

# COMMUNIQUE

**HABITAT**

United Nations Conference  
on Human Settlements  
Vancouver, 1976

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Conférence des Nations Unies  
sur les établissements humains  
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**NOTES FOR REMARKS**

**BY**

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**CANADIAN COMMISSIONER GENERAL OF HABITAT**

**TO**

**COMMITTEE I**

**ON**

**PROPOSED INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS**

**June 4, 1976**

Mr. Chairman,

The Canadian Delegation would like to offer a few additional comments on this important subject of international cooperation, especially on the institutional aspects.

The discussions over the past few days have been most productive and constructive. We have listened to the many excellent interventions with great interest and, as others have remarked, we have gained a new appreciation of the immense importance of the work before us.

One of our most important and, perhaps, most difficult tasks is to recommend changes in the institutional arrangements for human settlements within the United Nations. However difficult, Canada believes that this Conference has a clear mandate from the General Assembly to make recommendations in this area. Moreover, given the rapid explosion of settlements and settlement problems, especially in developing countries, with which Habitat is now seized, we believe that this Conference has a clear duty to resolve differences still outstanding on this issue and to recommend institutional re-arrangements that promise to be efficient and effective.

As you know, Mr. Chairman, the 56 nation Preparatory Committee did extensive work on this, as did the Secretariat, and we believe that a considerable measure of agreement has been reached on the nature and role of the organizational arrangements which this Conference might recommend to the General Assembly.

We consider, Mr. Chairman, that there was a near consensus, if not a complete consensus, in the Preparatory Committee, that the present arrangements within the United Nations are not adequate for the tasks before us now, let alone for the challenges - and opportunities - that will confront the world community in the immediate future. If that is true - and surely all of the discussion and films of the past week reinforce this view - then the question before this Conference is not whether - or even when - but how: what kind of institutional re-arrangements are required to strengthen the capability of the United Nations, now and in the future, to support the actions of governments in all countries - but especially in developing countries - in implementing the recommendations for national action? What kind of institutional re-arrangements are required to implement efficiently and effectively a programme of international cooperation in human settlements?

We consider that Document A/Conf.70/6/Add.1, the Addendum to the policy paper on international cooperation, contains within it a fair consolidation of the general thinking on U.N. institutions for human settlements, as it has developed during the preparatory process.

I would hasten to add that the document obviously contains some points which are quite contentious. We do not have a fixed position on these points and we would like to hear them further discussed and clarified in the proposed working group.

Nevertheless, we consider that the Addendum, together with the main document on International Cooperation, represents a good starting point for our work here and I propose to address the balance of my remarks mainly to them.

First of all, Mr. Chairman, we recognize, in common with most countries, that the existing human and financial resources of the U.N. in the field of human settlements are very limited. In order to strengthen their present capability and effectiveness, Canada would fully support the re-grouping of available posts and resources into a single and integrated unit. This would entail the appropriate combination of at least the Centre for Housing, Building and Planning, the Habitat and Human

Settlements Foundation, and the Human Settlements Division of UNEP. The Foundation with its recent mandate should retain its identity within the resulting organization, and be structurally integrated into it.

As to the global intergovernmental body, we would like to see it established as soon as possible to guide the implementation of the work coming out of Habitat. We believe that it should report either to the Economic and Social Council or through the ECOSOC to the General Assembly. Human Settlements is essentially an economic and social development matter but with strong environmental implications. We support the suggestion that this new body should be considerably larger than the existing 27 member Committee on Housing, Building and Planning which it would replace.

The notion that this re-arrangement of existing human settlements posts and resources into a single, integrated unit ought to have a strong regional focus is one that was supported repeatedly and vigorously by the Preparatory Committee. Canada supports this as a vital criterion for re-organization. It is probably one that is generally applicable in the world of today but it is especially important in the field of human settlements.

This argues strongly for the gradual re-deployment of the bulk of the available posts and resources of the consolidated unit to the regions to work with the proposed regional intergovernmental committees attached in some way to the Regional Economic Commissions. Our own experience with the Committee on Housing, Building and Planning of the Economic Commission for Europe has convinced us of the value of such an arrangement, and we would expect that other regions would wish to make some similar arrangements for cooperation in human settlements, within the U.N. system.

It would follow from this that the central headquarters staff of the consolidated unit should be small but effective. This also follows from its proposed leadership, coordination and other functions.

Among its other functions, Mr. Chairman, we would agree that the consolidated unit should act as advisor and as executing agent for United Nations development projects in human settlements. This function has been merely touched on in the Addendum, and we think it deserves somewhat greater emphasis. To date, this development function has been discharged largely by the Centre. It should receive increased effort by the proposed unit. It is a task that requires close cooperation with many U.N. agencies, in particular with the UNDP and the World Bank, and with other multilateral and bilateral agencies, and hence the need for the most effective possible links with them.

We believe that the role of the consolidated unit requires that it be headed by an official of the highest rank possible, preferably a rank equivalent to an Under-Secretary General.

The main points to be considered in selecting a location for the headquarters are the location of the principal units with which it would need to work and the need for operational effectiveness and efficiency. This leads us to favour a location in New York. The considerable deployment of the staff to the regions should ensure an increased presence and capability in developing countries, while the location of the headquarters unit should ensure good coordination with major financing organizations and with the rest of the U.N. family.

We fully recognize the intimate relationship between human settlements and the environment. Our present concept of human settlements, and HABITAT itself, originate in the Stockholm Conference and have been developed with the care and support of the Environment Programme. We believe that UNEP can and must continue to take a great interest in the environmental implications of human settlements, just as UNEP must be concerned with all other development activities affecting the environment. For this it will require some continuing expertise in the field. In addition, a close relationship must be established and developed between the UNEP and the human settlements organization. This should be done formally through the Environmental Coordination Board and other consultative machinery, but we believe that more direct cooperative arrangements will be needed to meet objectives which are often shared.

Obviously, Mr. Chairman, we have a great deal of work to do this next week. A number of contentious points need to be further discussed and, hopefully, resolved at this Conference. A recommendation on institutions from this Committee to the Plenary needs to be put together, desirably in a form that, when approved by the Plenary, can go to the General Assembly. We understand that this will be initially the task of the Working Group on Institutions that you have proposed. The Canadian Delegation will support its work in every possible way.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, I would like to stress the importance that I am sure we all attach to this. Governments in all countries, and especially in developing countries, will require increasing global and regional support to respond to their human settlements problems. One of Habitat's most urgent tasks is to ensure that the United Nations has the capability, now and in the future, to provide effective and efficient support for required action at the national level which is being defined by the other two main committees of this Conference.