



## SUMMARY OF THE 25TH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY (ISTANBUL+5): 6-8 JUNE 2001

The 25th Special Session of the UN General Assembly for an overall review and appraisal of progress made in the implementation of the outcome of the UN Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) took place from 6-8 June 2001 at UN Headquarters in New York. During the Special Session, delegates met in Plenary and the Committee of the Whole (COW) for general debate. Informal consultations on the 62-paragraph draft declaration on cities and other human settlements in the new millennium took place prior to the Special Session, on 4-5 June, and throughout the session itself. Delegates also met in the Thematic Committee, an innovative mechanism that featured 16 presentations over three days highlighting successes and stimulating dialogue to guide the quest for solutions in the development of human settlements. Mayors, other local authorities, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector, UN agencies and others held parallel events to showcase their recent work in human settlements development.

Negotiations focused primarily on seven outstanding paragraphs that were not resolved at PrepCom II in February in Nairobi. Delegates also considered proposals for new preambular text, with some delegates noting that the draft declaration needed a stronger political focus, as well as new paragraphs on foreign occupation, protection of civilians in conformity with international humanitarian law, refugees, international terrorism and strengthening UN mechanisms to implement the Habitat Agenda. The negotiating atmosphere became tense at times as larger political issues weighed down the debate. Sharp divisions appeared between New York and Nairobi diplomats, between those from the UN diplomatic corps and those from capitals, and within the negotiating blocs themselves. Closed-door discussions between a handful of countries over reference to illegal settlements consumed more than 12 hours on the final night of the meeting. Throughout the Special Session, the presence of NGOs, who played a vital role in the Habitat II negotiations, was barely felt. They were barred from the room where negotiations took place, and initially restricted from the floor of the Thematic Committee as well, despite an agreement at PrepCom II that they would be able to participate.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF ISTANBUL+5

**HABITAT II:** The Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) met in Istanbul, Turkey, from 3-14 June 1996, on the 20th anniversary of the first Habitat Conference (Habitat I), which met in Vancouver, Canada. The Habitat Agenda and the Istanbul Declaration on Human Settlements, adopted by 171 governments during the Conference, outlined commitments and strategies to address shelter and sustainable human settlements, emphasizing themes of partnership and local action. Habitat II, as the culmination of a cycle of UN conferences, witnessed the ground-breaking participation of local authorities, the private sector, parliamentarians, NGOs and other partners in the formulation of the Habitat Agenda. When the international community adopted the Habitat Agenda, it set itself the twin goals of achieving adequate shelter for all and sustainable human settlements development. After much debate, the Conference also reaffirmed the commitment to the full and progressive realization of the right to adequate housing.

**53RD GENERAL ASSEMBLY:** The General Assembly, during its 53rd session in December 1998, adopted resolution 53/180, which calls for a Special Session of the General Assembly for an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the Habitat Agenda (Istanbul+5). The resolution stresses the need for the effective participation of Habitat Agenda partners and other relevant actors of civil

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society in preparing for the Special Session, and to take into account the practice and experience gained at Habitat II. It also decides that the Commission on Human Settlements (CHS), during its 17th and 18th sessions, would focus on monitoring the implementation of the Habitat Agenda, assess its impact and serve as the Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) for the Special Session.

**ORGANIZATIONAL SESSION:** The organizational session of the PrepCom for Istanbul+5 took place in Nairobi, Kenya, on 13 May 1999. At this session, the CHS, acting as the PrepCom, considered the election of officers, procedures for the approval of credentials, the rules of procedure of the PrepCom, the organization of work, provisional agenda and other arrangements for the first substantive session of the PrepCom. The session elected the Bureau members of the 17th session of the CHS to also serve as the Bureau for the PrepCom and the UNGASS. The Bureau members included: Germán García-Durán (Colombia) as Chair; Amath Dansokho (Senegal), Andrzej Olszowka (Poland) and Manfred Konukiewicz (Germany) as Vice-Chairs; and Mehdi Mirafzal (Iran) as Rapporteur. Delegates decided to hold the first substantive meeting of the PrepCom for five days in May 2000, and also decided that when meeting as a preparatory committee, the Commission would be open-ended to allow full participation of all States and ensure effective participation of local authorities and other Habitat Agenda partners.

**PREPCOM I:** The first substantive session of the PrepCom for Istanbul+5 was held in Nairobi from 8-12 May 2000. A high-level segment of ministers, heads of delegations and mayors met and focused on the key issues of: the scope to be covered by the review and appraisal process; local, national and regional preparations for the Special Session of the General Assembly; the role of local authorities, other partners and relevant United Nations organizations and agencies in the review and appraisal process; and preparation of a declaration on the role and mandate of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS). A second segment focused on dialogues with local authorities and other partners to present and discuss the planned contributions of local authorities to the review of the implementation of the Habitat Agenda. Participants addressed initiatives such as global campaigns for good urban governance, a proposed world charter on local self-government and global norms for security of tenure.

**ECOSOC COORDINATION SEGMENT MEETING:** The ECOSOC coordination meeting met in New York from 10-12 July 2000, to discuss the report by the Secretary-General that reviews the Habitat Agenda and to coordinate implementation by the UN system of the Habitat Agenda. The report outlines the relevance of the Habitat Agenda to the work of the UN system in the economic and social development field and provides information on the Special Session. The Council expressed support for the new strategic vision of UNCHS. It also agreed to request that the Secretary-General review participation of UNCHS in all aspects of the work of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, consider adopting a Habitat Agenda task manager system to facilitate coordinated implementation, and streamline reporting to UNCHS and ECOSOC.

**55TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY:** The General Assembly considered the ECOSOC report for 2000 at its 55th session. The General Assembly adopted five resolutions relating to the work of the PrepCom at its second session on: the scope to be covered by the Special Session, highlighting the need to reconfirm the goals and commitments of the Habitat Agenda; preparations for the Special Session, which should include a Plenary, a COW and a thematic committee; follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit; the

ten-year review of progress achieved in the implementation of the outcome of the UN Conference on Environment and Development and the Third United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries.

**18TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS:** The 18th session of the Commission on Human Settlements took place in Nairobi from 12-16 February 2001. The purpose of the session was to discuss the future of the UNCHS, specifically: to debate the work programme and budget for the 2002-2003 biennium; to assess the progress made in the revitalization of Habitat; to review the implementation of the resolutions passed by the Commission at its 17th session; and to decide on the theme, agenda and organization of work of the 19th session. The Commission passed 12 resolutions addressing, *inter alia*: establishment of the Committee of Permanent Representatives as an intersessional body of the CHS; global campaigns for secure tenure and urban governance; the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II); cooperation between Habitat and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP); youth; and illegal Israeli human settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories.

