



## Habitat II Spells out Road Map to the Future

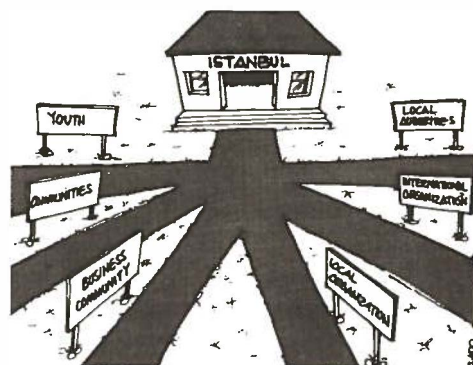
In the early hours of 15 June 1996, the world's Governments finally let the gavel fall to usher in the era of the Habitat Agenda.

The Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) ended in Istanbul at 3.20 on the morning of Saturday 15 June 1996 after consensus was finally reached on several outstanding issues under negotiation. The Conference adopted the Istanbul Declaration and the Habitat Agenda (principles, commitments and plan of action) for addressing issues and problems relating to human settlements, both urban and rural, into the next century.

The Conference was attended by over 3,000 government delegates representing 171 United Nations Member States, approximately 600 representatives of local authorities, over 2,000 accredited NGO representatives and some 3,000 journalists. In addition, representatives of trade unions, intergovernmental organizations, and other major groups participated in the Conference proceedings. Around 180 general statements were made in the plenary sessions and the three-day High Level Segment was addressed by some 110 speakers including five Presidents, two Vice Presidents, six Prime Ministers, one Deputy Prime Minister and scores of Ministers, Vice-Ministers, Permanent Secretaries and Ambassadors, as well as official representatives of local authorities and NGOs. The Secretary-General of the Conference was Dr. Wally N'Dow.

### A First for Civil Society

The Conference was a multi-faceted event. With the intergovernmental negotiation of the Istanbul Declaration and the Habitat Agenda at the core, a large array of related events took place in the vicinity of "Conference Valley" in Istanbul. These included the exhibition of "Best Practices", the Habitat II Dialogues for the 21st Century, the Habitat University (a series of thematic seminars), and special events



## Contents

<b>Editorial</b>	<b>2</b>
Habitat II Spells out Road Map to the Future by NGLS	1
The Habitat Agenda summarized by Mathias Hundsalsz	6
Gender in the Agenda by Wandia Seaforth	9
Consensus Achieved on Housing Rights by Edward Torgbor	11
Building Consensus in the Habitat Agenda by Daniel Biau	11
<b>Viewpoint:</b>	
A Realistic and Satisfactory Compromise by Alberto Colella	13
To Bracket or Not To Bracket? by B. Shafqat Kakakhel	15
<b>Partners' Events:</b>	
World Assembly of Cities by Andrea Connell	16
NGO Forum by NGLS	17
Stronger, Louder, Better Organized by Felix Dodds	18
Habitat II Dialogues Summarized by Rasna Warah	19
Best Practices	21
Experiences Gained in Committee II of the Habitat II Conference: by Martti Lujanen	24
The Committee II Process by Sekou Sessay	25
How the Media Viewed Habitat II by DPI	26
The Fourth Estate: Who Needs Controversy? by Rasna Warah	29
National Reports and National Plans of Action: A Regional Perspective	30
<b>Publications</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Calendar of Events</b>	<b>36</b>





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## EDITORIAL

### A People's Conference in Every Sense of the Word

In June 1996, Government representatives from 171 countries, mayors, representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector, and other members of civil society met in Istanbul over a two-week period to address what is perhaps the most widely-shared concern of people in all parts of the globe: where they live and how they live.

We waved no magic wand in those two weeks. When we left Istanbul, nearly a billion people were still homeless or living in inadequate and dangerous shelter; rapidly expanding cities were still ill-prepared for the growing numbers inundating them; the urban ills of our day — poverty, crime, disaffected youth, polluted air and water, overcrowding — were not suddenly cured. But Habitat II spoke with one voice to say, loudly and clearly, "Enough". The people who endorsed the forceful plan of action — known as the Habitat Agenda — were an extraordinary group for a United Nations Conference. They represented more than just the individual delegations of Member States of the United Nations. For the first time, as a consequence of a decision by the United Nations General Assembly, we included in our deliberations at Istanbul the full spectrum of governmental and civil society — from national governments to local authorities and from the private sector to NGOs in all areas and walks of life.

Habitat II was a people's conference in every sense of the word, and the international system will be the beneficiary — more effective, more vibrant, more representative.

We did not agree on everything, but we reached a global consensus that the status quo cannot stand. More importantly, we agreed to labour together to make the difference. For instance, the agreement reached on the right to adequate housing may well be the foundation on which we build for the future. It exemplifies the international system at its best: bringing diverse, often opposed, viewpoints together for the greater common good.

The Habitat Agenda is not just an expression of good intent, but a practical roadmap to the future of the new urban world. It is a global call to action at all levels which offers "a positive vision of sustainable human settlements — where all have adequate shelter, a healthy and safe environment, basic services, and productive and freely-chosen employment".

