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SECOND UN CONFERENCE ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS (HABITAT II) HIGHLIGHTS TUESDAY, 4 JUNE 1996

Delegates to Habitat II continued hearing statements in Plenary on the state of human settlements. A ceremony honoring "Best Practices" was held at 5:00 pm. Committee I spent most of the morning session in informal consultations before convening at 12:15 pm to select the Vice-Chairs of the Working Groups. In the afternoon, Working Groups I and II began negotiations on the Habitat Agenda. Committee II held a hearing on local authorities.

COMMITTEE I

Delegates continued to address organizational matters during the morning session. Regarding the Istanbul Declaration, the Chair noted a broad consensus for an open-ended drafting group to synthesize existing drafts. AUSTRALIA, supported by the US and INDIA, proposed that paragraphs assigned to Working Group I that deal with international cooperation should be allocated to Working Group II. Delegates decided that the chairs will reallocate paragraphs between groups when appropriate. The US, supported by the HOLY SEE and the EU, noted paragraphs in the Habitat Agenda were negotiated at PrepCom III, but bracketed because of inadequate time for adoption. She proposed that the Committee adopt these paragraphs before breaking into Working Groups. The Chair said that agreement was reached on the bulk of the text, but noted that the Conference is competent to revisit the entire document. CANADA sought confirmation that NGOs could make interventions during meetings, but could not participate in negotiations. UGANDA, for the G-77/CHINA, said the rules of procedure do not allow for oral submissions in the Committees, but did not object to NGO submissions in light of the Committee's consensus.

Committee I finalized the elections of chairs and vice-chairs. For Committee I, László Lackó (Hungary), Clarkson Umelo (Nigeria) and Ramon Santelises (Chile) were approved as Vice-Chairs, while the appointment of the rapporteur by the Western Europe and Others Group remains pending. For Working Group I, Vice-Chair Pavel Suian (Romania) was elected. For Working Group II, Chair Glynn Khonje (Zambia) and Vice-Chair Manfred Konukiewicz (Germany) were approved. For the informal drafting group for the Istanbul

Declaration, Amb. Balkan Kazildeli (Turkey) was approved as Chair and Antonio Fernando Melo (Brazil) as Vice-Chair.

WORKING GROUP I

Working Group I began negotiating the Preamble. The brackets in paragraph 1 (introduction to Preamble) were removed. Although 2 (purpose of Habitat II) contained no brackets, the SUDAN, on behalf of the Arab Countries Group, added text regarding spiritual and cultural values. The G/77-CHINA, supported by the EU, BRAZIL and ROMANIA, requested that the Chair set the precedent to prohibit re-opening of agreed text. The Sudan's text was bracketed.

In 2 bis (adequate shelter), the US, supported by JAPAN, objected to removing the brackets from "the right to adequate housing." The G-77/CHINA called for the removal of the brackets. NORWAY, supported by ROMANIA, the EU and the HOLY SEE, said the issue is too sensitive to be resolved now. The paragraph was adopted with the brackets and delegates agreed to enter into consultations regarding the language. In 2 ter (sustainable development of human settlements), CANADA stated that it would accept bracketed text, which notes that accountable governance is indispensable, if "respect for human rights" were added. The US added language regarding effective participation by NGOs. The Chair recommended that the groups proposing amendments form a small working group to harmonize their ideas into one proposal.

In 3 (global approach), the US wanted the language regarding consumption and production to reflect the importance of efforts by all actors. The G-77/CHINA added a reference to assistance from developed to developing countries. The US suggested that another working group meet to discuss 3. In 4 (previous UN conferences), G-77/CHINA added the 1994 Conference on Natural Disasters. Paragraph 5 (history of urbanization) was approved.

In 6 (challenges facing cities), delegates agreed to remove the "particular" needs of international migrants from brackets. Paragraphs 7 (globalization and interdependence) and 8 (urban-rural linkage) were adopted. Paragraph 9 (entitlement to adequate standard of living) will be addressed once the issue of a right to housing is resolved. Paragraph 9 bis (displaced persons) was adopted. In 9 ter (needs of children and youth), delegates debated a bracketed reference to recognition of "the rights, duties and responsibilities of parents and other persons legally responsible for children, consistent with the Convention on the Rights of the Child." The G-77/CHINA, the HOLY SEE and the US said it is agreed UN language. NORWAY suggested moving

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the bracketed language and introducing a reference to the living environment. The paragraph was adopted with brackets.

In **9quinquies** (women and sustainable settlements), the G-77/CHINA suggested removing a bracketed reference to “gender discrimination” and replacing it with “discrimination against women.”

WORKING GROUP II

Working Group II, chaired by Glynn Khonje (Zambia), convened in the afternoon to begin negotiations on Sections E (international cooperation) and F (implementation and follow-up) of the Global Plan of Action (GPA). INDIA, on behalf of the G-77/CHINA, noted that these sections are at the heart of the GPA. The success of the Conference depends upon the agreements made on these paragraphs and G-77/CHINA agreement on other sections will be subject to their satisfactory resolution. The LOCAL AUTHORITIES stressed the importance of key local mechanisms that can be used to implement the GPA, such as Local Agenda 21s.