**PREPCOM II:** The second substantive session of the PrepCom (PrepCom II) for Istanbul+5 took place from 19-23 February 2001, in Nairobi, Kenya. Delegates met in Plenary sessions for general debate on the draft report on the overall review and appraisal of implementation and the draft declaration on the cities and other human settlements in the new millennium and on further actions and initiatives for the implementation of the Habitat Agenda. The draft declaration was then forwarded to the Drafting Committee for negotiation. The COW dealt with issues of procedure and organizational matters relating to the June 2001 Special Session. At the end of the week, delegates adopted the PrepCom's report, one resolution and six decisions covering various issues relating to the Special Session, including a proposal on how to structure discussion among the various Habitat Agenda partners; organizational arrangements for the Special Session, which included the rules of procedure; and most of the 62-paragraph draft declaration on cities and other human settlements in the new millennium. Delegates also decided that NGOs would be allowed to participate in the Special Session and allotted eight speaking slots in the GA Plenary, after strong opposition by a few countries that resulted in the matter being put to a vote during PrepCom II's closing Plenary.

**PREPARATIONS FOR THE 25TH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY:** On 4-5 June 2001, informal consultations took place at UN Headquarters in New York to allow delegates to continue negotiations on bracketed text in seven outstanding paragraphs of 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.

On 5 June, Secretary-General Kofi Annan spoke at a Meeting of the Mayors, 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.



## ISTANBUL+5 REPORT

### PLENARY

On Wednesday, 6 June 2001, Finland's Minister of Foreign Trade, Kimmo Sasi, opened the 25th Special Session of the General Assembly. A moment of silence was observed in memory of the King and Queen of Nepal. General Assembly President Harri Holkeri (Finland) was elected President of the Special Session. He emphasized the innovative character of the Thematic Committee, which would allow delegations to share and discuss success stories and best practices for implementing the Habitat Agenda. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan noted that partnerships with local authorities, NGOs and women's groups are particularly important for the eradication of poverty in urban areas.

PrepCom Chair Germán García-Durán (Colombia) presented the report of the Commission on Human Settlements (CHS), which acted as the preparatory committee for the Special Session of the General Assembly for an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) (A/S-25/2). He highlighted the Special Session's main substantive document, the draft report of the Executive Director on the implementation of the Habitat Agenda (A/S-25/3 and A/S-25/3/Add.1). Delegates then adopted a list of NGOs to address the Plenary and the provisional agenda (A/S-25/1). The General Assembly agreed to establish a Committee of the Whole (COW) under Chair García-Durán.

Altogether, the Plenary met in six sessions to hear high-level debate on Agenda Item 8, the review and appraisal of progress made in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda, and on Agenda Item 9, further actions and initiatives for overcoming obstacles in the way of the implementation of the Habitat Agenda. Over the three days of the Special Session, the Plenary heard statements from five deputy prime ministers, 70 ministers, 20 vice ministers, 53 chairs of delegation, 11 government officials, five intergovernmental organizations, and 12 nongovernmental organizations. A list of speeches is available on the Internet at <http://www.un.org/ga/habitat/statements/english.htm>.

At the close of the Friday afternoon Plenary session, the Chair of the Thematic Committee, Habedidine Belaid (Tunisia), presented a summary of the Committee's discussions. He noted that the UN had proven to be the best forum for this kind of exchange of experiences and expressed hope that the results would be synthesized and published.

### COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

On Wednesday morning following the opening Plenary of the Special Session, Chair García-Durán opened the COW. He said informal negotiations would continue on the draft declaration under his chairmanship and invited Vice-Chair Olszowka to preside over the COW. The COW met in four sessions to hear general debate from UN agencies, NGOs and other partners on Agenda Items 8 and 9. Under the chairmanship of García-Durán, informal negotiations took place late into the night on all three days over Agenda Item 10, the declaration on cities and other human settlements in the new millennium.

On Saturday, 9 June, at 6:15 am, Vice-Chair Olszowka chaired the final session of the COW. Delegates considered, and adopted, the Draft Report of the COW (A/S-25/AC.1/L.1/add.1-5) and the draft declaration on cities and other human settlements (A/S-25/AC.1/L.2) without debate, and forwarded it to Plenary. Vice-Chair Olszowka thanked Chair García-Durán for his able chairmanship of the informal negotiations and formally concluded the work of the COW at 6:30 am.

## DECLARATION ON CITIES AND OTHER HUMAN SETTLEMENTS IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM

Informal negotiations on the draft declaration were held prior to the Special Session from 4-5 June 2001, and continued throughout the Special Session. The negotiations were guided by Chair García-Durán. The declaration contains a chapeau and four parts: renewing the commitments from Habitat II; progress in implementing the Habitat Agenda; recognizing gaps and obstacles; and taking further actions.

During negotiations at Istanbul+5, delegates addressed seven outstanding paragraphs forwarded by PrepCom II: reports related to the Habitat Agenda, external debt and foreign assistance, two paragraphs on governance, the establishment of a world solidarity fund, decentralization and gender. Based on a request from the EU to strengthen the political impact of the draft declaration, Chair García-Durán prepared a series of three proposals to add a chapeau. He also asked delegates to consider a new paragraph on strengthening the CHS and UNCHS. The G-77/China proposed two additional paragraphs on foreign occupation and illegal settlements and refugees.

The following summary of the declaration highlights, in particular, the paragraphs that were negotiated during Istanbul+5.

**CHAPEAU:** On Friday morning, Chair García-Durán opened discussion on the chapeau and introduced two alternative Chair's proposals: one, moving up paragraph 1 of the declaration, and another option, elaborating on preambular text highlighting specific elements in the declaration. He also indicated that a third option would be to leave the text as it is without a chapeau. Paragraph 1 reaffirms commitments to implement the Istanbul Declaration and the Habitat Agenda and decides on further initiatives, in the spirit of the Millennium Declaration. Canada, with Japan, Mexico, the US and the Republic of Korea, supported the first alternative. Norway supported the first alternative, but suggested further strengthening the chapeau by adding three paragraphs already contained in the body of the declaration on: linking the Habitat Agenda with sustainable development; promoting the upgrading of slums; and responsibilities toward future generations. The G-77/China supported the first alternative with two additional paragraphs: one reaffirming, *inter alia*, that human settlements be established in full conformity with international law; and another stating that an international enabling environment is a prerequisite for implementing the Habitat Agenda. The US, the EU and Japan opposed the introduction of new language. Norway withdrew his proposed additions to the preamble. The Chair asked the G-77/China to consider withdrawing their proposals. Early Saturday morning, delegates agreed to accept the Chair's first proposal, moving paragraph 1, without amendment.

**Final Text:** The final text of the chapeau contains language stating that governments reaffirm their will and commitment to fully implementing the Istanbul Declaration and the Habitat Agenda and decide on further initiatives, in the spirit of the Millennium Declaration.

**SECTION 1: RENEWING THE COMMITMENTS FROM HABITAT II:** This section contains several paragraphs on renewing the commitments made at Habitat II. The paragraphs in this section were agreed to at PrepCom II, and there was no discussion on this section during the Special Session.

The final text reaffirms that human beings are at the center of concerns for sustainable development, and states that, *inter alia*, half of the world's population of six billion will be living in cities, and decisions made now will have far-reaching consequences. The text also highlights: the need to eradicate rural poverty and to improve living conditions; the determination to address deteriorating environmental conditions; and the fact that some activities at the local level that



degrade the environment have implications at the global level and need to be addressed in the context of human settlements. Another paragraph reaffirms the seven commitment categories concerning adequate shelter for all, sustainable human settlements, enablement and participation, gender equality, financing shelter and human settlements, international cooperation and assessing progress.