Turning this vision into reality requires cooperative effort on the part of all members of society. Governments cannot do it alone; cities cannot do it alone. We are all in this together. The actual job of creating sustainable, healthy urban centres requires a wide range of actors, starting with the city officials but cutting through various strata to all aspects of civil society — the private sector, women and youth groups, coalitions of the elderly, foundations, labour unions, academies of science and engineering, professional and research groups, just to mention a few.

What we need is the courage and the political will to press ahead. The global community, by one



estimate, currently allocates some US\$ 800 billion a year to military budgets. If every country on earth agreed to reduce its military budget by just five per cent over the next ten years, the world community could begin to address the currently intractable human settlements problems of a world urbanizing faster than it can now afford.

The United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), which served as the secretariat for the Conference, looks forward to its role in implementing the Habitat Agenda. Much work remains to be done, especially in continuing the partnership we started with local authorities and in further developing the long-standing relationships we have with the NGO community around the world. We welcome the challenge posed by the Habitat Agenda and we thank the many delegations which called for the revitalization of the Centre. The job ahead is a big one, and we need the help — and guidance — of all our partners to carry it out.

I am proud that Habitat II helped make the United Nations even more relevant to the people of the world, the people for whom it was created. This would not have been possible without the commitment of both Member States and our partners, including local authorities and NGOs, who played a critical role in writing this new chapter in the history of the United Nations. I am also deeply grateful to our host, the Government of Turkey, and to the City of Istanbul for the magnificent cooperation and support extended to us. A special thanks to the young volunteers who worked night and day without complaint to ensure that the Conference ran smoothly. I must also pay tribute to the

members of the United Nations family, all sister agencies as well as international lending institutions and donors whose help and cooperation made Habitat II a truly system-wide undertaking. And last, but not least, I am indebted to President Demirel of Turkey, who was elected President of the Conference, and United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali for their constant support and advice every step of the way.

The very first words in the Preamble to the Charter start with "We, the peoples...". Habitat II has reaffirmed the United Nations belongs to them.

**Dr. Wally N'Dow**  
Assistant Secretary-General  
UNCHS (Habitat)



Poster illustration of the UNCHS Community Development Programme's seminar on civic engagement, "The New City We Want", organized by UNCHS, UNDP and the Government of Ecuador.  
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*Continued from p 1*

by partners, including the World Assembly of Cities and Local Authorities, and a number of Forums held by world business, labour unions, foundations, parliamentarians, professionals and researchers, and others. An International Trade Fair "Good Ideas for Better Cities" was also held, involving over 1,000 companies from 40 countries. The Conference also celebrated a Youth Day and a ceremony to mark the Decade of Indigenous Peoples. The parallel NGO Forum '96 registered 8,550 NGO participants and held over 1,700 NGO meetings and events. At the Conference itself, Committee II — dubbed the Partners' Committee — engaged in hearings and dialogue between Governments and representatives of NGOs, local authorities, trade unions, parliamentarians and other groups. (The report of Committee II was presented to the plenary and was accepted as a non-binding document.)

The specific contribution of Habitat II stems from its focus on the sustainable management of human settlements in an era of unprecedented and accelerating growth of urban conglomerations, cities and mega-cities. Consequently, some of the more difficult and contentious issues dealt with by the Conference included the "right to housing", forced evictions and other matters. The Conference also addressed in depth a range of globally-shared contemporary problems facing rural settlements and the relationships, forces and dynamics that link urban and rural settlements around the world. Habitat II and its preparatory process were also distinguished by the unprecedented role of NGOs, local authorities and other major groups, in participating in the Conference deliberations and shaping its outcomes.

## Spirit of Istanbul

The Conference was opened on Monday, 3 June 1996 by the United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. In his opening remarks the Secretary-General affirmed the value of the recent cycle of United Nations World Conferences in shaping a new agenda for development, emphasized the innovations of Habitat II with respect to including a wide range of partners in the process, and urged delegates to be inspired by the "Spirit of Istanbul", a spirit of learning from the past, from previous United Nations Conferences and their programmes.

President Suleyman Demirel of Turkey, elected Conference President, said that since Governments were



*Turkish President Demirel (centre) flanked by UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali (second from left) and Habitat II Secretary-General Dr. Wally N'Daw (second from right). © A. Grossman/UNCHS*

overwhelmed by ever-increasing urban challenges, Habitat II should seek imaginative, practical and effective measures to counter them. The Conference was a strategic initiative to guide urban policies for the twenty-first century which should be inclusive and innovative, capable of generating sustainable economic growth, alleviating poverty and improving the urban environment.

In his address, Conference Secretary-General Wally N'Daw said "We are here in Istanbul not merely to talk about these things. The time for talk is long past and the time for action is here." He added that cities, with their densely packed populations, were social time bombs capable of setting off collisions of powerful forces that might otherwise peacefully co-exist. This has serious implications for the stability of the international system and for the United Nations itself.

