



TWENTIETH SESSION OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL OF THE UNITED NATIONS HUMAN SETTLEMENTS PROGRAMME: 4-8 APRIL 2005

The 20th session of the Governing Council of the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) opens today at the UN Office at Nairobi, Kenya, and continues through 8 April 2005. The high-level segment will focus on: the activities of the UN-HABITAT; implementing and monitoring the goal of the UN Millennium Declaration on improving the lives of slum dwellers; and the work programme and budget of UN-HABITAT for the biennium 2006-2007. Dialogues with local authorities and other partners will focus on: recommendations on decentralization and the strengthening of local authorities, and financing shelter and urban development. The Committee of the Whole will discuss two special themes: involvement of civil society in improving local governance, and post-conflict, natural and man-made disasters assessment and reconstruction. It will also draft decisions on issues related to: activities of UN-HABITAT; implementing and monitoring the goal of the UN Millennium Declaration; the work programme and budget for the biennium 2006-2007; coordination between UN-HABITAT and other UN agencies; and the themes for next session and other future sessions.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF UN-HABITAT

As a result of the First United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, which took place in Vancouver, Canada, from 31 May-11 June 1976, the Vancouver Declaration on Human Settlements officially established the UN Center for Human Settlements as the major UN agency mandated by the UN General Assembly to promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities, with the goal of providing adequate shelter for all. By General Assembly resolution 32/162 of 19 December 1977, the Commission for Human Settlements was also established as the governing body for the UN Center for Human Settlements.

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. The Habitat Agenda and the Istanbul Declaration on Human Settlements, adopted by 171 governments during the Conference, outlined over 100 commitments and strategies to address shelter and sustainable human settlements, emphasizing the themes of partnership and local action. Habitat II, as the culmination of a cycle of UN conferences, witnessed

the 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.

ISTANBUL+5: 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 Habitat II took place from 6-8 June 2001, at UN headquarters in New York. At the special session, the General Assembly adopted the Declaration on Cities and Other Human Settlements in the New Millennium, which consists of a political declaration reaffirming the Istanbul Declaration on Human Settlements and the Habitat Agenda; a review and assessment of implementation of the Habitat Agenda; and proposals for further actions for achieving the goals of adequate shelter for all and sustainable development of human settlements.

56TH SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY:

In its resolution 56/206 of 21 December 2001, the General Assembly decided to transform the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements into the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, UN-HABITAT. The General Assembly also decided, in the same resolution, to transform the Commission on Human Settlements into the Governing Council of UN-HABITAT. The Governing Council, which was also made into a subsidiary body of the General Assembly, reports to the General Assembly through the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and provides overall policy guidance, direction and supervision to UN-HABITAT. The resolution stressed a commitment to the implementation of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), including the need to improve the lives of over 100 million slum dwellers by 2020. The resolution also called for the election and enhancement of the status of the Executive Director of UN-HABITAT to the level of Under-Secretary-General. In July 2002, Anna K. Tibaijuka was unanimously elected by the General Assembly as Executive Director of UN-HABITAT for a four-year term.

FIRST SESSION OF THE WORLD URBAN FORUM:

Designated by the UN General Assembly as an advisory body, the World Urban Forum (WUF) is an open-ended think tank designed to encourage debate and discussion about the challenges of urbanization in this century. The first session of the WUF was held in Nairobi, Kenya, from 29 April-3 May 2002. The overall theme was sustainable urbanization. Discussions also focused on:



the effect of HIV/AIDS on human settlements; violence against women; basic services and infrastructure, including provision of water and sanitation; and the need for secure tenure.

WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE

DEVELOPMENT: The World Summit on Sustainable Development convened in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 26 August–4 September 2002. The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI), adopted in Johannesburg, calls for achieving a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020, as proposed in the “Cities without Slums” initiative. The JPOI calls for actions at all levels to: improve access to land and property, adequate shelter and basic services for the urban and rural poor; use low-cost and sustainable materials and appropriate technologies for the construction of adequate and secure housing for the poor; increase decent employment, credit and income; remove unnecessary regulation and other obstacles for microenterprises and the informal sector; and support slum upgrading programmes within the framework of urban development plans.