**SECTION 2: PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING THE HABITAT AGENDA:** This section reviews progress made in implementing the Habitat Agenda. Delegates at Istanbul+5 deliberated on the paragraph regarding national and regional reports in this section.

The agreed text in this section welcomes:

- progress made thus far in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda;
- the UNCHR's decision at its 56th session mandating the Special Rapporteur to have regular dialogue and discuss possible areas of collaboration with governments, relevant UN bodies, specialized agencies, and international organizations in the field of housing rights, and to make recommendations on the realization of the rights relevant to the mandate;
- the increasing economic role of cities and towns in a globalizing world;
- efforts made by developing countries to effect decentralization; and
- the contributions of national and other governments in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda.

It also takes note of: the growing awareness of the need to address poverty, homelessness, unemployment, exclusion of women and other marginalized groups, including indigenous communities; social fragmentation; and the development of integrated and participatory approaches to urban development.

**Paragraph 8 (National and Regional Reports):** On Monday, delegates discussed bracketed text on “taking note with satisfaction of the comprehensive nature of national and regional reports on the implementation of the Habitat Agenda and of the analysis of these reports by the UNCHS, as contained in the report of the Executive Director (A/S-25/ 3).” Chair García-Durán suggested removing the brackets since the reports were now complete, but the G-77/China stated the need to address inaccuracies in the reports. The G-77/China expressed concern about the legal connotations of “taking note with satisfaction,” opposed reference to the analysis of these reports, and supported 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 the reports be “noted with appreciation.”

On Thursday, the G-77/China proposed alternative language stating that governments “commend the efforts” of the Executive Director of Habitat. The G-77/China expressed concern that the reports may be interpreted as recommendations and added a footnote to clarify that the reports were presented as information documents to the Special Session. With these amendments, the paragraph was adopted.

**Final Text:** The final text of paragraph 8, *inter alia*, commends the efforts of all levels of government, the UN, other intergovernmental organizations, Habitat Agenda partners and the UNHCS Executive Director, takes note with appreciation the national and regional reports, and takes into account the specific priorities and objectives of each region in conformity with the legal framework and national policies of each country. A footnote clarifies that the reports were presented as information documents to the Special Session.

### SECTION 3: RECOGNIZING GAPS AND OBSTACLES:

This section highlights gaps and obstacles to the implementation of the Habitat Agenda. This section was forwarded to the Special Session with bracketed text on good governance.

The final text of the section identifies gaps and obstacles to the implementation of the Habitat Agenda as, *inter alia*:

- widespread poverty as the core obstacle;
- the discrepancy between commitments made at Istanbul and the political will to fulfill them;
- serious financial constraints in countries receiving an influx of refugees;
- policies that limit participation and partnership, including women's participation;
- different capacities and priorities, and absence of coordination among local authorities where metropolitan concentrations extend beyond the cities' original administrative boundaries; and
- economic and financial policies that constrain adequate resource mobilization.

The decision also recognizes that: for the first time in human history, a majority of the world's six billion people will live in cities; many people have experienced a deterioration, not improvement, in their living environment; global progress towards sustainable human settlements has slowed in the last five years; and, thus, States have the need to ensure that the Habitat Agenda is now translated into policy and into practice in every country.

**Paragraph 24 (Good Governance):** On Tuesday, delegates discussed paragraph 24, on identifying obstacles associated with limited economic, technological and institutional capacities, in combination with paragraph 49, on intensifying efforts for ensuring transparent, responsible, accountable, just, effective and efficient governance of cities and other human settlements (Section 4). The G-77/ China, supported by Mexico and opposed by the EU, proposed deleting language stating that good governance is yet to be realized at different levels of decision-making and management. Delegates agreed to this proposal after the US said it could accept its deletion if a reference to good governance were maintained in paragraph 49.

**Final Text:** The final text contains no reference to good governance and states that obstacles associated with limited economic, technological and institutional capacities at all levels of government, particularly in the developing and the least developed countries have been identified. It also recognizes the absence of comprehensive and inclusive policies for capacity-building institutions and their networking.

**Paragraph 27bis (Terrorism):** Early Saturday morning, as part of a compromise related to other paragraphs on foreign occupation and refugees (Section 4), delegates agreed to add an additional paragraph to this section on further resolving to take concerted action against international terrorism.

**Final Text:** The final text states that countries resolve to take concerted action against international terrorism, which causes serious obstacles to the implementation of the Habitat Agenda.

**SECTION 4: TAKING FURTHER ACTIONS:** This section highlights a broad range of further actions to be taken across the spectrum of issues related to the Habitat Agenda. Five paragraphs in this section were forwarded by PrepCom II with brackets. The bracketed language addressed: good governance, external debt and ODA, a world solidarity fund, decentralization and gender equality. Additional paragraphs relate to strengthening the UNCHS and the CHS, foreign occupation, protection of civilians in conformity with international humanitarian law and refugees.



Among the paragraphs in the final text for this section are three paragraphs on the family. The first reaffirms that the family is the basic unit of society and should be strengthened and notes that in different cultural, political and social systems, various forms of the family exist. The second addresses a poverty eradication strategy encouraging policies designed to meet housing needs of families. The third refers to promoting changes in attitudes, structures, policies and laws and other practices related to gender, in order to eliminate obstacles to human dignity and equality in family and society.

This section also calls for actions on:

- overcoming obstacles encountered in implementing the Habitat Agenda, especially poverty, the major underlying factor;
- raising awareness about human settlements through full and open dissemination of information;
- empowering the poor and vulnerable through, *inter alia*, promoting greater security of tenure;
- building capacities and networks to enable all partners to play an effective role in shelters and human settlements development;
- promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women;
- supporting volunteer work and the work of community-based organizations;
- reducing vulnerability from natural and human-made disasters and implementing post-disaster programmes;
- strengthening existing financial mechanisms and identifying and developing appropriate innovative approaches for financing shelter and human settlements development;
- promoting upgrading of slums and regularization of squatter settlements, and reiterating the aims of the Cities Without Slums initiatives;
- promoting use of adequate low-cost and sustainable building materials and appropriate technology in the interest of affordable housing;
- formulating and implementing appropriate policies and actions to address the impact of HIV/AIDS on human settlements;
- intensifying efforts to enhance the role of youth and civil society, and increasing cooperation with parliamentarians in human settlements;
- promoting action against urban crime and violence, particularly violence against women, children and the elderly;
- addressing challenges posed by wars, conflicts, refugees and human-made disasters;
- promoting access to safe drinking water for all and facilitating the provision of basic infrastructure and urban services;
- intensifying efforts for improving environmental planning and management practices, and promoting sustainable production and consumption patterns in human settlements;
- integrating Local Agenda 21 in the Plan of Action for the implementation of the Habitat Agenda;
- monitoring and evaluating progress, and identifying and disseminating best practices and applying shelter and human settlements development indicators by governments at all levels;
- translating best practices into policies and enabling their replication;
- strengthening institutional frameworks to facilitate the extension of micro-credit to those living in poverty; and
- encouraging and strengthening existing and innovative forms of international cooperation and partnership.

