



ISTANBUL+5 PREPCOM II HIGHLIGHTS WEDNESDAY, 21 FEBRUARY 2001

On the third day of deliberations of the Istanbul+5 PrepCom II taking place at UNCHS in Nairobi, the Committee of the Whole (COW) convened briefly in the morning for a progress report from the contact group on issues relating to the thematic committee and participation of NGO speakers during the special session. The contact group met for the rest of the day and into the early evening to complete organizational arrangements for the thematic committee. The Drafting Committee met all day and in an evening session to consider the section of the draft declaration on renewing Istanbul commitments. Plenary convened briefly in the afternoon to hear NGO statements on the draft declaration.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

The COW convened in a brief morning session. The Chair of the contact group, Martti Lujander (Finland), reported disagreement over the inclusion of partners in the Plenary of the special session, and noted that outstanding issues on organizational arrangements for the thematic committee were of a technical, not substantive, nature. Chair Fall adjourned the COW and the contact group met during the remainder of the day to finalize its work.

CONTACT GROUP: Regarding the presentations, the group identified major themes, sub-themes and key elements drawn from the Habitat Agenda. Discussion revolved around issues of financing for urban development, participation in governance, city development strategies, and social inclusion. Cross-cutting themes included: poverty elimination; gender equality; and participation, partnerships and cooperation at local and international levels. It was agreed that each presentation should build partnerships needed to implement the Habitat Agenda.

On selection criteria, the group agreed that presentations would represent national, local, NGO, grassroots and private sector initiatives and be geographically balanced. Delegates stressed lessons learned, replicability and partnerships. On format, emphasis was placed on: interactivity; flexibility; frank and genuine dialogue; and innovation, both in terms of content and form of the presentation. It was agreed that presentations would involve discussions among participants, and that the discussion would take twice as much time as the presentation itself, and could extend to informal sessions if space permitted. Delegates also agreed to a potential reduction in the number of presentations, to allow more time for discussion.

The contact group decided that presentations should be provided electronically in advance to the Secretariat. Deadlines for submission of descriptions and summaries were set, and funding of developing country presentations was briefly discussed. It was agreed that the Secretariat and the PrepCom Bureau would assure

continuity of the preparations of the thematic presentations after PrepCom II by liaising with the Committee of Permanent Representatives.

DRAFTING COMMITTEE

PARTICIPATION OF NGOS AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES: Drafting Committee Chair Konukiewicz reported that UN Headquarters in New York had submitted legal advice regarding the participation of local authorities and NGOs in the Drafting Committee. He said the Drafting Committee is not a main committee of the PrepCom, but rather a subsidiary body, and, distinguishing between public and private meetings of the Drafting Committee, stated that in accordance with rules of procedure, local authorities may participate in public meetings and NGOs may observe as members of the public, but that private meetings were closed to both groups. He said this interpretation limits opportunities for NGO participation in the PrepCom's decision-making process, as compared to previous PrepCom practice. PrepCom Chair Garcia-Durán said an afternoon Plenary session would be held to give NGOs the opportunity to make statements on the draft declaration.

CANADA expressed disappointment that the meeting would be closed to NGOs, and asked that his view be placed on record. The EU noted that PrepCom I practice would not be followed regarding NGO participation. The US said negotiations must be private and involve only governments. NORWAY said it did not want to kill the spirit of Istanbul, reiterated that the Habitat II Agenda is a partners' agenda, proposed that meetings remain public until a request is made to revert to a private meeting, and also asked that his disappointment with the decision be reflected in the record of the meeting. NEW ZEALAND called for the widest possible participation in the spirit of Istanbul. INDIA noted the loss of valuable time, and suggested, with support from the Committee, that a public meeting be held for general discussion on each section of the draft declaration, followed by negotiations in a private meeting.

DRAFT DECLARATION: Chair Konukiewicz proposed that the Committee first hear a presentation by the Holy See on a new *bis* paragraph on the family and then proceed to a paragraph-by-paragraph consideration of the draft declaration. NORWAY and PAKISTAN sought clarification on when they too would be permitted to present their new proposals. The HOLY SEE reiterated that the family issue had been pending since PrepCom I. The Chair explained he was making the exception to honor his commitment to the Holy See to have the issue presented at the start of the discussion.

The HOLY SEE then introduced the proposal, which notes, *inter alia*, that the family is the basic unit of society and should be strengthened. It also states that to improve the quality of life within

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human settlements and to combat the deterioration of conditions including family instability, governments and civil society actors should be encouraged to develop and report upon innovative approaches to fulfill commitments. Chair Konukiewicz said a “friends of the chair” group would be established to consider the proposal. NORWAY requested that the small group not meet in parallel to the Drafting Committee.

Delegates then began consideration of the section on renewing Istanbul commitments. CANADA, supported by the HOLY SEE and CHINA, proposed an inclusive paragraph, which covers all the commitments made in Istanbul, rather than a select few. The EU, with ALGERIA, NORWAY and INDIA, called for a more politically-oriented document. INDIA called for a forward-looking document that also takes stock of past achievements and failures, and which provides guidance on linkages between cities and rural settlements.

