



## UN-HABITAT GC-20 HIGHLIGHTS: TUESDAY, 5 APRIL 2005

Delegates to GC-20 met in the morning and afternoon sessions of the high-level segment focusing on: activities of UN-HABITAT; implementing and monitoring the goal of the UN Millennium Declaration on improving the lives of slum dwellers; work programme and budget for the biennium of 2006-2007; and coordination with other UN agencies. The Committee of the Whole (COW) met in the afternoon to discuss post-conflict, natural and human-made disasters assessment and reconstruction, and implementing and monitoring of the goal of the UN Millennium Declaration on improving the lives of slum dwellers. The contact group on budget and work programme also met in the afternoon. The drafting committee met throughout the day to draft resolutions.

### HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT

John Ashe (Antigua and Barbuda), Chair of the 13th session of the Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD-13), made a presentation, noting that the human settlements issue is one of CSD-13's three main themes. He outlined obstacles, constraints and policy challenges in implementing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on achieving adequate water, sanitation and housing, and expressed hope that GC-20 will provide valuable inputs to CSD-13. Mexico, speaking on behalf of GRULAC, urged the Executive Director to strengthen UN-HABITAT regional offices and programme managers.

Noting the efficacy of the UN-HABITAT model, the US stressed that UN-HABITAT needs to remain focused on its core mission and carry forward its global campaigns on Urban Governance and Secure Tenure. She also outlined three policies relevant to both UN-HABITAT and CSD-13: attracting people to the formal economy through home ownership, secure land tenure, and property rights; mobilizing private sector resources at local levels and in local currency; and improving knowledge, technical capability, and accountability of local authorities. TURKEY stressed that urbanization is one of the key challenges for achieving a sustainable society. UGANDA highlighted the outcomes of the First African Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development and stressed the need to strengthen the link between UN-HABITAT's normative and operational functions.

ISRAEL reported on the recent visit by the Executive Director to the region, aimed at addressing the issue of housing for the Palestinian people. KENYA called upon countries to increase their voluntary contributions to the UN Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation, and, supported by ZAMBIA, for new and additional financial sources, including debt swap, relief and cancellation. NORWAY highlighted the three entry

points for implementing the Habitat Agenda: secure tenure, urban governance, and human settlements finance. He supported the Slum Upgrading Facility initiative, which could pave the way for innovative financial packages. NIGERIA stressed the special needs of Africa, including poverty eradication, urban sanitation and post-conflict reconstruction. He said that the GC should consider the issue of the voluntary indicative scale of contributions. PALESTINE outlined challenges faced by his people and asked this GC session to support UN-HABITAT programmes relating to Palestine.

ALGERIA highlighted the importance of providing housing for low- and medium-income people and the need for establishing a coordination mechanism for responding to natural disasters and emergencies.

MEXICO supported strengthening youth participation in urban governance, and called for incorporating gender into UN-HABITAT programmes as a cross-cutting issue. ZAMBIA noted that the proposed resetting of Target 11 as "halve, between 1990 and 2020, the proportion of slum dwellers in the urban population" will pose a significant challenge as slum dwellers represent about one-eighth of the country's population. She also suggested "enablement" as a theme for the next GC session. FRANCE said that improving living conditions depends on better access to basic services, and suggested that a set of common principles clarifying roles and responsibilities of all actors involved be spelled out in a non-binding political declaration. He said a draft resolution to this effect, which is supported by South Africa and the Philippines, is tabled at this GC. SPAIN underscored the role of local authorities as key actors in implementation of MDG targets. Recalling the recent devastating earthquakes in the Indian Ocean, INDONESIA stressed that natural and human-made disasters jeopardize the achievement of MDGs, while SRI LANKA called for assistance from nations with experience in disaster management. The CZECH REPUBLIC reported on its new housing policy, which reflects the changes since its entry into the EU. CHAD, MOROCCO, MALAWI, INDIA and PAKISTAN presented their national activities aimed at improving the lives of poor urban and rural dwellers. Emphasizing the need for an integrated approach and the relevance of UN-HABITAT's expertise for poverty reduction strategy papers and national sustainable development strategies, SWEDEN announced its contribution to the UN-HABITAT Water and Sanitation Trust. The HOLY SEE said that an enhanced involvement of civil society is an important step forward for UN-HABITAT. SOMALIA and LIBERIA focused on the challenges of providing adequate shelter in the wake of military conflict and civil strife. LIBYAN ARAB JAMAHIRIYA highlighted its efforts to eradicate slums. POLAND said that the newly established UN-HABITAT office in Warsaw could be used



as a case study in the regionalization review. ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA urged delegates' political will to make progress on the achievement of the MDGs.

GLOBAL PARLIAMENTARIANS FOR HABITATS called for a world plan of action to achieve sustainable settlements and adequate housing for all, emphasizing capacity building for developing countries to promote local authorities and legislation. THE YOUTH COUNCIL said only few delegations included youth representatives and called for youth to be recognized as equal partners in development.

#### COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair Braun (Germany) opened the discussion of the special theme on post-conflict, natural and human-made disasters assessment and reconstruction (HSP/GC/20/5).