The final text also: recognizes the interdependence of the implementation of the Habitat Agenda and the pursuit of sustainable development; reconfirms the role of the CHS and of the UNCHS in implementing the goals of adequate shelter for all through providing

legal security of tenure and sustainable human settlement development in all countries; supports the establishment of the Habitat Agenda Task Manager, designed to allow better monitoring and mutual reinforcements of actions undertaken by international agencies; and agrees to regularly review further implementation of the Habitat Agenda with a view to assessing progress and considering new initiatives.

**Paragraph 33 (Foreign Debt and ODA):** On Monday, delegates began considering bracketed text on external debt and official development assistance (ODA). Regarding bracketed language stating that the international community should consider further measures that would lead to durable solutions to the external debt of all developing countries, the EU opposed reference to “all” developing countries, and supported reference to the debt burden. New Zealand, opposed by the G-77/China, proposed text stating that the measures should be consistent with the existing Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) framework. Japan suggested adding text to say that further measures should be considered, as appropriate.

Delegates also debated three bracketed alternatives referring to the ODA target of 0.7% of GNP. After some discussion, delegates used the alternative that expresses appreciation to developed countries that have agreed to and have reached the ODA target of 0.7% of GNP and calls on developed countries that have not yet done so to strengthen efforts to achieve the agreed target. 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 supported that the target be achieved “where agreed.” The EU and Norway opposed, while Japan and the US supported, language singling out developed countries that have agreed to the target. 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.

On Wednesday, delegates accepted text on strengthening efforts to achieve the agreed ODA target of 0.7% of GNP as soon as possible. On Thursday, language on external debt was agreed following the G-77/China’s acceptance of the phrase “as appropriate” in reference to considering further measures that would lead to durable solutions to the external debt burden of developing countries.

**Final Text:** The final text emphasizes that the international community should consider further measures, as appropriate, that would lead to durable solutions to the external debt burden of developing countries. It also expresses appreciation to developed countries that have agreed to and have reached the ODA target of 0.7% of GNP, and calls on developed countries that have not yet done so to strengthen their efforts to achieve the agreed target of 0.7% as soon as possible and, where agreed, within that target, to earmark 0.15% to 0.20% of GNP for least developed countries. It also: invites governments, the UN and other international organizations to strengthen their support to poverty eradication and sustainable human settlements development, which requires renewed political will and new and additional resources; and urges the strengthening of international assistance to developing countries.

**Paragraph 34 (World Solidarity Fund):** On Tuesday, delegates began discussions on text stating that the establishment of a world solidarity fund for poverty eradication should be actively considered. The G-77/China, the US and Tunisia supported this text, while the EU opposed it. On Wednesday, the EU stated that the UN Secretary-General is actively working on this issue. Tunisia proposed language on taking GA resolution 55/210 into account and also suggested removing language calling on the international community to “actively



consider” the establishment of a fund. The EU, supported by Japan, proposed alternate text on welcoming the ongoing consultations of the UN Secretary-General on the establishment of a world solidarity fund. On Thursday morning, delegates agreed to the EU-proposed text.

**Final Text:** The final text requests the international community to strongly support poverty eradication, and welcomes the ongoing consultations by the Secretary-General on the establishment of a world solidarity fund for poverty eradication to finance and realize, *inter alia*, the social policies and programmes of the Habitat Agenda to address challenges of poverty eradication and sustainable development in developing countries, especially least developed countries, bearing in mind the voluntary nature of contributions.

**Paragraph 37 (Decentralization):** On Tuesday, delegates began debating two alternative formulations related to decentralization: one on agreeing to establish an intergovernmental forum to deliberate on guiding principles of local self-government with a view to reaching a consensus on an enabling international framework; and another on deliberating further on all issues related to effective decentralization. The G-77/China opposed the first option, while the EU supported it. Canada proposed new language on intensifying dialogue on effective decentralization and strengthening of local authorities within the framework of implementing the Habitat Agenda. The EU asked for time to consult.

On Wednesday, using the Canadian proposal as a basis for discussion, the G-77/China proposed that dialogue be in conformity with the legal framework and policies of each country. The EU proposed an amendment on guiding principles for local government and, as appropriate, legal frameworks. The G-77/China suggested deletion of the paragraph.

On Thursday, regarding the EU-proposed language, India, supported by Mexico and Tanzania, reiterated that this language was agreed to by the CHS. Canada accepted the EU proposal, while the G-77/China opposed. After consultations, the G-77/China proposed deleting the reference to legal frameworks and maintaining the reference to principles with a footnote stating that the term principles refers to national principles that are not intended to be implemented through legally binding international instruments. The EU opposed the reference to national principles.

On Friday, the EU said it would, in the spirit of compromise, agree to a proposal made by the Republic of Korea to delete the reference to principles and legal frameworks, and said he understood that any dialogue would include a discussion of these issues. The paragraph was accepted.

**Final Text:** The final text states agreement to intensify dialogue, where possible, including, *inter alia*, through the CHS on all issues related to effective decentralization and strengthening of local authorities, in support of the implementation of the Habitat Agenda, in conformity with the legal framework and policies of each country. It also includes language on empowering local authorities, NGOs, and other Habitat Agenda partners to play a more effective role in shelter provision and in sustainable human settlements development, which can be achieved through effective decentralization of, *inter alia*, responsibilities, policy management and decision-making authority. Ensuring the effective role of women in decision-making of local authorities is also highlighted.

**Paragraphs 42 and 43 (Gender Equality):** On Tuesday, delegates began debating gender equality and two alternative formulations within paragraph 42 related to security of tenure, one calling for elimination of inequalities and the other on upholding respect for rights. After the EU supported merging the elements of these alternatives and

placing them in paragraph 43, on equal access to economic resources, the debate focused on paragraph 43. The EU proposal included language recognizing women’s 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 this proposal and possible amendments.

On Wednesday, Norway proposed adding language to reflect that legislative and administrative reforms should be undertaken to remove obstacles and inequalities. The G-77/China indicated they could accept the original EU proposal, but not Norway’s amendment.

On Thursday, Norway proposed replacing language on the removal of obstacles and inequalities with reference to eradicating legal and social barriers. Uganda and South Africa supported Norway’s proposal. The G-77/China said it would accept Norway’s proposal provided that the text recognized different national laws and/or systems of land tenure and refer to progress that has been made. He proposed that countries should continue to undertake reforms, while the EU, with Tanzania, supported language on resolving to undertake reforms. Norway proposed adding reference to eradicating “remaining” legal and social barriers. After some debate and as a compromise, Norway suggested deleting its proposal on eradicating barriers and supported Brazil’s proposal stating that reforms should continue to be undertaken. Delegates agreed and the text was approved.

**Final Text:** The final text resolves to continue to undertake legislative and administrative reforms to give women full and equal access to economic resources, including the right to inheritance and the ownership of land and other property, credit, natural resources, and appropriate technologies, as well as ensuring their right to security of tenure and to enter into contractual agreements. The text also refers to: strengthening existing financial mechanisms and identifying and developing appropriate innovative approaches for financing shelter and human settlements development; promoting increased and equal access for all people to open, efficient, effective and appropriate housing finance and to support savings mechanisms in the informal sector, where appropriate, and to strengthen regulatory and legal frameworks and financial management capacity.