19TH SESSION OF THE UN-HABITAT GOVERNING

COUNCIL: This session took place in Nairobi, Kenya, from 5-9 May 2003. The purpose of the session was to discuss follow-up to the special session of the UN General Assembly for an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the Habitat Agenda. The special themes of the session were urban development strategies and sheltering strategies favoring the poor, and the rural dimension of sustainable urban development. The session reviewed activities of UN-HABITAT, adopted its work programme and budget for the biennium 2004-2005 and its medium plan for 2006-2009. The session also adopted 18 resolutions covering topics ranging from women’s role and rights in human settlements development and slum upgrading, to water and sanitation, and decentralization and strengthening of local authorities.

INTERSESSIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

CSD-12: The twelfth session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-12) was held from 19-30 April 2004, at UN headquarters in New York. CSD-12 undertook an evaluation of progress in the implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21, and the JPOI, focusing on identifying constraints, obstacles, successes and lessons learned with regard to water, sanitation and human settlements. The Commission also heard reports from the UN Regional Commissions on the status of implementation, and from Major Groups on their contribution to implementation. A high-level segment, attended by over 100 ministers and addressed by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, was held from 28-30 April. At the conclusion of CSD-12, the Commission adopted the report of the session, which includes a Chair’s Summary, reflecting inputs from the session and records of activities held as part of the Partnerships Fair and Learning Centre.

SECOND SESSION OF THE WORLD URBAN FORUM:

The second session of the WUF took place from 13-17 September 2004, in Barcelona, Spain. Participants discussed progress on achieving Goal 7 of the Millennium Development Goals, on environmental sustainability, including target 10 on water and sanitation, and target 11 on improving the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by the year 2020. Participants also addressed gender equality, urban culture, poverty, safety, disaster preparedness and reconstruction.

INTERREGIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE URBAN-RURAL LINKAGES APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT:

The Interregional Conference on the Urban-Rural Linkages Approach to Development was held in Nairobi, Kenya, from 1-4 October 2004, to create and promote awareness, exchange

experience and build capacity among national economic and social development decision-makers and planners, their policy advisers and urban-rural development actors, on the need for enhancing the balanced territorial development of both rural and urban areas.

FIRST AFRICAN MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

ON HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT: The First African Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development (AMCHUD) took place in Durban, South Africa, from 31 January-4 February 2005. The conference theme was Urbanization, Shelter and Development: Towards an Enhanced Framework for Sustainable Cities and Towns in Africa. The ministers adopted a Declaration on the establishment of the AMCHUD, as the consultative mechanism on the promotion of sustainable development of human settlements in Africa, normally meeting every two years before the UN-HABITAT Governing Council session, under the auspices of the African Union. The ministers also adopted an Enhanced Framework of Implementation and Related Outputs for more effective African urban development policies and strategies. The enhanced framework set out Africa’s priority for UN-HABITAT GC, CSD-13 and the Millennium Review Meeting, particularly highlighting poverty as a crosscutting issue applying to water, sanitation and human settlements.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL PREPARATORY MEETING

FOR THE 13TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: The intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting for the 13th Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-13) took place from 28 February-4 March 2005, in New York. Participants considered policy options, interlinkages and cross-cutting aspects on water, sanitation and human settlements, the three themes for the CSD-12/CSD-13 Implementation Cycle. These discussions were reflected in a draft Chair’s text, which is expected to form the basis of further discussions during CSD-13, scheduled to meet from 11-22 April 2005, in New York.

PREPARATORY MEETING FOR THE UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL’S 2005

HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT: The preparatory meeting for ECOSOC 2005 high-level segment took place on 16-17 March 2005, in New York. The meeting focused on: achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, as well as implementing the outcomes of the major UN Conferences and summits; eradication of poverty and hunger; education and literacy; health and mortality; global partnerships and financing development; gender equality and the empowerment of women; and environmental sustainability. The outcomes of the preparatory meeting will feed into ECOSOC’s High-level and Coordination Segments, which will take place as part of the substantive ECOSOC session from 29 June-27 July 2005, in New York.

UN-HABITAT YOUTH FORUM: The Forum is taking place in Nairobi from 3-4 April 2005, immediately prior to the GC session. The Forum sought to contribute to the GC agenda through, *inter alia*: consolidating the youth agenda for the session; informing youth on relevant UN-HABITAT initiatives; finalizing the youth consultative mechanism; and formulating the youth message to GC-20. Amongst topics discussed were: youth and MDGs; local governance; and strategies for engagement in the Global Partnership for Urban Youth in Africa. In its final statement “Youth and Human Settlements,” the Forum called for strengthening the work of UN-HABITAT on the engagement of youth in human settlements development.