## Getting Down to Business

In the business session of the opening Plenary, 27 Vice-Presidents and the Rapporteur-General (Ricardo Gorosito of Uruguay) were elected. Shafqat Kakakhel (Pakistan) was elected to chair the negotiations to be undertaken by Committee I (Habitat Agenda) and Martti Lujanen (Finland) was elected to chair the hearings and dialogue on the role of partners in Committee II.

Following the completion of procedural matters and arrangements, the Conference separated into several concurrent strands. The Plenary was opened for general statements by Governments, local authorities, and some

NGOs, on issues related to the agenda of the Conference (3-11 June), and was followed (12-14 June) by a High Level Segment involving Heads of State or Governments and Ministers. The two Committees of the Conference worked in parallel to the Plenary sessions.

Committee I established two working groups. Working Group II, chaired by Glyn Khonje (Zambia) negotiated sections E (international cooperation) and F (implementation and follow-up) of the draft Habitat Agenda. Working Group I, chaired by Kakakhel, negotiated the remaining parts of the draft Habitat Agenda (Principles, Commitments and Section A to D of the Programme of Action). Many informal groups were convened during the two weeks of negotiations to deal with and resolve the most difficult issues.

For Working Group I, amongst the most difficult issues to resolve in Istanbul included the right to housing, reproductive and sexual health, forced evictions, definitions of the family, vulnerable groups, the concept of gender equality, occupied territories, good governance and human rights issues, and the concept of sustainable development. For Working Group II the most difficult issues included the role of UNCHS (Habitat) in the follow-up to the Conference, financial resources for implementing the Habitat Agenda, overseas development assistance and United Nations-agreed aid targets.

## The Istanbul Declaration

The Istanbul Declaration — a high-level statement of political commitment drawn from and endorsing, the Habitat Agenda — was proposed and negotiated



entirely in Istanbul. The 15-paragraph Declaration commits governments to recommendations of the Habitat Agenda and reaffirms their commitment "to better standards of living in larger freedom for all humankind". It commits them to address unsustainable consumption and production patterns, particularly in industrialized countries; unsustainable population changes; homelessness; unemployment; inadequate resources; lack of basic infrastructure and services; growing insecurity and violence; and increased vulnerability to disasters.

The Declaration recognizes the need to intensify cooperation to improve living conditions throughout the world, particularly in developing countries, reaffirming the principle that countries have common but differentiated responsibilities in light of the different magnitude of their contributions to global problems. "Globalization of the world economy presents opportunities and challenges for the development process, as well as risks and uncertainties", states the Declaration. The Declaration also acknowledges that the goals of the Habitat Agenda would be promoted by positive actions on financing development, external debt, international trade and transfer of technology. It commits to intensifying efforts to eradicate poverty and pledges to promote "gender equality in policies, programmes and projects" for shelter. The "commitment to the full and progressive realization of the right to adequate housing as provided for in international instruments" is reaffirmed. In this regard the active participation of partners will be sought to ensure legal security of tenure, protection from discrimination and equal access to affordable adequate housing for all. It also states that actions have to be consistent with the precautionary principle approach, applied according to countries' capabilities.

## The Habitat Agenda

The Habitat Agenda — the principles, commitments and programme of action negotiated and adopted by the Conference — is a global call for action which sets out approaches and strategies towards the achievement of the sustainable development of the world's cities, towns and villages over the next 25 years. It contains a preamble, a nine-part statement of goals and principles, and a set of six commitments for Government action in support of achieving the goals of Habitat II. The fourth part of the Agenda contains the programme of action and the strategies, policies and approaches for its implementation. (For more detailed

descriptions of the Habitat Agenda, please refer to pages 6 to 15.)

## Twin Legacy

Habitat II was a fitting and worthy end to the cycle of recent United Nations conferences. The outcomes of Habitat II reaffirm, strengthen and take forward into new fields of activity international agreements on sustainable economic and social development. It set precedents and established new and wider opportunities for the involvement of civil society in the work of the United Nations and in follow-up to the Conference. Habitat II succeeded in focusing the sustainable development agenda on to villages, towns, cities and mega-cities of the world where the bulk of the world's people live and where enormous changes in conditions, policies, attitudes and actions are required in the building of a sustainable future.

Habitat II leaves a twin legacy: firstly a set of principles and commitments and a plan of action, agreed to by a majority of the world's Governments, which address the major problems of the world's human settlements today; secondly, a number of unprecedented breakthroughs in the involvement of civil society in the international policy dialogue and negotiations and a practical strengthening of the concept of partnership between the United Nations, its Member States, local authorities and organizations of civil society — solid foundations upon which to build as the United Nations moves into the era of conference implementation and follow-up.