**Paragraph 49 (Good Governance):** On Tuesday, delegates discussed, in combination, references to good governance in paragraphs 24, on identifying obstacles associated with limited economic, technological and institutional capacities (Section 3), and 49, which refers to intensifying efforts for ensuring transparent, responsible, accountable, just, effective and efficient governance of cities and other human settlements. After agreeing to delete the reference to good governance in paragraph 24 if it were retained in paragraph 49, delegates debated the scope of good governance. The G-77/China proposed specifying good governance both at national and international levels. The US and the EU supported, and the G-77/China opposed, reference to good governance at the local level. Canada suggested good governance within each country and at the international level. Following informal consultations, delegates agreed to accept the formulation proposed by Canada.

**Final Text:** The final text: resolves to intensify efforts for ensuring transparent, responsible, accountable, just, effective and efficient governance of cities and other human settlements; and recognizes that good governance, within each country and at the international level, is essential to addressing the challenge of urban poverty as well as the challenge of environmental degradation and to harnessing the potential opportunities offered by globalization.



**Paragraphs 53 bis, ter and quater (Foreign Occupation, Protection of Civilians, Refugees):** On Friday, delegates began substantive discussions on two paragraphs tabled by the G-77/China on Monday, on illegal settlements and refugees. Israel said he refused to participate in the negotiations on these paragraphs. The US objected to the paragraphs stating that the text was new and that it would destroy the balance of the declaration. The EU proposed searching for agreed language from the other +5 processes or from paragraph 26 of the Millennium Declaration. The G-77/China noted that similar language appeared in the Millennium Declaration and that it is consistent with international humanitarian law. The informal negotiations adjourned at 5:30 pm to allow for informal consultations.

At 4:40 am on Saturday morning, the session reconvened. Chair García-Durán noted that consultations had continued throughout the night and representatives from Israel, the US and Iran, on behalf of the G-77/China, had met with Norway and General Assembly President Harri Holkeri, who acted as mediators in the formulation of mutually agreeable text. Delegates agreed to a package deal, which contained paragraphs on foreign occupation, protection of civilians in conformity with international humanitarian law and refugees. An additional paragraph on international terrorism was added to Section 3, recognizing gaps and obstacles.

**Final Text:** The final text includes language on: taking further effective measures to remove obstacles to the full implementation of the Habitat Agenda, as well as to remove obstacles to the realization of the rights of the people living under colonial and foreign occupation (53 bis); strengthening the protection of civilians in conformity with international humanitarian law, in particular Article 49 of the Geneva Convention (53 ter); and the need for international coordination of humanitarian assistance to countries hosting refugees and the need to help all refugees and displaced persons to return voluntarily to their homes in safety and dignity (53 quater).

**Paragraph 61 bis (Strengthening UN Mechanisms):** On Friday morning, delegates began discussion of Chair García-Durán's proposed paragraph on strengthening the mandate and the status of the CHS and further strengthening the role and function of the UNCHS. The Secretariat explained to delegates that the low status of the CHS and the UNCHS within the UN system is impeding their work. The US objected to the introduction of new concepts to the declaration. Regarding the Chair's proposal, the EU stated that the review should be conducted by the CHS and channeled through ECOSOC to the General Assembly. Norway supported the EU proposal and added that options for strengthening the mandate and the status of the CHS and the UNCHS should be reviewed. India asked the EU to withdraw their proposal since paragraph 17 of General Assembly resolution 51/177 already emphasizes that the General Assembly and ECOSOC should review and strengthen the CHS. The G-77/China, opposed by Norway, proposed inviting the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly to review options for strengthening the CHS and UNCHS. Japan, opposed by Nigeria, Egypt, Norway and the EU, expressed concern about possible financial implications and stated that strengthening the CHS and UNCHS should be done with existing resources. As a result of contact group discussions, delegates agreed to adopt text inviting the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly on options for reviewing and strengthening the mandate and status of the CHS and the status, role and function of the UNCHS.

**Final Text:** The final text invites the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its 56th session on options for reviewing and strengthening the mandate and status of the CHS and the status, role,

and function of the UNCHS (Habitat), in accordance with the relevant resolutions of General Assembly and of ECOSOC and decisions of the Habitat II Conference.

### THEMATIC COMMITTEE

On Wednesday, 6 June, Chair Habedidine Belaid (Tunisia) opened the first session of the Thematic Committee and introduced the Bureau, which included Vice-Chairs José María Matamoros (Venezuela), Erna Witoelar (Indonesia) and Luís García Cerezo (Spain), and Elena Szolgayova (Slovakia) as Rapporteur. He highlighted the Committee's sub-themes of housing, social development, balanced structures for human settlements, environmental management, economic development, governance, financing for urban development and strategies for development of cities. He stated that the presentations would reflect successes of national governments, local authorities and civil society. They would also examine the impacts of multi-sectoral elements including: participation, partnership and cooperation; poverty reduction; gender equality; social inclusion; upgrading of local practices; and knowledge exchange.

Sixteen presentations from developed and developing countries were given during four sessions over three days, with an hour for each case study that included time for questions and answers from participants, and a final discussion session on conclusions.

**SOUTH AFRICA:** Sankie Mthembu-Mahanyele, Minister of Housing for South Africa, presented a video showing how a rights-based approach to housing is being addressed in both urban and rural areas nationwide. Strategies include legislation preventing unfair evictions, upholding the right to adequate housing and addressing the needs of women and the disabled. Housing subsidies and government support for roads, water, sanitation and electricity have combined successfully with regional cooperation and community involvement to increase access to housing and create employment. Discussion revolved around, *inter alia*, access to credit, collective savings, land ownership, technology transfer, upgrading slums, cooperation between government and communities, and the role of local authorities and women.

**EGYPT:** Mohamed Ibrahim Soliman, Egyptian Minister of Housing Utilities and Urban Communities, presented three urban rehabilitation and relocation projects and attributed their success to the emphasis placed on cultural factors and stakeholder participation at all stages. Initial planning of the projects focused on a holistic view of the residential environment by incorporating elements such as green spaces and social services, and on ways to alleviate the financial burden on the state by identifying possibilities for private sector involvement. The debate focused on, *inter alia*, subsidies, the enabling roles of all levels of government, and how to ensure effective participation of women and marginalized sectors of society.

**COLOMBIA:** Alvaro José Cobo Soto, Minister of Housing for Colombia, discussed the Holistic Upgrading Programme in the city of Medellín. He said contrasting populations and levels of socioeconomic development in peripheral areas have created conflict over territory and resources. He highlighted how a strategy involving local and national governments, supported by international financial assistance, has improved subnormal areas of the city with projects to establish a safe environment, improve quality of life and peacefully integrate citizens into the city. The discussion addressed: urban integration; progressive use of reference to "subnormal" areas to denote communities currently lacking acceptable living conditions; maintenance of new infrastructures and sustainability of new improvements; and the necessity of guaranteed resources.



