



## INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS FOR THE 25TH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY (ISTANBUL+5): 4-5 JUNE 2001

Delegates gathered at UN Headquarters in New York for two days of informal consultations before Istanbul+5, the 25th UN General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS), which opens on Wednesday, 6 June. Negotiations took place on the seven outstanding paragraphs from the draft declaration. Delegates also discussed the submission of additional text, including a chapeau and two paragraphs proposed by the G-77/China on foreign occupation and refugees. They agreed to postpone negotiations on the additions until finishing the existing text.

### ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

Chair Germán García-Durán (Colombia) opened informal consultations at 11:00 am on Monday, 4 June 2001, and delegates adopted the provisional agenda. The Chair expressed hope that delegates would not reopen previously agreed text. SUDAN noted that many experts from capitals were not present and that any text agreed during the informals should be considered *ad referendum*.

Delegates then considered the procedure for electing the Bureau of the Thematic Committee. The Chair recommended that the Chair of the Thematic Committee be from the Asian, African, or Eastern European regional groups, and proposed that a subcommittee consisting of one representative from each regional group meet during the day to discuss this issue. SUDAN, TUNISIA and INDIA supported the Chair's proposal. TUNISIA offered to chair the Thematic Committee. INDIA proposed that either a representative from Asia or Africa chair the Committee as these two regions have particularly critical problems relating to human settlements. A decision will be announced on Wednesday.

### DRAFT DECLARATION ON CITIES AND OTHER HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

**Preambular paragraphs:** On Monday, Chair García-Durán noted an EU proposal to add an introductory paragraph to the draft declaration that would strengthen the political impact of the document. On Tuesday, the Chair distributed a new formulation for a preamble that he said drew upon existing elements in the draft declaration that had already been agreed at PrepCom II. He suggested a small contact group consider the proposal. The G-77/CHINA, with the US, CANADA, EGYPT and MEXICO, noted insufficient representation in many delegations and opposed a contact group. JAPAN, with the

US and CANADA, preferred to first address bracketed text in existing paragraphs and opposed the introduction of any new language. MEXICO supported an earlier proposal from the Chair to make paragraph 1 into the introductory paragraph, thereby avoiding new language. NORWAY, the EU and the RUSSIAN FEDERATION supported Chair García-Durán's new text formulation as a basis for discussion, but agreed to look at existing bracketed paragraphs before considering new proposals.

**Paragraph 8:** On text related to taking note with satisfaction the comprehensive nature of national and regional reports on the implementation of the Habitat Agenda and of the analysis of these reports by UNCHS as contained in the report of the Executive Director (A/S-25/3), Chair García-Durán suggested removing the brackets since the report was now complete. The Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC) noted the need to address inaccuracies in the report. INDIA and BRAZIL proposed keeping brackets around reference to "with satisfaction." The G-77/CHINA said that the phrase "taking note" had legal connotations, and with EGYPT, ARGENTINA and PAKISTAN supported retaining brackets around reference to taking note with satisfaction. The EU said that taking note does not indicate endorsement or dissatisfaction. BRAZIL proposed noting the comprehensive nature of the report. The G-77/CHINA suggested noting the national and regional reports on the implementation of the Habitat Agenda, and called for deleting reference to the analysis of these reports and adding reference to consistency with the legal framework and national policies of each country. The EU said that the new wording did not show enough courtesy to the Secretariat, and suggested adding the phrase "with appreciation." The text remains in brackets.

**Paragraph 33:** Delegates considered brackets around language on foreign debt. The EU recommended removing the word "all" in a reference to developing countries, and adding either "unsustainable" or "problem" to a reference to external debt. NEW ZEALAND proposed text stating that the measures should be consistent with the existing Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) framework. The US objected to reference to the international community without the acknowledgement of national measures. He maintained that debt should be addressed on a case-by-case basis, and proposed drawing upon agreed language from other instruments. The G-77/CHINA objected to the HIPC reference, and NEW ZEALAND agreed to withdraw it if alternative text was developed. The US suggested the text refer to continuing to consider measures on external debt rather than considering further measures. JAPAN suggested reference to further

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measures being considered when appropriate. The PHILIPPINES supported reference to continuing to consider measures, but opposed including the words “further” and “all.” The G-77/CHINA proposed compromise text on the international community considering further measures, as appropriate. It suggested referring to the external debt burden, and deleting the word “all.” Delegates accepted this formulation except for “as appropriate,” which remains in brackets.

Regarding three bracketed alternatives referring to the ODA target of 0.7% of GNP, delegates used the first alternative as a basis for discussion. The G-77/CHINA preferred language calling on developed countries to achieve as soon as possible the agreed target of 0.7%, but opposed language stating that this target be achieved, where agreed. JAPAN said it could accept this alternative if the reference to “where agreed” was retained. The EU and NORWAY opposed language singling out developed countries that have agreed to the target. JAPAN and the US supported retaining this language. The US proposed language urging the developed countries that have not done so to strive to meet the targets of 0.7% and earmarking 0.15% to 0.20% for the least developed countries, as agreed, as soon as possible. NORWAY said it could accept this proposal. After informal consultations, the G-77/CHINA proposed deleting “strive to” and “as agreed,” but this was not acceptable to the US, the EU and JAPAN and the matter was left for further consultations.