*The above article is extracted from NGLS Roundup, prepared by the United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS) based in Geneva.*

*The text of the Istanbul Declaration and Habitat Agenda can be found on the World Wide Web site <<http://www.undp.org/un/habitat/agenda>>.*

*Press releases generated throughout the Conference by UNCHS (Habitat) can be found on the World Wide Web site <<http://www.undp.org/un/habitat/unchs>>.*

*Statements delivered during the High Level Segment of the Conference are available on the World Wide Web site <<http://www.un.org/Conference/habitat/eng-stat>>.*

*Official UN Press releases providing summaries of the statements made at the Conference can be found on the World Wide Web <<http://www.un.org/Conferences/habitat/eng-res/3>>.*

*Earth Negotiations Bulletin, particularly Vol. II No.37, "Summary of the Second UN Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II): 3-14 June 1996" can be found at <[enb@igc.apc.org](mailto:enb@igc.apc.org)>.*



The Plenary Hall © A. Kalsi/UNCHS



# The Habitat Agenda

## Goals, Commitments and Action Plans

Twenty years after the Vancouver Conference on Human Settlements, the community of nations was prepared to review its collective vision and responsibility for the future of living conditions, and agreed on a new Habitat Agenda which is expected to guide national and international action on human settlements well into the twenty-first century. Twenty years after Habitat I, it had become evident to the world community that comprehensive and far-reaching action was urgently needed to secure a healthy, safe and equitable living environment for which a commitment of all interested parties on a sustained basis is required. Twenty years after the Vancouver Declaration and Plan of Action, a new global policy and international standard for human settlements was needed which would no longer rely on Governments and the public sector of national economies as the sole providers of adequate shelter and environmentally-sustainable infrastructure and services. The growing worldwide perception of Government as the enabler and coordinator of a discussed effort by all interested parties, as well as a new vision of partnership in a revitalized civil society, were the foundations upon which the new Habitat Agenda was discussed and drafted over a preparatory period of more than two years, negotiated and finally adopted in Istanbul. The process of preparations and negotiations also benefitted from the experience of countries which expressed their collective views and commitments on matters of global development concerns through (at times compromise) consensus language, built up through a series of world conferences during the past several years.

After protracted and sometimes tedious negotiations, the result was finally adopted by consensus in the early hours of 15 June 1996, allowing the Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) to come to a successful conclusion. The delegates to this memorable conference needed a total of 238 paragraphs to outline a Global Plan of Action (preceded by a preamble), express 10 goals and principles, and set out commitments by the community of nations on the two substantive themes: adequate shelter for all, and sustainable human settlements development in an urbanizing



The main Conference building where the Habitat Agenda was adopted. ©A. Kalsi/UNCHS

world. They also agreed on enablement and participation, on gender equality, on financing of shelter and human settlements, on international cooperation and on assessing progress.

Owing to the nature of the preparatory process which included the participation of local government representatives and NGOs involved in human settlements, the resulting Habitat Agenda is a reflection of the very broad-based concerns of all interested parties. A main principle of seeking consensus in the various action areas was explicit inclusion of the specific issues and concerns of all major groups whose contributions to the Habitat Agenda are outlined and whose commitments are detailed within the framework of partnership and active civil society. As a consequence, the Habitat Agenda offers references to a wide range of human development issues which are affected by the quality of living conditions in urban and rural areas. However, this vision of a humane, healthy and equitable society, supported by adequate shelter, infrastructure and services, and conditioned by a sustainable environment, may well turn out to be a conventional planner's nightmare, because of the Habitat Agenda's far-reaching structural complexity and topical diversity. The challenges to its implementation go well beyond our current instruments of planning for investments and coordinating action in given spatial contexts.

### Preamble

The Preamble extends over 21 paragraphs, making statements on the

rationale of the Habitat Agenda as the global prospect for the safety, health and well-being of people, and a view of solutions to global environment and social problems. While recognizing the serious problems of and tremendous opportunities for cities and towns as the basis for a call to action, the preamble states that rural settlements represent a challenge and opportunity for renewed developmental initiatives at all levels which can contribute to reducing pressures on urban growth. It stresses further that secure living conditions are needed to tackle the wide range of social and environmental problems associated with development. Poverty, homelessness, unemployment, the impacts of natural and human-made disasters, the special needs of children, youth and the elderly, and of persons with disabilities, as well as the particular constraints of women, are some of the reference points for human development which a positive vision for sustainable human settlements is expected to address.

The Preamble confirms that "everyone has the right to an adequate standard of living for themselves and their families, including adequate food, clothing, housing, water and sanitation, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions." The concept of sustainable development is defined therein as consisting of interdependent and mutually reinforcing components of economic development, social development and environmental protection, which can be realized "through solidarity and cooperation within and between countries and through effective partnerships at all



levels". It furthermore confirms that "human beings are at the centre of concern for sustainable development" and people are "entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature".

## Goals and Principles

The Preamble is followed by a chapter on **Goals and Principles** which covers the topics of (i) equitable human settlements, (ii) the eradication of poverty, (iii) sustainable development, (iv) physical conditions and spatial characteristics of human settlements, (v) the family as the basic unit of society, (vi) people's rights and responsibilities, (vii) solidarity with those belonging to vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, (ix) the need for new and additional financial resources, and (x) human health and quality of life as the centre of the effort to develop sustainable human settlements.

The goals and principles are preceded by a statement that the objectives of the Habitat Agenda are in full conformity with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. Its implementation is understood to be the "sovereign right and responsibility of each State in conformity with all human rights and fundamental freedoms". In this chapter, States reaffirm their commitment to ensure the full realization of human rights and in particular the right to adequate housing. The chapter further confirms such goals and principles as equal access to economic resources, including the right to inheritance, equal opportunity to participate in public decision-making, and calls for the promotion of tolerance, non-violence, and the diminution of foreign occupation, organized crime, terrorism and corruption as being destructive to human settlements.