**SENEGAL:** Seydon Sy Sall, Minister of Town Planning and National and Regional Development of Senegal, described a pilot project to secure land tenure, improve basic services and develop local economic bases in several squatter towns. He identified challenges including the difficulty in planning for future spontaneous settlements, improving access to credit, and the creation and implementation of mechanisms to prevent land speculation. Subsequent debate focused on curbing rural exodus, corruption at the local level, the distinction between land ownership and the right to use land, and a proposed UN-sponsored network to share Habitat-related best practices.

**INDIA:** Sheela Patel of SPARC, a Bombay partnership of local actors, discussed a programme successfully initiated in three cities whereby municipalities pay for sustainable sanitation facilities created and managed by communities. Working together to design, build and maintain public toilet blocks has allowed municipalities, senior leaders, contracted artisans and the poor to work together, making sustainable sanitation occasion for social celebration. Participants focused on how such projects have reduced illness and disease, promoted community participation while producing awareness of the value of work and increasing management capabilities, provided the opportunity to use grant funding to create successful projects that can garner funding from municipalities, and fostered public-private sector relationships.

**TANZANIA:** Tumsifu Jonas Nnkyia, Professor at the University of Dar-es-Salaam, presented two case studies illustrating the advantages of environmental management plans. He said holistically planned development strategies to implement environmental improvements can also create employment and income-generating opportunities. He also noted that labor-intensive methods, as opposed to capital-intensive ones, were more appropriate and sustainable. The ensuing discussion centered on how to start the dialogue among the actors, the effects of increased property values on the poorest residents of environmentally improved settlements and the lack of youth involvement.

**SWEDEN:** Mats Perner, Director of the Strategic Department, Stockholm City Planning Administration, described the development of Stockholm as a sustainable compact city, noting a planned growth strategy since 1952 that provides for good housing, efficient public transport and reclaimed industrial lands. He highlighted respect for ecological, social and cultural values through infrastructure allowing green spaces and reducing environmental impacts. Discussion addressed the importance of long-term planning, land value and use, and inward expansion to avoid urban sprawl.

**CHINA:** Shaoxiong Wang, Vice Mayor of Chengdu Municipality, introduced the Fu and Nan Riverbank Refurbishment project as a successful example of comprehensive urban environmental renovation. He noted the synergies between public planning and market forces, and emphasized the importance of the role and support of the central government. The question and answer period covered, *inter alia*, the difficulty of making long-term comprehensive plans in countries with economies in transition, the regional nature of river management, the added difficulty of relocating businesses and private sector participation in infrastructure upkeep.

**POLAND:** The Mayor of Katowice, Peter Uszok, discussed an environmental management and city development strategy in Katowice Agglomeration involving reclamation and rehabilitation of industrial mining areas. He said that promoting sustainable development and environmental regeneration by strengthening local capacity in the field of urban environmental planning and management has required decentralization and transformation of post-industrial areas to serve local needs for commerce, recreation and other services. Discus-

sion addressed the role of women, multilateral sources of finance, the importance of visibility and replication, and achievements in pollution reduction and capacity building.

**BRAZIL:** Celso Daniel, Mayor of Santo André, presented an integrated programme for social inclusion in this area located on the outskirts of São Paulo, highlighting the multi-dimensional character of social exclusion and the need to address economic, urban and social issues while empowering people and creating conditions for them to participate in activities related to health, education, literacy, employment and housing construction. Discussion focused on how to stimulate and sustain social inclusion and the need for international funding and support from local government.

Joaquim Roriz, Governor of the Federal District of Brasilia, spoke about transformation of the slum areas around Samambaia, where families were provided the means to relocate to an area where they could own a plot of land and build their own homes, through cooperation between the Inter-American Development Bank, the federal government and the local community. Discussion underscored the political will necessary for such a project, replicability, employment generation, infrastructure provision, and social inclusion in city planning.

**FRANCE:** Gérard Collomb, Mayor of Lyon, described "Millénaire3," his city's strategy for integrated urban development in the context of globalization. He explained that the plan aimed to improve economic competitiveness, particularly on the regional scale, while addressing the gap between rich and poor neighborhoods in order to avoid "two-track development." He related the creation of a municipal council for development, an innovative consultative group made of many social actors to help guide policy in managing the complexity of urban society. Topics of discussion included the relationship between participatory and representative democracy and how to maintain public interest in urban renewal projects.

**NIGERIA:** J. O. Okunfulure, Director of Lands, Urban and Regional Development, and Garba Madaki Ali, Minister of State for Works and Housing, discussed sustainable urban development and good governance in Nigeria. Creation of geopolitical zones to balance regional growth and development and the establishment of an urban development bank were among the sweeping initiatives undertaken by the government in cooperation with the World Bank. Cross-cutting issues of poverty reduction and social integration were addressed. Discussion examined corruption, transparency, security of tenure and the challenge of achieving decentralization without disintegration.

**SPAIN:** Joan Clos, Mayor of Barcelona, discussed sustainable economic transformation and decentralization in Barcelona. He described a growth model based on transformation of industrial seafront areas and revitalization of historic districts through investments involving joint capital companies and communities, emphasizing the importance of preserving historic patrimony. Discussion revolved around issues related to investment, strategic urban planning, public-private ventures, and cultural sensitivity in urban renovation.

**THAILAND:** Somsook Boonyabancha, of the Community Organizations Development Institute, discussed how an urban community development fund begun with initial government capital has allowed poor people to develop small-scale activities to stimulate collective savings and improve their lives in cities throughout the country. An expanding network of partnerships among community groups, extending to rural areas and neighboring countries, serves as the key mechanism for sharing information and knowledge. Discussion explored the benefits of South-South cooperation, and overcoming obstacles of formal lending.





**PERU:** Martín Pumar, Mayor of Villa El Salvador, presented his city's experience with participatory planning and budgeting through popular assemblies. The Mayor described the various ways used to obtain the population's vision of the city, including how to spend public money. Gustavo Rio Frio, of DESCO, a Peruvian NGO, said that the process of national development is cumulative and is made up of the sum of local developments. Ensuing questions covered, *inter alia*, the division of responsibility between representative democracy and direct democracy, support required from the national level, and pseudo-regional characteristics of problems in large metropolitan areas and the need for inter-municipal cooperation.

**MOROCCO:** Moncey Fadili, national coordinator of a pilot project to combat poverty in urban and peri-urban areas, discussed poverty alleviation in cities throughout Morocco, through promotion of regions as integrated spaces and partnerships among government, the United Nations Development Programme, UNCHS and communities. The project's objectives are to: promote permanent fora for dialogue and consultation; improve the living conditions of disadvantaged populations; enhance the competencies of local actors; and promote replicability of the processes of implementation of local programmes. Income generation, access to housing and basic services, protecting vulnerable groups and promoting social integration are among the issues being addressed that have strengthened associations, mobilized partnerships and integrated roles of women in facing challenges of poverty alleviation in a number of cities.