The Committee then reverted to a private session to begin negotiations. Chair Konukiewicz announced that the “friends of the chair” group discussing the programme on the family would consist of eight delegations, namely, Argentina, Canada, the Holy See, Iran, The Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the US, and would be chaired by Bangladesh. One delegate said establishing a group before having a general debate of the issue is a surprising procedure, while another noted that Africans also have families and suggested Zimbabwe as Africa’s representative in the group. Following informal consultations, India and Zimbabwe were added to the group. Several other delegates expressed interest in participating and a proposal to make the group open-ended was accepted.

The Committee turned its attention to the section on renewing Istanbul commitments. Regarding a paragraph on reaffirming the commitments, some delegates supported including a reference to the Millennium Declaration, while some questioned the rationale and relevance of such a reference, as the draft declaration only relates to the outputs of Habitat II, and the General Assembly does not generally refer to its own declarations. Underscoring the importance of the Millennium Declaration, some delegates recalled that it was a post-Habitat II output, said future work should be shaped by it, and noted that it refers to the Cities Without Slums initiative committing to significantly improve the lives of 100 million slum inhabitants by 2020. The reference was maintained. Delegates also agreed to recognize “emerging issues,” to maintain references to providing adequate shelter for all and reformulate the title of the section to conform to the title of the Habitat II document.

Regarding a Holy See-proposed *bis* paragraph reaffirming that human beings are at the center of concerns for sustainable development, one delegate proposed adding language to reflect a rights-based approach, specifying the need to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms and equal rights without distinction as to sex, race, language and religion. Another delegate added reference to living in harmony with nature. The two additional proposals were consequently dropped after some debate, and delegates agreed to language reaffirming that human beings are at the center of concerns for sustainable development and that they are the basis for actions in implementing the Habitat Agenda.

The EU proposed three paragraphs on urbanization, urban-rural linkages and the environment. Delegates generally agreed to include a paragraph reflecting the current state of urbanization and urban poverty, but did not agree on exact language. The Committee also agreed to include a paragraph on rural-urban linkages and rural human settlements, highlighting, *inter alia*, the need to eradicate rural poverty and to improve living conditions, but lacked consensus on exact language. The EU said it would reformulate these two paragraphs based on interventions. Regarding the environment, some delegates questioned the appropriateness of such a paragraph in this section, but the EU stressed the importance of environmental issues with respect to human settlements and the link between local activities and global implications. After some debate, the Committee agreed to a general statement on the envi-

ronment, but specific language relating to the destabilizing effects of emissions and manmade and natural disasters was deleted from the original EU proposal. In addition, some delegates opposed language referring to the role of governments, including local authorities, and the international community in addressing environmental problems. The agreed text reaffirms the determination to address, at all levels, the deteriorating environmental conditions that threaten the health and quality of life of billions of people, and states 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.

PLENARY

Commenting on the draft declaration, the HUMAN SETTLEMENTS CAUCUS proposed setting up a habitat watch to monitor progress and called for alternative financing mechanisms. HABITAT INTERNATIONAL COALITION noted the regressive and anti-democratic trend, on the part of some governments, in their campaign to exclude NGOs from the negotiations, and said such action sets a dangerous precedent that contradicts the spirit of the UN’s work and risks reversing progress made. He said that NGO exclusion at this time calls into question the sincerity of the Commission itself. The WOMEN’S CAUCUS highlighted proposed amendments to the draft declaration, including reference to women’s empowerment in the new strategic vision and emphasis on female-headed households.

Elaborating on the issue of security of tenure, the NGO COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS emphasized, *inter alia*: empowerment of the poor in decision making; removal of legal impediments to security of tenure; and research on diverse forms of tenure for incorporation in the legal systems, as appropriate. The YOUTH CAUCUS called for consultations with youth as part of the implementation of the Habitat Agenda. RESEAU HABITAT FRANCOPHONIE noted a deterioration in housing since Habitat II, called for public housing and habitat policies, and emphasized the importance of public investment in housing, as markets lack the capacity to adequately finance housing for poor and low-income groups, particularly in Africa.

IN THE BREEZEWAYS

NGOs reacted to today’s ruling to exclude them from the drafting committee with unequivocal disappointment. Some NGO representatives said they now felt unwelcome, and would have to decide if they would continue participating in the Habitat process. Others spoke of how hard it will now be to “sell” both the UNGASS and the Habitat process to their constituencies and donors, and feared that their participation might be further jeopardized by the inability to secure resources for their continued involvement. Others complained that they had lost their last chance to contribute to the text of the draft declaration, since negotiations at the General Assembly in New York are always done behind closed doors. Yet others urged their colleagues to maintain a spirit of calm, compromise and innovation, imploring them not to “create another Seattle.” Many were looking forward to hearing the outcomes of Thursday’s briefing session between the US delegation and American NGOs.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE: The COW will convene at 10:30 am to review the outcome document from the contact group and begin consideration of the participation of NGOs at Istanbul+5.

DRAFTING COMMITTEE: The Drafting Committee will meet at 9:30 am and is expected to meet all day and into the evening to complete negotiations on the draft declaration.

CONTACT GROUPS: The contact group on the organization of the thematic committee will meet at 9:45 am to review its results before presenting them to the COW. The “friends of the chair” group on the family is expected to meet as well.