## Commitments

In chapter III on Commitments, States outline six commitments to implementing the Habitat Agenda through national, local and regional action and in cooperation with all interested parties, giving special attention to the needs of people living in poverty, people who are homeless, women, older people, indigenous people, refugees, displaced persons, persons with disabilities and those belonging to vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.

With reference to achieving adequate shelter for all, Governments commit themselves to the full and progressive realization of the right to adequate housing. They recognize their obligation to enable people to obtain shelter and to protect and improve their dwellings and neighbourhoods. They

further commit themselves to the objectives of equal access to land, to safe drinking water and sanitation, to the use of environmentally-sound construction methods and to providing legal protection from forced evictions that are contrary to the law. On sustainable human settlements, States found consensus on commitments to the adoption of integrated planning methods, to making efficient use of resources within the carrying capacity of ecosystems and through application of the precautionary principle approach, to providing adequate environmental infrastructure facilities, to promoting changes in unsustainable consumption and production patterns, to promoting more effective and environmentally-sound transportation systems and to promoting energy-efficient technologies for human settlements. They further commit themselves to the promotion of optimal land-use forms, the protection of cultural, historic and natural heritage, to maintaining and strengthening rural settlements, and to preventing man-made disasters.

Commitments are also expressed to enable and promote the participation of all key actors to play an active role in human settlements and shelter development,

within the context of transparent and accountable forms of government. To meet the goal of gender equality, States pledge themselves to integrating gender perspectives in human-settlements legislation, policies and programmes. On the financing of shelter and human settlements, commitments are expressed on developing innovative approaches for the mobilization of additional resources from the private, public, multilateral and bilateral sectors. States also commit themselves to enable markets to work and to encourage wide-ranging partnerships for the financing of shelter and human-settlements development.

Commitments on international cooperation relate to multilateral, regional and bilateral cooperation programmes on technical and financial assistance, to the promotion of exchange of appropriate technology and to international networking for the dissemination of information. Consistent with the action plans of previous international conferences, Governments re-confirm the target of **0.7 per cent gross national product of developed countries as a target to strive for in official development assistance**. On assessing progress in implementing the Habitat



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Agenda, Governments are committed to monitor progress through the application of quantitative and qualitative indicators at national and local levels, which should include a disaggregation into age- and gender-sensitive data.

## Strategies for Implementing the Habitat Agenda

Strategies for implementing the Habitat Agenda are presented in Chapter IV, which covers the global plan of action in the proper sense of the term, stretching over more than 150 paragraphs with detailed requests for action by Governments, at the appropriate levels, usually in cooperation with local authorities and other interested parties. The overriding principles for the action plans are referred to in Section A. Introduction as enablement, transparency and participation, with action to focus at the local level.

Action on the first theme of **Adequate shelter for all** is outlined in Section B of Chapter IV. In its introduction, the section calls on governments to take appropriate action in order to promote, protect and ensure the full and progressive realization of the right to adequate housing whose basis is recognized as emanating from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. Within the framework of an enabling approach, such actions are expected to include protection from discrimination in the housing sphere, providing legal security of tenure and equal access to land, effective protection from forced evictions that are contrary to the law, and adopting policies aimed at making housing accessible, affordable and habitable.

Related strategies have two fundamental objectives: to integrate shelter policies with policies that will guide macroeconomic and social development and sound environmental management, and to enable markets as the primary housing delivery mechanisms to perform their functions with efficiency. Further objectives and recommended actions address the components of shelter delivery systems, such as land, finance, infrastructure and services, construction, building materials, maintenance and rehabilitation, in the private, public and community sectors. The chapter on strategies to achieve the goal of adequate shelter for all gives special attention to those groups of people who are at considerable risk because they lack security of tenure or find it difficult to participate in housing markets. International cooperation is considered both necessary and beneficial in pursuing strategies on adequate shelter for all,

particularly in areas affected by war, natural, industrial or technological disasters.

Strategies on the theme of **Sustainable human settlements development in an urbanizing world** are presented in section C of Chapter IV. It recognizes that urban settlements hold a promise for human development and for the protection of the world's natural resources by their ability to support large numbers of people while limiting their impact on the natural environment. On the other hand, many cities are currently witnessing harmful patterns of growth, of production and consumption, of land use and of their physical structures.

Consistent with the significance of enablement as the core strategic principle for the action plan of the Habitat Agenda, a separate section D of Chapter IV is devoted to outlining needed action areas on Capacity-building and institutional development. The 16 paragraphs of its section defines required action on (1) decentralization and the strengthening of local authorities and their associations/networks, (2) popular participation and civic engagement, (3) human settlements management, (4) metropolitan planning and management, (5) domestic financial resources and economic instruments, and (6) information and communications. The sections calls for increased support for appropriate training programmes in these action areas and the promotion of comprehensive human resource development policies which are gender sensitive. Capacity-building is to be particularly directed towards supporting the decentralization and participatory urban management process. All interested parties, particularly local authorities, the private sector, the cooperative sector, trade unions, non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations need to be empowered to play an effective role in shelter and human settlements development.

