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AUDIO VISUAL FACILITIES, VANCOUVER

One of the most gratifying and encouraging developments since the meeting of the Preparatory Committee in Vancouver has been the great progress made in the audio/visual field. This has been due in great measure to the leadership and perseverance of the distinguished Secretary General of Habitat, and of those hard-working and dedicated international public servants who so ably assist him. In particular the Secretary General must be commended for his success in obtaining additional funds for the audio/visual programme from the United Nations Environment Programme.

For its part Canada has been glad to make available the services of a Producer Liaison officer from the National Film Board to assist the Habitat Secretariat in their important, and indeed vital work.

More recently the Canadian International Development Agency has negotiated a contract with the National Film Board, for approximately \$600,000, under which the Film Board will send seven producers to less developed countries to assist them in producing more effectively their audio/visual input into Habitat. An offer to provide both capital and technical assistance under the programme, to be coordinated by the Film Board, has been extended by CIDA to 30 countries. It should be noted that the Canadian budget of \$600,000 is in addition to the United Nations funds for this purpose.

The Canadian authorities have been co-operating fully with the United Nations Habitat Secretariat, with a view to providing an audio/visual programme, backed by suitable facilities, which will enhance the effectiveness of the conference through the greatest possible interchange of concepts, ideas and information.

Of necessity, in planning a conference of this scope, a great deal of preparatory work must take place, sometimes before all of the information which one could desire is at hand. Indeed, in the case of the present conference, many technical decisions had to be taken even before there was any concrete indication of the degree of interest and participation by countries and of the quantity and type of audio/visual programmes which might be expected. We find it reassuring that the response by countries has been very close to the original expectations.

Inevitably, many unknown factors still exist; some may persist until, and indeed after, the opening of the Conference. This being so, the Canadian authorities are doing their best to provide flexibility, both conceptual and technical, in the arrangements being made in consultation with the U.N. Habitat Secretariat.

It may be useful to review here the opportunities and options for delegates and others to have access to and see, the various audio/visual materials available at the conference. The following are the proposed arrangements. Wherever possible of course, these could be varied to take into account other suggestions and ideas.

In the plenary sessions, the "capsule" versions of each country's audio/visual programme will be available, on request, to appear on a large (approximately 5 metres wide) colour television screen in the Plenary Hall. Any capsules so used will appear simultaneously on the outgoing television programme made available by the Host Broadcaster to any broadcasting agency making arrangements to carry it. It is difficult to predict exactly how national delegations will wish to use this facility, but it could provide an excellent opportunity to introduce audio/visual statements to the Conference at large.

Audio/visual "Capsules" will also be available in two of the three committee rooms (identified as "B" and "D" in our planning) where they appear on small colour television receivers, one receiver adjacent to and serving each two delegations. As before, all capsules will be available on request. The technical arrangements make it desirable that there should be some advance notice of a request, such as would be inherent in an agenda or chairman's list of speakers, but it is anticipated that unexpected requests can be dealt with in most cases within two or three minutes or less. Capsules called up in these committee rooms will also be incorporated into the outgoing closed-circuit colour television programme from these rooms, which goes to all delegates' lounges and many other locations.

The full-length audio/visual demonstration projects will be available in the Project Presentation Centre, adjacent

to Committee Room "D". In this facility, any delegate, or group of delegates, will be able to request and/or book screening of any of the full-length versions of the audio/visual programmes in the language of their choice. Viewing arrangements will accommodate individuals or small-to-medium size groups, with one or two rooms capable of accommodating up to 40 persons. In addition, the Host Secretariat is endeavouring to have available one or two reception rooms, in close proximity to the Project Presentation Centre, where delegations may book receptions and private screenings of any desired material from the Presentation Centre Library. We also hope to make arrangements whereby the contents of the Presentation Centre Library will be available for viewing by non-government organizations at a location convenient to them. Unfortunately, the number of copies available from the United Nations does not permit the setting up of a duplicate or parallel library for non-Government Organizations, but we are considering means of remedying this to some extent. A complete set of all audio/visual materials for the Conference will be deposited with the Host Broadcaster and will be available for incorporation into any broadcasts arranged through the Host Broadcaster, subject of course to appropriate technical arrangements. In order to facilitate access by non-government organizations and the general public, it is intended that the full-length presentation projects be screened in a theatrical environment on a scheduled basis, advertised in advance. During seven days of pre-conference and the 12 days of the conference, operating 12 hours per day (say 10:00 a.m. to

10:00 p.m.) this would make available 228 hours of screening time, which should be sufficient for every presentation to be screened at least three times. We look forward to the co-operation of the U.N. Habitat Secretariat in working out a fair and equitable screening schedule.