On the special theme, Lars Reutersward, UN-HABITAT, presented an opening statement of the UN-HABITAT Executive Director, indicating the wish to formulate a future programme for UN-HABITAT according to the framework for development-oriented sustainable relief and reconstruction activities, which is contained in document HSP/GC/20/5. Eric Falt, UNON Information Centre, moderated a multi-stakeholder dialogue for the exchange of experiences on post-conflict, natural and human-made disasters assessment and reconstruction, highlighting, *inter alia*: involvement of local communities and the private sector; disaster preparedness; donors' coordination; and the link between emergency relief and development.

In introducing agenda item on implementing and monitoring of the goal of the UN Millennium Declaration on improving the lives of slum dwellers (HSP/GC/20/6 and HSP/GC/20/6/Add.1), Reutersward presented an opening statement of the Executive Director, which reports on the progress of UN-HABITAT in analysis, campaigns, operational activities implementing and monitoring Target 11 of Goal 7, in preparation of the UN Millennium Review Meeting. He stressed that changing Target 11 from an absolute number to a proportion is a top priority for UN-HABITAT.

**CONTACT GROUP:** Rosalinda Valenton Tirona (the Philippines) chaired the group's discussions. During a general debate on UN-HABITAT's work programme and budget for the 2006-2007 biennium, several delegates requested the Secretariat to provide further information regarding 14 vacant positions within the Secretariat and five proposed new positions to be funded by the UN regular budget. NORWAY suggested inclusion in the draft resolution of UN-HABITAT's participation in CSD discussions and youth activities. JAPAN, supported by the US, suggested that the budget level for the 2006-2007 biennium should remain at the same level as the revised budget for the 2004-2005 biennium. The EU suggested that UN-HABITAT develop a six-year medium-term plan in order to provide strategic direction for its future work programme and budget.

The discussion was based on a draft resolution presented by the Secretariat (HSP/GC/20/L1/Rev.6) and focused on several bracketed paragraphs of the draft resolution. On budget for the 2006-2007 biennium, JAPAN proposed a lower budget. On a paragraph about the Executive Director's authority to reallocate general purpose resources of the appropriation, the EU stressed that Executive Director needs explicit authority to do so, indicating its flexibility regarding the actual scope of such reallocation. MEXICO suggested a lump sum for reallocation instead of putting a percentage restriction to the reallocation. The G-77/CHINA suggested deleting the entire paragraph, noting that there should not be any restriction to the Executive Director's authority in this regard.

On voluntary indicative scale of contributions to the UN Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation, the G-77/CHINA proposed that such a contribution mechanism should be discussed at GC-21. The US, JAPAN, and the EU opposed introduction of such a mechanism into UN-HABITAT, with the EU noting that

it is premature for GC-21 to discuss this matter. The EU also expressed its willingness and readiness to consider innovative ways to mobilize resources for UN-HABITAT, but would not agree to single out one specific option and pre-empt others.

#### DRAFTING COMMITTEE

Chaired by Jose Luis Casal (Argentina), the Committee met in the morning session to review draft resolutions. Discussions were based on a report of work of the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) during the intersessional period, which contains 16 draft resolutions prepared by CPR to the current GC session (HSP/GC/20/3/Add.1). Noting that 15 out of the 16 draft resolutions contain brackets, Chair Casal proposed that discussion start with the unbracketed draft resolution on organization and themes for future GC sessions of UN-HABITAT, which was approved without amendment.

On a draft resolution regarding post-conflict, natural and human-made disasters assessment and reconstruction, the preambular paragraphs were approved without amendment but four operative paragraphs remain bracketed.

On a draft resolution on the World Urban Forum (WUF), the Committee approved a paragraph requesting the Executive Director to mobilize adequate resources for WUF future sessions within UN-HABITAT's work programme and budget. The Committee also approved, with one country's reservation, a paragraph inviting governments to support participation to WUF of representatives of developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

On a draft resolution on strengthening the Slum Upgrading Facility of the UN Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation, a paragraph on financing the Facility was bracketed due to lack of consensus on the text. On a draft resolution about decentralization and strengthening of local authorities, delegates could not agree on the text requesting the Executive Director to assist governments on promoting local democracy.

In the afternoon, the Committee approved two draft resolutions, after informal consultations over lunch break, one on decentralization and strengthening of local authorities, and the other on global campaign on secure tenure and urban governance.

No other draft resolutions were approved, but the following ones were discussed: post-conflict, natural and human-induced disasters assessment and reconstruction; enhancing the involvement of civil society in local governance; strengthening the Slum Upgrading Facility of the UN Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation; implementing and monitoring the MDG goals on improving the lives of slum dwellers; and gender equality in human settlements development. Most of the discussion focused on the last two, with alternative texts on the role of the Executive Director proposed and deferred to informal consultations.

#### IN THE CORRIDORS

The beginning of the work of the Drafting Committee was marked by some confusion as to its procedures and functions *vis-à-vis* the Committee of the Whole (COW), reminiscent of the "chicken-and-egg" scenario. Some delegates were perplexed as to how the deliberations in the COW are supposed to inform the corresponding resolutions of the Drafting Committee, when most of the draft resolutions under its consideration had already been discussed at length in the earlier meetings of the Committee of Permanent Representatives. Moreover, these same resolutions were scheduled to be discussed by the Drafting Committee in parallel with, or even in advance of discussions in the COW. Unfortunately, this resulted in lower than anticipated attendance to some of the COW's key dialogues, as in the case of the proposed change to Target 11. Commenting on such modest attention paid to the COW, one participant suggested that the most controversial decisions will be those taken in the contact group on the UN-HABITAT programme of work and budget.