**CONCLUSIONS:** At the close of the Thematic Committee on Friday, 8 June, Chair Belaid noted how different elements in the 16 case studies reflect the guiding principles of the Habitat Agenda. Belgium highlighted concerns regarding globalization and standardization of projects, stressing that settlement design should be determined by culture and environment. Vice-Chair Witoelar underscored similarities in issues of heritage and preservation, the need for partnerships and cooperation and replicability through government facilitation. Vice-Chair Matamoros stressed that viewing people as catalysts for change is the key to guiding the process of poverty alleviation. He called on universities and technological institutions to keep up with the transformation of participatory democracy based on shared responsibility, and emphasized the need to integrate rights and duties as individuals are now more willing to become responsibly involved in change. Vice-Chair Cerezo highlighted the benefits of holistic policies and the importance of long-range planning.

The UK identified common elements of: connections between levels of government and coordination among agencies; transportation and its environmental and social impacts; strategic urban planning that is participatory and culturally sensitive; land and property issues; and the role of personal commitment. Iran noted that developing country projects were mostly sponsored by international organizations and stressed recognition of their importance. Finland agreed that countries should not depend on development aid programmes to solve problems and cautioned against neglecting local resources. He praised the examples of South-South cooperation, and identified the importance of the Thematic Committee as an innovation. Tanzania recognized that systems of evaluation sometimes overemphasize the product of a project, stating that capacity and progress must also be considered.

Chair Belaid closed the session by noting the excellent formula for such a discussion forum, and thanked UNCHS and Executive Director Anna Tibajuka, the Thematic Committee Bureau and the 16 speakers.

## CLOSING PLENARY

On Saturday, 9 June, at 6:40 am, General Assembly President Holkeri called to order the closing Plenary in the General Assembly Hall. COW Rapporteur Alireza Esamaeilzadeh (Iran) presented, and delegates adopted, the report of the COW (A/S-25/AC.1/L.1 and Add.1-5) and the Declaration on Cities and Other Human Settlements (A/S-25/AC.1/L.2).

Israel noted its reservation on the newly agreed paragraphs on occupied territories. Egypt maintained its reservation from Istanbul on "various forms of the family," and Saudi Arabia reiterated its reservations from Istanbul on "the items that contradict Islam." The US, supported by Israel, welcomed the new text on terrorism, and expressed regret that yet another UN conference on a thematic matter had become politicized. He hoped that a better and more efficient way to work could be found in the future. Palestine said that the consensus achieved was a significant achievement and that it would be a guide for activities in the years to come. Iran, on behalf of the G-77/China, thanked President Holkeri for his personal involvement in the success of the UNGASS.

In his closing statement, President Holkeri expressed satisfaction with the constructive and cooperative spirit that prevailed throughout the Special Session and the difficult negotiations. After a moment of silence for prayer or meditation, President Holkeri gavelled the 25th Special Session of the General Assembly for an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the outcome of the UN Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) to a close at 7:00 am.

## A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF ISTANBUL+5

### ISTANBUL +5: VALUE ADDED?

Istanbul+5 brought to the UN the largest ever meeting of mayors and an innovative new mechanism in the form of the Thematic Committee. But few participants reported being impressed with what was supposed to be the main output of the Istanbul+5 review process, the declaration on cities and other human settlements. Following a bland and mostly agreed outcome document forwarded from PrepCom II, delegates spent a week on political debate over a handful of standard arguments that eclipsed the main substantive issues of the Habitat process.

While some progress was made in linking the concept of good governance to the sub-national level, delegates missed the chance to craft forward-looking language on topics such as external debt, decentralization and gender equality. An 11th hour discussion of foreign occupation and illegal settlements between the US, Israel, Palestine and Iran, on behalf of the G-77/China, nearly resulted in a vote, which would have been a first for a UN political declaration. Some delegates maintained that they would have almost preferred no conclusion to the meeting over setting this kind of precedent.

In assessing the results of Istanbul+5, it is important to examine issues related to participation and process. The meeting introduced a new forum for debate, the Thematic Committee, which broadened participation beyond national government delegates in a General Assembly forum, but the more general exclusion of civil society partners was also a major shift from Habitat II. A related issue was the Habitat process itself. Spanning a range of players from civil society to governments to UN mechanisms, it continues to struggle to bridge the awkward gap between the arena of international debate and the fact that implementation of the Habitat Agenda takes place primarily at the local level.



### **SUBTRACTING NGOS**

Civil society participation at Habitat II led the meeting to be dubbed the "Partners' Conference." At Istanbul+5, in contrast, attempts were made to systematically exclude civil society through an interpretation of protocol that was more rigid than in other +5 processes. This could have been predicted following the staunch opposition to NGO participation at PrepCom II, but it did not entirely explain the low level of enthusiasm among those gathered in the main NGO watering holes. Without the usual buzz of NGO activity surrounding the meeting, some delegates even remarked that Istanbul+5 did not feel like a real event.

Some NGOs themselves pointed out that they are already doing a better job than governments in implementing the Habitat Agenda within their own communities. A network of partnerships has flourished worldwide since Istanbul, and NGOs said they saw little point in putting much energy into the UN process, which is, after all, a club of nations. NGO efforts to intersect with the informal negotiations were lackluster and made no substantial impact. Others noted that the strong government response to NGO participation may reveal an underlying unease among some countries that civil society influence over policies and resources is growing.

### **MULTIPLYING PARTNERSHIPS AND PARTICIPATION**

As highlighted by GA President Harri Holkeri in the opening of the session, Istanbul+5's most substantial contribution may have been the Thematic Committee. Following on the heels of the largest ever meeting of mayors at the UN, which took place on Tuesday, 5 June 2001, the Thematic Committee allowed delegates to hear 16 speakers from around the world profile their best practices. Participants said the innovative forum revived the spirit of Istanbul in allowing a dynamic exchange of ideas and methods for implementing the Habitat Agenda. One delegate noted that this was the first time local authorities, who made up many of the speakers, have participated so strongly in General Assembly proceedings.

Many Thematic Committee participants remarked that this exercise generated a true dialogue, involving frank questions related to sensitive issues such as corruption, political will, social inclusion, and relocation of marginalized communities. Several highlighted discussions on the issue of international aid, saying that while ODA is important for implementing the Habitat Agenda, national resources should be used whenever possible.

Participants, while stressing that the Thematic Committee should be replicated in the future, also offered suggestions to improve it. These included stricter criteria for selection of the presentations, some of which verged on feel-good propaganda. Several delegates maintained that the upcoming 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development would greatly benefit from this type of forum for exchange. With more time to prepare, the 2002 Summit might be able to develop more selective criteria.

### **THE POWER OF DIVISION**

When the week began, with two days of informal negotiations before the three-day Special Session, delegates faced brackets in only seven paragraphs, a record low for the +5 processes. On the surface, clearing the brackets appeared to be a fairly easy task. But delegates were not deterred from dragging out their negotiations until the early hours of Saturday morning.

Much of this related to what one observer called the "cast of characters" on the negotiating floor. Chair Germán García-Durán proved to be unwilling to exercise his authority to invoke the confrontations that often proceed compromise. Different negotiating styles frequently

halted the debate, in a three-ring circus between diplomats from New York, Nairobi and the capitals. Those from outside New York often learned the hard way that they had broken the rules. One Nairobi delegate from a large developing country was reportedly asked to stay out of the room, and harsh words and table-top poundings were publicly inflicted on several delegates who broke the ranks of the G-77/China. Within the group, delegates reported that a small set of countries appeared to be making decisions among themselves. Other members complained about the lack of transparency, and a few found themselves so cornered on some issues that they put aside solidarity and spoke openly in the debate.