The municipal level is singled out as a potentially effective partner in making human settlements viable, equitable and sustainable. Policies and programmes for sustainable development are seen as requiring strong public-sector institutions at the subnational level in partnership with all interested parties. The importance of keeping the diversity of types of human settlements is underlined as a key component for the creation of just and sustainable societies.

For the sustainable development and management of cities, towns and rural settlements in a geographically balanced manner, ten action areas are identified: (1)

sustainable land use, (2) social development in the form of eradication of poverty, creation of productive employment and social integration, (3) population and sustainable human settlements development, (4) environmentally-sustainable, healthy and livable human settlements, (5) sustainable energy use, (6) sustainable transport and communication systems, (7) conservation and rehabilitation of the historical and cultural heritage, (8) improving urban economics, (9) balanced development of settlements in rural regions, and (10) disaster prevention, mitigation, preparedness and post-disaster rehabilitation capabilities. International cooperation, including city-to-city cooperation, is considered necessary in promoting sustainable human settlements development.

*Summarized by Mathias Hundsatz, Officer-in-Charge, Research and Development Division, UNCHS (Habitat).*



## Gender in the Agenda

By Wandia Seaforth

The Habitat Agenda contains 30 references to "gender", and no fewer than 110 to "women/girls". Mention of gender is in reference to gender equality, gender perspective, gender specificity, gender sensitivity, gender needs, disaggregation of data etc. The references to women and girls deal with, among other things, the need to address the current disadvantage of women (that starts with the girl child) and the special needs of women, and to recognize and support the contribution of women in the human settlements development process. This is the glossy picture of the visibility of gender in the Agenda. More fundamentally, there are several basic rights and principles that have been recognized and incorporated in the Agenda that have a direct bearing on gender. Some of these are:

- equality
- gender equality
- sustainability
- recognition of various forms of family
- solidarity with disadvantaged and vulnerable groups
- recognition of the right to adequate housing

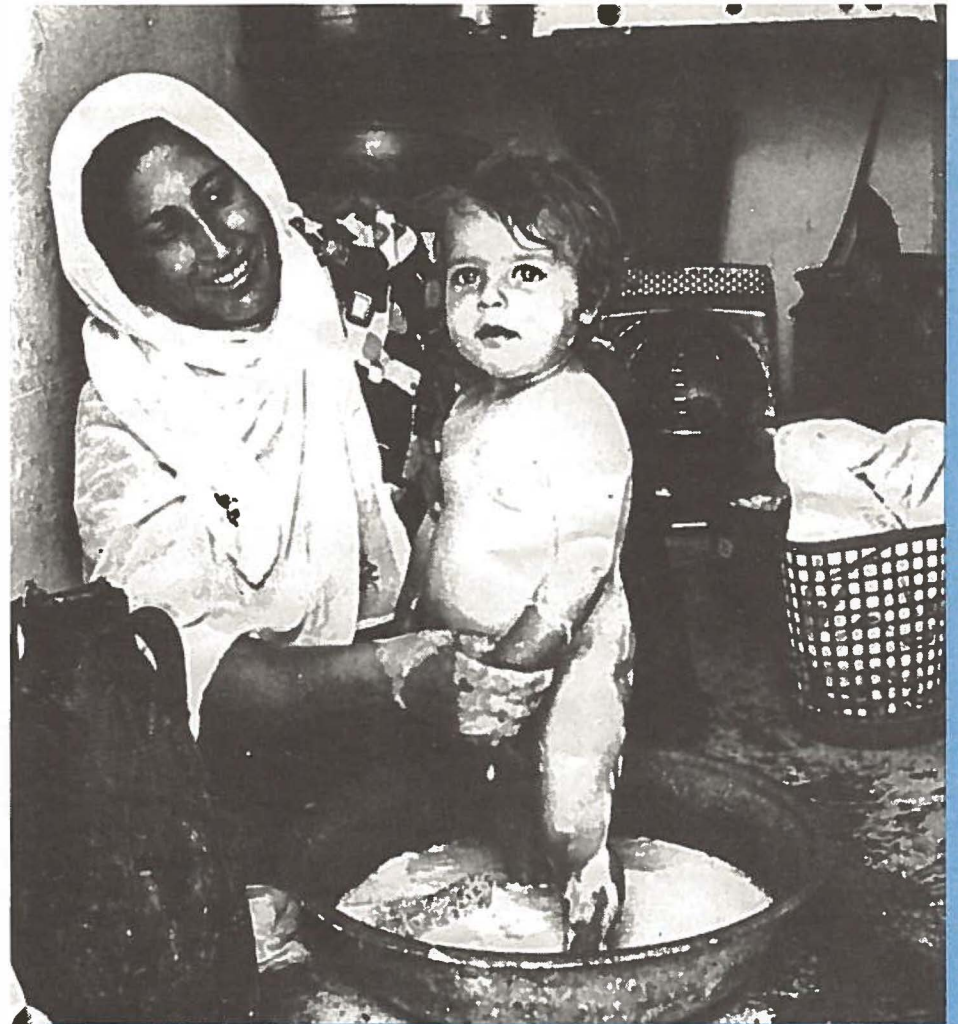
The principles of equality and sustainability assume that genuine development should not and cannot exclude any group/s. The Agenda therefore calls for measures to ensure that women's expertise and knowledge be recognized, utilized and rewarded at all levels of the human settlements development process, and that women benefit equally from all development. This theme is picked up under numerous sub-sections of the Agenda.

