul, Turkey from 3-14 June 1996, will allow participants to consider the issue of sustainable human settlements through a variety of fora. General statements on the state of human settlements will be offered in Plenary from 3-11 June. A High-Level Segment from 12-14 June will allow world leaders to commit to making cities sustainable. Committee I will negotiate the Habitat Agenda: Goals and Principles, Commitments and Global Plan of Action. Committee II will conduct hearings on the role and contribution of local authorities, NGOs and other partners.

(Editor's Note: The daily ENB reports will focus on the negotiations in Committee I and the commitments offered during the High-Level Segment.)

A BRIEF HISTORY OF HABITAT II

The Second UN Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) is meeting on the 20th anniversary of the first Habitat Conference in Vancouver, Canada. The Secretary-General of the Conference is Dr. Wally N'Dow.

The objectives for Habitat II are: (1) in the long term, to arrest the deterioration of global human settlement conditions and ultimately create the conditions for achieving improvements in the living environment of all people on a sustainable basis, with special attention to the needs and contributions of women and vulnerable social groups; and (2) to adopt a general statement of principles and commitments and formulate a related Global Plan of Action capable of guiding national and international efforts through the first two decades of the next century.

ORGANIZATIONAL SESSION

The organizational session of the Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) for Habitat II was held at UN Headquarters in New York from 3-5 March 1993. Delegates elected the Bureau and took several decisions regarding the organization and timing of the process. Martti Lujanen (Finland) was elected PrepCom Chair.

PREPCOM I

The first substantive session of the PrepCom was held in Geneva from 11-22 April 1994. Delegates agreed that the overriding objective of the Conference should be to increase global awareness of the problems and potentials of human settlements and to commit the world's leaders to making cities, towns and villages healthy, safe, just and sustainable. The PrepCom also took decisions on the organization of the Conference and financing, as well as the following issues.

Regarding national objectives, delegates agreed that each participating country should design, adopt and implement a national plan of action that would address the issue of human settlements in both urban and rural areas and involve the full participation and support of the public and private sectors, and non-governmental (NGOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs). Countries should also strengthen the capacity of institutions at all levels to monitor shelter conditions and urbanization processes using a minimum set of indicators.

Regarding international objectives, delegates agreed that the preparatory process should: present a "State of Human Settlements" report; produce a Statement of Principles and Commitments based on a new international consensus on shelter policies and goals; produce a Global Plan of Action to mobilize international resources and create institutional arrangements to assist countries to implement and monitor Habitat goals and to protect the environment against unwarranted and undesirable impacts of urbanization; and make available the broadest range of information concerning shelter strategies, technologies, resources, experience, expertise and sources of support.

Regarding participation, delegates agreed that governments of participating States should establish national committees with broad participation from all levels of government and civil society. These committees should formulate, adopt and implement a work programme that includes the production of a national report, discussion of priority issues, organization of local and country consultations and fora, and preparation and presentation of audio-visual documentaries of examples of best practices in human settlements development.

Regarding the draft Statement of Principles and Commitments and the draft Global Plan of Action, delegates agreed that the former should reaffirm and be framed within the general goals of the UN, contain a reference to the Principles adopted by Habitat II as well as the Rio Declaration, and introduce the rationale for the new principles and commitments that will guide national and international action on human settlements. The GPA should be structured around the two main themes of the Conference: adequate shelter for all and sustainable human settlements

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development in an urbanizing world. Multi-sectoral issues to be considered include: settlements management; poverty reduction; environmental management; and disaster mitigation, relief and reconstruction. Cross-sectoral issues include: women; the urban economy; social and economic dimensions of urbanization and shelter development; education and capacity building; and vulnerable social groups.

PREPCOM II

The second session of the PrepCom met in Nairobi, Kenya, from 24 April-5 May 1995. The Committee considered organizational matters for PrepCom III and the Conference itself; prepared the first part of the draft Statement of Principles and Commitments and the Global Plan of Action (GPA); and prepared draft decisions for consideration by the 50th General Assembly.

Working Group I, chaired by Pamela Mboya (Kenya), considered preparations for the Conference and the status of human settlements reports and major reviews. During discussion of the rules of procedure, the issue of the participation of local authorities came under scrutiny.

Working Group II, chaired by Amb. H. L. de Silva (Sri Lanka), began work on the draft Statement of Principles and Commitments and the draft Global Plan of Action. The draft GPA contained the following sections: a preamble, principles, goals and commitments, and strategies for implementation. The PrepCom made some progress on the first three parts of the document, but delegates acknowledged that a significant amount of work remained. To facilitate negotiations, delegates decided to continue drafting informally during the intersessional period through an open-ended drafting group.