From the diplomatic perspective, an interesting highlight of the week was Norway's lone stand against the world on language to eradicate legal and social barriers to women's full and equal access to economic resources. The US remained silent on this issue, a departure from past practice, while the EU and Canada offered only lukewarm support. The debate dominated discussions off and on for more than three days. Observers noted that Norway's position probably had less to do with a new prominence on the negotiating floor and more to do with the composition of the diplomatic team.

At the end, there was mild disagreement in the corridors over what constituted forward movement. Although the document was not as strong as many would have wanted, some felt that the process of getting people together to reaffirm their commitments and talk about the issues was more important than coming up with a new declaration that might improve on the Habitat Agenda. Others said that the Habitat Agenda's reference to the right to housing makes the Istanbul document stronger than the declaration. They questioned whether the declaration, which does not include this reference, was really worth the effort. Some developed countries felt that the declaration's focus on poverty alleviation speaks more to developing countries, and overshadows important issues related to urbanization and sustainable development in developed countries.

### **THE WHOLE IS GREATER THAN THE SUM OF ITS PARTS**

As a whole, Istanbul+5 left many wondering about the relevance of five-year review processes in general. Istanbul+5 was a particularly weak example, because it enjoyed little political interest or support—no Heads of State or Government chose to attend. For the most part, delegates used the chance to score political points and made little real progress toward supporting the UN's implementation of the Habitat Agenda. This may prove to be a missed opportunity, given the dynamic new director of the UNCHS, Anna Tibaijuka, who has already started to bring a new focus and clarity to the agency.

Observers also noted that the review did little to thoroughly analyze the implementation of the Habitat Agenda. Without this base, there was little to build on. While this has been true of all the +5 processes, with the exception of Rio+5, Habitat may have been the worst example so far. This led one delegate to speculate, at the close of the Special Session, that the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development would be the first and only +10 meeting.

In the future, the Habitat process will continue to struggle with the question of whether it should be an international process within the UN, given that so much implementation occurs at the local level. What may continue to matter more than the rehashing of political debates will be the successes shared and replicated through the global networks that came out of Istanbul. Carried out in collaboration with the people they are designed to serve, these have gone a long way in strengthening the partnerships championed at Habitat II. As one grassroots activist concluded, "Let them talk. We are busy building houses."



## THINGS TO LOOK FOR

**SUMMER COURSE ON REFUGEE ISSUES:** This course will be held at York University in Toronto, Canada, from 16-24 June 2001, and is being sponsored by the Centre for Refugee Studies. For more information, contact the Centre for Refugee Studies; tel: +1-416-736-5423; fax: +1-416-736-5837; e-mail: summer@yorku.ca; Internet: <http://www.yorku.ca/crs/>

**ASIA-PACIFIC SUMMIT OF WOMEN MAYORS AND COUNCILLORS:** This conference will meet in Phitsanulok, Thailand, from 19-22 June 2001. It is being organized by UNESCAP, ADB, APGEN, City Net, TUGI, UNCHS (Habitat) Fukuoka Office and UNIFEM. The objectives are to increase the awareness of the transformative role women play in local government and the challenges and constraints they face while working with and leading local governments, and to discuss follow-up regional strategies and actions to promote the participation and representation in local governments. There are a limited number of partial sponsorships available for participants from developing countries. For more information, contact Miki Oshima at UNCHS, Fukuoka Office; tel: +66-2-288-1600; fax: +66-2-288-1097; e-mail: miki.oshima@fukoka.unchs.org; Internet: <http://www.unescap.org/huset/women/summit/index.htm>

**37TH INTERNATIONAL ISOCARP CONGRESS:** The 37th International ISoCaRP Congress ("HONEY, I SHRUNK THE SPACE" Planning in the Information Age) will be held in Utrecht, Netherlands, from 16-20 September 2001. It is being organized by the International Society of City and Regional Planners. For more information, contact the Congress Secretariat; tel: +31-70-3346-2654; fax: +31-70-361-7909; e-mail: secretariat@isocarp.org; Internet: <http://www.isocarp.org/2001/index.htm>

**ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE IN NEW ARAB TOWNS: PRESERVATION AND CONTEMPORARY TRENDS:** This symposium will meet in Cairo, Egypt, from 24-27 September 2001, and is being organized by INTA and the Arab Urban Development Institute (AUDI). For more information, contact AUDI; tel: +9661-4802555; fax: +9661-4802555; e-mail: info@araburban.org; Internet: <http://www.araburban.org>

**WORLD HABITAT DAY GLOBAL CELEBRATION:** This event will be held in Fukuoka, Japan, on 1 October 2001, and is organized by UNCHS (Habitat) Fukuoka office. For more information,

contact Miki Oshima at UNCHS, Fukuoka Office; tel: +81-92-724-7121; fax: +81-92-724-7124; e-mail: miki.oshima@fukoka.unchs.org; Internet: <http://www.fukuoka.unchs.org>

**FOURTH INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON URBAN POVERTY (IFUP):** This conference will be held in Marrakech, Morocco, from 16-19 October 2001, and is organized by UNCHS and the government of Morocco. The conference will be devoted to "Productive and Inclusive Cities: Towards Cities for All." For more information, contact IFUP; tel: +254-2-62-4322; fax: +254-2-62-4264/65; e-mail: ifup@unchs.org; Internet: <http://www.unchs.org/ifup>

**INTA25 CONGRESS: NEW DIMENSIONS OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT: LINKING NEW TECHNOLOGIES OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION FOR LOCAL MANAGEMENT:** This conference will be held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, from 20-23 October 2001, and is organized by the International Network for Urban Development (INTA). For more information, contact INTA; tel: +31-70-3244526; fax: +31-70-3280727; e-mail: intainfo@inta-net.org; Internet: <http://www.inta-net.org>

**THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ECOLOGICAL SANITATION:** This conference will meet in Nanning, Guangxi Province, China, from 5-8 November 2001. It is being organized by Jiu San Society, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), UNICEF, UNDP, the Ecological Society of China and the Chinese Association for Agricultural Engineering. For more information, contact the Conference Secretariat, Jiu San Society; fax: +86-10-64220162; e-mail: jszykjb@236.net; Internet: <http://www.wkab.se>

**FUTURE CITIES:** This conference will be held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, from 10-12 November 2001, and is being organized by AUDI and INTA. For more information, contact AUDI; tel: +9661-4802555; fax: +9661-4802555; e-mail: info@araburban.org; Internet: <http://www.araburban.org>

**24TH WORLD CONGRESS OF HOUSING FINANCE:** This conference will be held in Washington, DC, US, from 11-14 November 2001, and is being organized by the International Union for Housing Finance. For more information, contact Donald Holton; tel: +1-312-946-8200; fax: +1-312-946-8202; e-mail: don\_holton@housingfinance.org; Internet: <http://www.housingfinance.org>