In order to make it as easy as possible for delegates, official and N.G.O., as well as the general public, to have easy access to as much of the conference proceedings and other material as possible, we are arranging for a dedicated closed-circuit television network to interconnect as many of the venues as possible. This means that the Host Broadcaster TV coverage, as well as closed-circuit television pickups and sound transmissions will be available in all delegates' lounges, at the media centre, at a visitors' centre for the general public and possibly at other locations as well. There will be substantial amounts of time available on this system when meetings are not in session, time which can be used for distribution of capsule or full-length versions of the demonstration projects. Again we will be working in close co-operation with the U.N. Habitat Secretariat in scheduling the use of this facility.

We have reserved a channel on this closed-circuit television system for the distribution of non-government organization material. It is our hope that the NGO groups will prepare and produce their own material and take advantage of this facility to bring it to the attention of the delegates to the official conference.

Finally, and far from least, we are negotiating with a group of Vancouver-area cable television companies for the use of their local-origination channel on a full-time basis to carry the most significant of the Conference material to delegates and NGO participants, wherever they may be located, as well as to the general public in their homes. Because this channel is distributed to the general public and because we have access to it only on a goodwill basis, there may be some limitations as to the material which can be used, particularly as regards language, but we believe that the advantages of widespread distribution greatly outweigh any modest restrictions on the content.

Obviously, both the dedicated closed-circuit TV channels and the public cablevision channel must carry frequent and serious Conference news reporting, ranging from morning "Today at Habitat" to a nightly wrapup of the day's events and highlights of the meetings, within the limits of the technical and human resources available. One caution: we would prefer to do a few things well, rather than overextend our resources, attempt too many things and do some badly.

In brief, we believe that exposure of the most significant capsules in the Plenary sessions will serve to alert participants to the material available, though it will obviously be up to the United Nations to decide on precise mechanisms (i.e. how much time will be allocated to each country, does that time include or exclude time consumed by capsule presentation, is each country entitled to show more than one

capsule, etc.?) Once alerted to the availability of material either through presentation in the Plenary sessions or by means of the Conference documentation or information system, it will then become the responsibility of the participants, either individually or in groups, to seek out the material which they consider significant and view and consider it through the variety of means which will be available.

We recognise that thus far the emphasis may seem to have been rather technical, not because we believe that technical matters are of overriding importance, but rather because in this presentation we preferred to deal with them first, before coming to the substantive aspects of the audio visual elements of the conference.

Since there has never been a conference quite like Habitat before, we must necessarily make some guesses and assumptions as to what will work and what will not. In many areas, because of such uncertainties, we have provided alternatives and options. In fact, flexibility has been a fundamental principle of our planning; maximum ability to adapt to the requirements of the conference as it develops has been built in to all of our arrangements. This is not to say that we believe that the conference should be run on an ad hoc basis, quite the contrary, but that there are some elements of the activity that can only be worked out, quite properly, by the United Nations and the participating countries themselves.

Among the crucial factors will be the pre-planning and making available a maximum of information to the delegates, technical experts and non-governmental participants. By this we mean such things as the preparation of a comprehensive

and accurate catalogue of the audio/visual materials available, to be published and in the hands of the participants well in advance of the conference, together with clear and concise information concerning the facilities available and suggestions as to how they may best be used. You may be sure of our fullest co-operation in the preparation of such materials.

If it is considered that there can be some reductions in the facilities we propose, an early decision would be appreciated. For example, if capsules are required in only one committee room and not at all in the Plenary Hall, then we have no interest in providing unnecessary facilities and would be happy to delete them.

One important factor, which is sometimes overlooked until too late in unique ventures such as the Habitat Conference, is the proper recording and evaluation of the relative success or failure of the various innovative elements and the overall effectiveness of this conference as compared with others. We would strongly recommend an independent evaluation, to be carried out by knowledgeable but uncommitted experts, the results of which would be available to the United Nations and member countries in due course. The Canadian authorities have already instituted their own pre-evaluation of the techniques and methods for the conference, to ensure that the most appropriate and most flexible facilities are offered to the conference, and we would be pleased to have the people responsible co-operate with the U.N. post-evaluation group in every possible way.

One last word in our view, the films and audio/visual materials called for from the participating countries by the United Nations are the minimum quantities required for the successful operation of the audio/visual component of the Habitat Conference. There will, for example, be no copies of films or slides available for borrowing for private screenings or other special uses by delegations, although materials will be available for media use and for screenings within the conference environment, as outlined earlier. It is suggested, therefore, for the very small additional investment required, countries provide themselves with sufficient additional copies of their audio/visual programmes to be able to look after their own special needs during the time of the conference.