Gender equality should naturally be assumed to be contained in the principle of equality. However, this assumption has in the past led to women being left out either by discrimination or by design. Therefore, there was an expressed need to have it spelled out as a separate area. Section D of Chapter III (Commitments), obliges Governments to pursue the goal of gender equality in human-settlements development through:

- Integrating gender perspectives in human settlement-related legislation, policies, programmes and projects through the application of gender-sensitive analysis;
- Developing conceptual and practical

methodologies for incorporating gender in human-settlements planning, development and evaluation including the development of indicators;

- Collecting, analyzing and disseminating gender-disaggregated data and



A woman bathing her child: Women fought hard to ensure that gender issues were addressed in the Habitat Agenda.  
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information on human-settlements issues, including statistical means which recognize the unremunerated work of women for use in policy and programme planning and implementation;

- Integrating a gender perspective in the design and implementation of environmentally-sound and sustainable resource-management mechanisms, production techniques and infrastructure development in rural and urban areas;
- The formulation and strengthening of policies and practices to promote the

full and equal participation of women in human-settlement planning and decision-making.

The right to adequate housing, one of the most hotly contested points, was of great interest to women and to gender activists, as it provides an additional basis for gender equality in housing. Some specific gender concerns addressed in this area were:

"provision of legal security of tenure and equal access to land to all people including women ... legislative and administrative reforms to give women full and equal access to economic resources, including the right to inheritance and to ownership of land and other property, credit, natural resources and appropriate technologies."

Recognition of different forms of the family was another controversial issue, especially with certain religious groups. However, the language that was finally adopted does recognize the diversity of family types, among them those that are

female-headed (often the poorest in many communities).

**Vulnerability** is an area that was viewed with concern by those trying to put a gender perspective into the Habitat Agenda. There had been a tendency to lump women with vulnerable groups such as the elderly, the disabled, and children. The Agenda now recognizes that not all women are vulnerable, and more importantly, that vulnerability is most often caused by exclusion from the socio-economic mainstream, and from the decision-making process. Measures to address vulnerability include at one level special programmes such as safety nets for

the vulnerable, but also, more fundamentally, addressing inequalities from a rights perspective.

No international conference no matter how successful, and no international agenda, however comprehensive, can solve the problems of poverty, inequality and development in general. The **Habitat Agenda** will have its weaknesses, and like any negotiated text, it will not be perfect in every area for every interest group but it is a very good starting point. However, it will only be as good as its implementation, and that will depend a lot on national-level action as well as solidarity-building, exchange and monitoring at local, national,

regional and international levels. If Habitat II was about partnerships, the follow-up needs to be equally about partnerships. This is particularly true with respect to social exclusion in general, and gender in particular, especially with regard to monitoring.

*Wandia Seaforth was Networking Coordinator in the Women in Human Settlements Development Programme of UNCHS (Habitat) during the period leading up to the City Summit. At the Conference, she was involved in the Women's Caucus.*

## The Road From Beijing To Istanbul

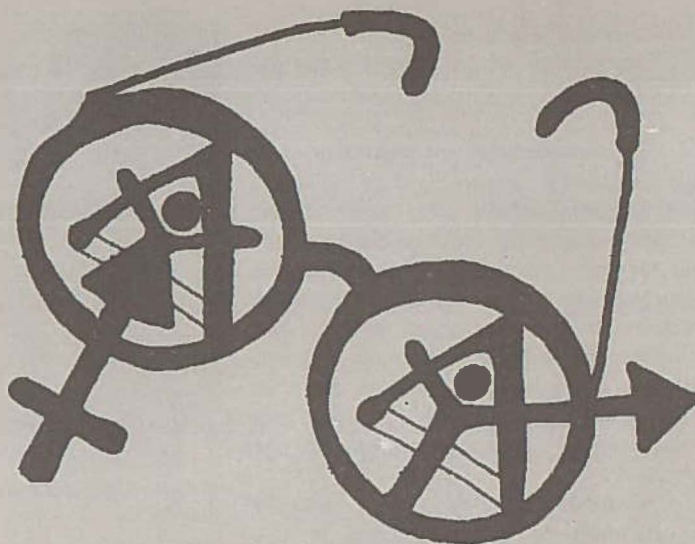
“Genderizing” the Agenda was no mean accomplishment. It involved many months of strategizing by many women and women's organizations, coalitions and alliances. It also involved the support of many committed men in Government delegations and in the NGO movement. It received the continuous moral and strategic support of Dr. Wally N'Dow. Long before Istanbul, the Habitat International Coalition (HIC) Women and Shelter Network had been working to get a gender perspective into the work of HIC, and to influence UNCHS (Habitat); the Super Coalition on Women, Homes and Community was formed. This Coalition contributed significantly to getting human settlements on the Beijing agenda, and for moving forward the achievements of Beijing to Istanbul.

