



UN-HABITAT GC-20 HIGHLIGHTS: THURSDAY, 7 APRIL 2005

Delegates to GC-20 met in the morning and afternoon sessions of the Committee of the Whole (COW), focusing on: coordination with other organizations; inputs of GC-20 to the 13th Session of the UN Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD-13); and the themes for GC-21 and future GC sessions. The contact group on the budget and work programme conducted its deliberations throughout the day and into the evening. The drafting committee continued to review draft resolutions throughout the day and into the night.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair Bernd Braun (Germany) introduced the item on coordination matters, including: cooperation between UN-HABITAT and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) (HSP/GC/20/10); cooperation with agencies and organizations within the UN system, international organizations outside the UN system and NGOs (HSP/GC/20/12); and matters arising out of the resolutions of major legislative organs of the UN and other intergovernmental bodies brought to the attention of the GC (HSP/GC/20/BD/3). Chair Braun drew attention to the newly added agenda item on CSD-13 (HSP/GC/20/1/Add.1), and informed delegates that a Chair's Summary of GC-20 Discussions for CSD-13 would be produced for approval by GC-20, and subsequent dispatch by the GC President to the CSD-13 Chair.

Lars Reuterswärd, UN-HABITAT Secretariat, presented an opening statement of the Executive Director, highlighting the environmental dimension of the Habitat Agenda, and reporting on strengthened cooperation with UNEP, focusing on implementation of Agenda 21 and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). On the CSD-12/CSD-13 Implementation Cycle, he stressed the important role of UN-HABITAT as the only UN agency responsible for human settlements and the leading agency on urban water and sanitation, calling for the GC-20 to send a clear message on the roles of UN-HABITAT in the follow up to CSD-13. He emphasized the necessary integration of the three themes of CSD-13 at the level of human settlements by the international community and national authorities. He also reported on UN-HABITAT partnerships with other intergovernmental, non-governmental, and community-based organizations.

On CSD-13, Luxembourg, on behalf of the EU, highlighted that: UN-HABITAT is in a good position to contribute to the issues of access to basic services; slum upgrading is the key for the implementation of MDGs; and that the urban dimension

will be important in the CSD-14/CSD-15 Implementation Cycle on energy, climate change and air quality. She called for mainstreaming the Habitat Agenda into all MDGs, and cautioned against the proposed reformulation of Target 11, underscoring the risk for new negotiations to undermine the MDG package and to lose the urban dimension. She proposed, instead, discussions on an appropriate interpretation of Target 11. NIGERIA welcomed the recent General Assembly resolution that enabled the GC sessions to be held prior to the CSD sessions. BRAZIL commented on the concept of global city and the effects of globalization.

In the afternoon, Chair Braun presented a draft Chair's Summary for discussion, indicating that it is a reflection of the discussions on water, sanitation, and human settlements, to be presented for information to the plenary of GC-20 and then submitted to the CSD-13 Chair. As requested by CSD-13 Chair John Ashe, the Chair's Summary highlights policies and action areas for consideration at CSD-13, including: general principles, sustainable urbanization, and recognizing the urban context; integration of CSD-13 themes at the human settlements level; reviewing the slums target (pending the decision on the MDGs resolution); secure tenure; reconstruction in post conflict and natural disasters; decentralization and strengthening of local authorities; enhancing participation of civil society in local governance; gender and sustainable human settlements; women's participation; youth and human settlement development; financing slum upgrading; financing water and sanitation; UNEP and UN-HABITAT cooperation and the role of UN-HABITAT in CSD-13 and in future CSD cycles.

Chair Braun then introduced the agenda item on the themes for GC-21 and other future sessions (HSP/GC/20/13). He informed delegates that this agenda item had become moot, due to the adoption in the Drafting Committee of a resolution providing that the special themes will be chosen six months before the start of the next GC session by the GC Bureau upon advice from the Executive Director, in consultation with the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR), and taking into account the outcomes of the World Urban Forum (L.14/Rev.1).

Chair Braun also introduced the COW's draft report (HSP/GC/20/CW/L.1, Add.1 and Add. 2), which was approved without amendment.

CONTACT GROUP: In the morning, Chair Rosalinda Valenton Tirona (the Philippines) presented a revised text on the budget and work programme for discussion. On financing options for UN-HABITAT, a group of developing countries proposed a new text requesting the Executive Director to develop a resource



mobilization strategy for presentation to GC-21, including options adopted by other UN bodies, such as the voluntary indicative scale of contributions, for broadening the donor base and, in particular, encouraging non-earmarked contributions. One country reiterated its position against mentioning the voluntary indicative scale of contributions. Noting that UN-HABITAT's financing comes from a small number of major donors, the Executive Director stressed the need to broaden the donor base, and emphasized the voluntary nature of the mechanism.

On a proposal requesting the Executive Director to develop a six-year medium-term strategic and institutional plan, a group of developed countries amended the text by requesting the Executive Director to also develop recommendations for clarifying roles, responsibilities and financing at the global, regional and country level. The amendment was agreed by other delegates. On the Executive Director's authority to reallocate funds, a representative of the Office of Internal Oversight Services said that the GC may request the Executive Director to report to the CPR on a regular basis on such reallocation.