In **143** (international cooperation), the G-77/CHINA added “economic growth” before the reference to “development.” The EU stated it would accept “economic growth” without “development,” or a reference to economic development, social development and environmental protection, which are interdependent components of sustainable development (from the World Summit for Social Development). Delegates eventually agreed to retain only the original reference to “development.”

The US deleted the reference to making human settlements “more equitable” and added “non-discriminatory,” but the G-77/CHINA supported “equitable and non-discriminatory.”

The EU proposed deleting the reference to “specific action by the international community,” and called for action “at the national and international levels.” The G-77/CHINA objected. Delegates accepted the CHAIR’s proposal to call for action “at the international level.”

COMMITTEE II

Committee II reconvened to conduct a Local Authorities Hearing. During the morning session international panels addressed the partnership role of local authorities in implementing the Habitat Agenda and Local Agenda 21s. In the afternoon the Mayors of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Johnny Araya, and of Eparnay, France, Bernard Stasi, addressed democratization and decentralization. Stasi said local authorities can exercise a daily living democracy. During the dialogue, PARAGUAY spoke about uncoordinated efforts in the provision of international technical assistance. BENIN said the most important thing is to eradicate poverty. It would be a pity to die of hunger in a beautiful city.

The Mayor of Allahabad, India, Rita Bahuguna Joshi, addressing a discussion on applying technology to empower local democracy, said new approaches are needed in managing human settlements involving a shift away from top-down approaches. The Mayor of Abeline, Texas, US, said technology holds the promise of solutions to problems of urbanization. The final panel considered The Global Way Forward: Unified Local Authorities

BEST PRACTICES AWARDS CEREMONY

UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali opened the ceremony, which honored 12 initiatives designed to provide positive solutions to the world’s most pressing human settlement problems. He highlighted their efforts to build partnerships between civil society and private enterprise and offered them as proof that sustainable human development is indeed possible. The awards were given to projects involving a wide range of

practices, including technology, information, poverty alleviation and improved access to land.

The 12 Best Practices are: Project on Sites and Services for Family Groups with Low Income Living in the North of Gran, Buenos Aires, Argentina; Integration Council in the Favelas’ Rehabilitation Process, Fortaleza, Brazil; Metro Toronto’s Changing Communities: Innovative Responses, Metro Toronto, Canada; Post-calamity Reconstruction of Anhui Province’s Rural Areas, China; Successful Institutionalization of Community-based Development in the Commune of Adjamé, Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire; A Women’s Self-help Organization for Poverty Alleviation in India: The SEWA Bank, India; Shelter Upgrading, Agadir, Morocco; City Management in Tilburg, the Netherlands; Local Initiative Programme: Community Planning Process and City/Neighborhood Partnership, Lublin, Poland; Community Information Resource Centre (CIRC), Alexandra, South Africa; “Don’t Move, Improve,” Community-owned and -governed Urban Revitalization Project, South Bronx, New York City, US; and the pollution clean-up and environmental conservation efforts of the City of Chattanooga, Tennessee, US.

IN THE CORRIDORS I

The debate over Habitat II implementation in general, and the future of UNCHS in particular, intensified during private conversations on Tuesday. Committee I was delayed for two hours during the morning while last minute consultations continued regarding the selection of the chair for Working Group II, which will negotiate the text regarding Habitat II follow-up. Observers note that the G-77/China wants the Conference to recommend a role for UNCHS in the Habitat II follow-up in the context of the UN review process. Others report that the EU does not want to prejudice the ongoing UN review process, including the review of UNCHS.

IN THE CORRIDORS II

The Bureau of Committee I meets Wednesday morning to consider measures to inject some urgency into the pace of negotiations. Chair Kakakhel (Pakistan), who remains optimistic about the programme of work, is expected to reconvene the specialized subgroup on the “right to housing” chaired by Marcela Nicodemus (Brazil). She attracted much respect for her handling of the role at PrepCom III in New York. A proposal to task other experienced delegates to work informally on difficult issues has met with some resistance among smaller delegations.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

PLENARY: The Plenary will meet in the Plenary Hall during the morning and afternoon to hear statements on the state of human settlements from governments, UN agencies, IGOs and NGOs.

WORKING GROUP I: Working Group I, which is considering all aspects of the Habitat Agenda except Sections E (international cooperation) and F (follow-up), is expected to meet during the morning and afternoon in Conference Room 1.

WORKING GROUP II: The Working Group considering Sections E and F of the GPA is expected to meet at 10:30 am in Conference Room 3. An afternoon meeting is also expected.

DRAFTING GROUP: The drafting group on the Istanbul Declaration is expected to meet at 10:00 am in Conference Room A.

COMMITTEE II: The Committee is expected to meet in Conference Room 2. Hearings involving representatives of the World Business Forum and the Foundations Forum are expected during morning and afternoon meetings, respectively.