**Paragraphs 24 and 49:** Delegates discussed in combination references to good governance in paragraphs 24, on identifying obstacles associated with limited economic, technological and institutional capacities, and 49, on intensifying efforts for ensuring transparent, responsible, accountable, just, effective and efficient governance of cities and other human settlements. Regarding paragraph 24, the G-77/CHINA, supported by MEXICO and opposed by the EU, proposed deleting a phrase stating that good governance is yet to be realized at different levels of decision-making and management. NORWAY, supported by the EU, proposed reverting to the language used in the Millennium Declaration regarding good governance. Regarding paragraph 49, BANGLADESH, supported by NIGERIA, opposed reference to good governance, stating that it is a relative term. After the US said it could accept deletion of the phrase in paragraph 24 if it was maintained in 49, the G-77/CHINA proposed specifying good governance both at national and international levels in paragraph 49. The US proposed good governance at the local, national and international levels. CANADA suggested good governance within each country and at the international level. The G-77/CHINA said it could accept this if the reference to good governance was deleted in paragraph 24.

Following informal consultations, the EU said it could delete the reference in paragraph 24, but supported language on good governance at the local, national and international levels. The G-77/CHINA opposed reference to the local level. Chair García-Durán proposed avoiding specification of the scope of good governance so that interpretation could be left to each country, but this was not acceptable to all delegations. Following informal consultations, delegates agreed to accept the Canadian formulation on good governance within each country and at the international level and to delete the phrase referring to good governance in paragraph 24.

**Paragraph 34:** The EU opposed language regarding the establishment of a world solidarity fund for poverty eradication. The G-77/CHINA stressed contributions would be voluntary, and with the US and TUNISIA, supported the paragraph. JAPAN proposed deleting “actively” in reference to considering the establishment of a fund. TUNISIA said this would weaken the text. The issue was left for further consultations.

**Paragraph 37:** Regarding two bracketed alternatives related to effective decentralization, the G-77/CHINA opposed the alternative agreeing to establish an intergovernmental forum to address the issue. The EU supported the establishment of such a forum. CANADA, supported by the US and JAPAN, proposed language taken from a

resolution of the Commission on Human Settlements on intensifying dialogue on effective decentralization and strengthening of local authorities within the framework of implementing the Habitat Agenda. The EU said it would suggest amendments to the Canadian proposal after consultations.

**Paragraph 42:** In text on gender equality in human settlements development, delegates debated two amendments on security of tenure, one calling for elimination of inequalities and the other on upholding respect for rights. NORWAY and the EU supported the first alternative, while the G-77/CHINA accepted the second formulation but preferred to keep the paragraph as previously agreed. The EU proposed merging the elements and placing them in paragraph 43, on equal access to economic resources, to recognize “the right to inheritance and the ownership of land and other property, credit, natural resources, appropriate technologies as well as ensuring their right to security of tenure and to enter into contractual agreements.” The G-77/CHINA requested time to discuss possible refinements. NORWAY cautioned against changing the context of the paragraph, and with PAKISTAN and the EU, emphasized respect for cultural and religious sensitivities surrounding the issue.

### THE MEETING OF THE MAYORS

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan spoke at the largest ever gathering of local authorities at the UN. Mayors and representatives from Istanbul, Rio de Janeiro, Addis Ababa, Barcelona, Minnetonka, Athens, Monterrey, Stockholm, Bonn, Casablanca, Albay, Gaza, the World Federation of United Cities, the International Union of Local Authorities and the World Association of Cities and Local Authority Coordination gave brief presentations about the importance of strengthening local governance. The Secretary-General declared that local authorities are among the most important allies of the UN because they are closely in touch with the world’s people. He recommended that the UN remain a close partner with local authorities, and called upon them to advocate the Habitat Agenda.

### IN THE CORRIDORS

It was a bit of a rocky start to the 25th UNGASS. The main negotiating document almost didn’t get printed and delegates freely offered their thoughts on why the speaker’s list kept skipping or omitting delegations. Even those agreements that were supposed to be concluded over a civilized lunch failed to pick up much steam. Some observers noted that it was culture clash UN style—New York, Nairobi and The Capitals. That may have snarled the negotiations on the draft declaration at some points, and proved the old adage about work expanding to fill the space (and in a few cases more than the space—more procedural discussions, anyone?). But at least it didn’t slow down the key lobbying for whose national accomplishments get the most prominence in the Thematic Committees...

### THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

**PLENARY:** At 9:00 am, the President of the General Assembly will open the 25th Special Session of the General Assembly in the General Assembly Hall. High-level presentations will begin following the presentation of the report of the CHS acting as the PrepCom for an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the outcome of Habitat II (A/S-25/2).

**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE:** The COW will convene in Conference Room 2 after the opening speeches in the Plenary, and is expected to form a Drafting Committee. It will meet in the Trusteeship Council to continue informal negotiations on outstanding paragraphs in the draft declaration.

**THEMATIC COMMITTEE:** The Thematic Committee will begin at 11:00 am in a room to be announced.