In the afternoon, the group reached a compromise on the reallocation of funds after informal consultations, agreeing to limit such reallocations to a maximum of 25%. It also agreed to the wording requesting the Executive Director to: report all reallocations and adjustments to the CPR in the Executive Director's quarterly financial reports; develop an overarching resource mobilization strategy, including encouraging non-earmarked contributions; and explore modalities to enable the participation by one representative each from developing countries and countries with economies in transition in future GC sessions.

Paragraphs relating to adequate budget allocations for UN Office at Nairobi were redrafted. In the final compromise text, the draft resolution: requests a review of current administrative arrangements at UN-HABITAT, in order to enable it to function more effectively, and report thereon to GC-21; notes that an increase in funding from the UN regular budget would make it possible to release additional resources for the programme activities of UN-HABITAT; and calls for an allocation of an appropriate share of the UN regular budget to UN-HABITAT. Discussion on the paragraph inviting governments to strengthen and support financially the Habitat Programme Managers was deferred to a later stage, pending discussions on the same issue in the Drafting Committee.

DRAFTING COMMITTEE

Most of the morning session was devoted to a new draft resolution on youth, which received full support after minor changes and some discussion of issues of contention, including application of MDGs to youth living in slums, use of the word "democratic" in the context of youth groups, and requests for bilateral aid for youth organizations. There was a proposed addition requesting the Executive Director to initiate a study on intergenerational transfer of values of citizenship, which was accepted, subject to availability of funds.

The Committee considered draft resolutions on the establishment of African Ministers Conference on Housing and Urban Development (AMCHUD) (HSP/GC/20/CRP.2) and on the preservation and sustainable development of the Oasis (HSP/GC/20/CRP.3).

On the establishment of AMCHUD, the draft resolution was approved with one amendment recognizing the work of other conferences of Ministers in the area of human settlements such as the Assembly of Ministers and High-level Authorities on Housing and Urban Development in Latin America and the Caribbean. All the bracketed paragraphs were unbracketed without amendment.

On the preservation and sustainable development of the Oasis, the draft resolution was approved with minor editorial amendments, and the addition of the G-77/CHINA and the AFRICAN GROUP to the list of the resolution's sponsors.

The afternoon session began with a review of pending draft resolutions. Two out of seven were approved by the end of the session. Those resolved included L.2, on "Post-Conflict, Natural and Human-Induced Disasters Assessment and Reconstruction." The preambular paragraphs had previously been approved, and a contact group met and approved the operative paragraphs with minor changes. L.9, on "Gender Equality in Human Settlements Development," was agreed with some changes from informal consultations.

L.8, on "Implementing and Monitoring the Goal of the UN Millennium Declaration on Improving the Lives of Slum-Dwellers" still has bracketed operative paragraphs. Most of the disagreements centered on the methodology of measuring the improvement of slum dwellers. L.12, on "Habitat Programme Managers and Regional Offices," was not discussed during the session. One of the new draft resolutions introduced on Tuesday, "Resolution on the Least Developed Countries" (HSP/GC/20/CRP.4), remains bracketed in the operative paragraphs, especially with regard to the terminology on the UN Millennium Declaration and a provision on administrative steps to be taken by the Secretariat in implementing the Brussels Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries. Another new draft resolution tabled on Tuesday under the title "Access to Basic Services for All" (HSP/GC/20/CRP.5) is still pending because of alternative text introduced during the session, which has not been cleared by all delegations. A new draft resolution introduced on Tuesday and titled "Best Practices, Good Policies and Enabling Legislation in support of Sustainable Urbanization and the Attainment of the MDGs" (HSP/GC/20/CRP.6) was not discussed during the session. *Editor's note: The ENB coverage ended at 8:00 pm.*

IN THE CORRIDORS

With the conclusion of the Governing Council session drawing nearer, delegates broke into several small "sub-groups" to tackle unresolved issues. In addition to the pending resolution on the Habitat Programme Managers, another sticky issue of the past few days has been the proposed resetting of the target on upgrading 100 million slum dwellers, contained in the draft resolution on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This issue, raised by the Executive Director in her presentation on Monday, still concerns a number of delegates. Even if most agreed that the current target is inadequate, some delegates felt that reopening negotiations on the MDGs may lead to dropping slum dwellers off the Millennium agenda altogether. Another group of delegates, however, found unacceptable that the current target only covers a small percentage of the world's slum population and does not provide benchmarks to individual countries and regions. Yet another developing country delegate suggested that a more ambitious target would be unattainable.

One large developed country pointed out that the MDGs have been embodied in a declaration, but not necessarily adopted as "internationally agreed goals." This phraseology is a sore point with other delegations, who regard it as an undermining of governments' commitments to the MDGs. Another delegate was less concerned about the details but felt a nagging worry about the continuing dissension in the Governing Council. There were also delegates who regarded the whole issue of MDGs as an unavoidable distraction as long as it is embodied in resolutions and other documents. It appears that negotiations on this issue will continue to the bitter end.