INTERSESSIONAL DRAFTING GROUP

The 17-member Informal Drafting Group (IDG) included governmental, local government and NGO representatives. It was charged with preparing the documentation for PrepCom III and met twice. The first meeting from 17-21 July 1995 was held in Nairobi, where the fourth part of the GPA dealing with strategies for implementation was drafted. The IDG draft focused on: adequate shelter for all; sustainable human settlements in an urbanizing world; capacity building and institutional development; international cooperation and coordination; and tracking progress and impact evaluation. The draft was circulated to UN Member States, NGO networks and others, and was revised.

The second meeting of the IDG met in Paris from 9-14 October 1995. Delegates reviewed the revised draft and made progress on the text, but deferred a number of matters to PrepCom III, including the principle that deals with the family. The IDG did not submit a draft text on some points, including international financial assistance, housing rights and institutional follow-up.

PREPCOM III

The third session of the PrepCom met at UN Headquarters in New York from 5-16 February 1996. Organizational questions included: participation of NGOs and the implementation of Rule 61 to facilitate input from local authorities, and financial resources. Negotiations began on the draft Statement of Principles and Commitments and the GPA. Key debates included the "right to housing" and the role of UNCHS in Habitat follow-up. A heavily bracketed text went forward to Istanbul, in part due to time constraints.

Working Group I, chaired by Pamela Mboya (Kenya), discussed funding for Habitat II, the "Best Practices" initiative, and parallel fora in Istanbul. Australia proposed that participants in Habitat II commit to action by 2000.

Working Group II, chaired by Amb. H. L. de Silva (Sri Lanka), formed three sub-groups to consider the draft Statement of Principles and Commitments and the GPA. Subgroup A

considered the Preamble and NGO participation, and allocated problematic texts on sustainable development and financial resources and the right to housing to informal groups. Subgroups B and C considered the GPA introduction, adequate shelter, sustainable human settlements and capacity building.

PRE-CONFERENCE CONSULTATIONS

Delegates met from 1-2 June 1996 for pre-conference consultations, which were chaired by Huseyin Çelem, Permanent Representative of Turkey to the UN. Delegates agreed on a number of procedural recommendations for the Conference, including the rules of procedure, the agenda, and accreditation of international associations of local authorities and NGOs. Delegates recommended that Süleyman Demirel, President of Turkey, be elected President of the Conference and Emre Gönensay, Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs, be elected Vice-President *ex-officio*. Shafqat Kakakhel (Pakistan), was recommended to chair Committee I (Habitat Agenda), and Martti Lujanen (Finland) to chair Committee II (the role of partners). Ricardo Gorosito (Uruguay) was recommended as Rapporteur-General. Some delegates inquired about the procedure for reporting on Committee II and suggested adjustments to the timetable.

IN THE CORRIDORS I

Delegates and organizers alike are anxious to avoid delays that stymied the negotiating process at PrepCom III. The arrival of senior DPCSD officials in Istanbul has been interpreted by some observers to indicate their enhanced role in facilitating the negotiations. It has also been suggested that Conference organizers task experienced delegates with resolving contentious issues. Whatever the procedural innovations, however, substantive debates are still expected on issues including sustainable development and economic growth, and the "right to housing."

IN THE CORRIDORS II

Participants at the NGO Forum are complaining of the heavy undercover police presence, particularly following the storming on 31 May of the Alternative Forum, organized by 38 Turkish NGOs. The Governor of Istanbul stated that the action by the Security Forces was justified when organizers failed to notify him of their intention to hold the event.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

PLENARY: The opening Plenary will meet during the morning in the Plenary Hall. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali is expected to give the opening remarks, followed by the election of the President of the Conference and an address by Süleyman Demirel, President of the Republic of Turkey. Delegates are expected to consider: adoption of the rules of procedure; election of officers; adoption of the agenda; organization of work; and the appointment of the Credentials Committee. Following an address by Secretary-General Wally N'Dow, delegates will begin to exchange views on the state of human settlements, which will continue during the afternoon and for the next six days.

COMMITTEE I: The Committee considering the Habitat Agenda is expected to meet during the afternoon in Conference Room 1 (Hilton Convention Centre).

COMMITTEE II: The Committee holding hearings regarding the role and contribution of local authorities, the private sector, parliamentarians, NGOs and other partners in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda is expected to meet during the afternoon in Conference Room 2 (Cemal Resit Rey Concert Hall).