At Beijing, Dr. N'Dow declared that the road to Istanbul must go through Beijing, and launched the Huairou Commission, made up of representatives from grassroots organizations, NGOs, Governments, United Nations agencies and individual professional women, with an interest in, and in a position to influence, the Habitat II process with respect to gender; women organized around women's and human-settlements issues and started strategizing on how to make gender visible in the Habitat II process, and the Habitat Agenda.

At UNCHS (Habitat), the Women in Human Settlements Development Programme was keeping in touch with national, regional and global efforts on gender, and working with other programmes of the Centre, for example, with the Indicators Programme to take gender into account, with Best Practices for gendered best practices, and with In-Country Preparations to monitor national preparatory processes.

In Istanbul, the Super Coalition, Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) and other women's organizations met every morning and every evening to brief and de-brief. Women were trained to lobby and to present their issues and to use their national delegations to ensure a gender perspective in the Habitat Agenda. Some of the most controversial issues depended on ensuring that ground gained in Cairo, Copenhagen and Beijing was not lost in Istanbul. The fact that a large and diverse group of people had been systematically working together over a period of time on issues to which they were committed was responsible for the gendering of the Habitat Agenda.

The challenge now is to maintain this commitment, energy and spirit of partnership that was in Istanbul to implement the agenda.



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## Consensus Achieved on Housing Rights

by Edward Torgbor

The achievement of the Istanbul Conference on the right to adequate housing is a success story of the Conference for advocates of human rights and proponents of housing rights in particular. The debate on housing rights had stalked all stages of the preparatory process right up to Istanbul. Those who know the long road travelled by housing rights activists will recall the profound dismay felt by all concerned when the third and final preparatory meeting in New York failed to reach consensus on the status of the right to adequate housing as an agenda item.

The impassioned appeals of concerned groups, eminent personages and ordinary citizens around the world for the inclusion of the right to adequate housing in the Habitat Agenda have not been in vain now that the international community, through this Conference, has affirmatively and unequivocally committed itself to the realization of all human rights and, in this particular context, the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing as set forth and provided for in international

instruments.

The consensus so achieved on this subject exemplifies the expression of the political will of the international community to confront the challenge of global homelessness, inadequate shelter conditions, inequities in housing availability and distribution in our global settlements, insecurity of tenure and illegal evictions and the need to combat these problems with a sense of urgency. But it is also a manifestation of the common concern for the homeless and disadvantaged members in our midst, and a recognition of the need to create those conditions that will enable every man, woman and child to live somewhere in peace, security, comfort, happiness and with dignity.

In specific terms, the Conference expressly recognized the universal existence of the right to adequate housing and confirmed the commitment of all countries to promote, protect and ensure the progressive realization of this right. It is a commitment that requires Governments to take appropriate action

in the housing sector which includes:

1. providing legal protection against discrimination in housing,
2. providing legal security of tenure and equal access to land and effective protection against forced evictions and
3. adopting enabling policies that would facilitate access to habitable and affordable housing.

The consensus so achieved at Istanbul represents a major step in moving forward the Global Shelter Strategy and it is fitting that the Istanbul Declaration devotes a separate and complete paragraph to the right to adequate housing in its declaratory provisions apart from the contextual references to it in the Habitat Agenda itself.

*Justice Edward Torgbor is a consultant at UNCHS (Habitat).*

## Building Consensus on the Habitat Agenda: International Cooperation and Follow-up

by Daniel Biau

Sections E and F fall under chapter IV of the Habitat Agenda which deals with strategies for implementation. Section E is on international cooperation and co-ordination; Section F is on implementation and follow-up.

Sections E and F of the Habitat Agenda had to be negotiated entirely in Istanbul. This was done in Working Group II of Committee I, which met from 5 to 13 June under the chairmanship of Dr. Khonje (Zambia). Given that Sections E and F were closely related, particularly with respect to the role of UNCHS (Habitat), finalization of E became possible only after an agreement was reached on F. At the start of the Conference, Section F was indeed

supposed to constitute the most delicate part of the negotiation, due to its institutional implications.

In Section E (international cooperation and coordination), Governments recognize that the formulation and implementation of human settlements development strategies are the primary responsibility of each country at the national and local levels. However, they acknowledge the need for international cooperation, which "assumes added significance and importance in the wake of recent trends in the globalization of the world economy". They call for innovative approaches and frameworks for international cooperation which should include the active participation of all levels of government, the private and cooperative sectors, non-governmental and community-based organizations (NGOs and CBOs), in decision-making, policy formulation and resource allocation, implementation and evaluation. This implies recognition of complementary forms of decentralized cooperation between local authorities.

Section E calls upon the international community to promote the establishment of an enabling international environment, through positive actions on the issues of finance, external debt, international trade

and transfer of technology. The international community is invited to mobilize additional national and international financial resources for shelter provision and human settlements development and to promote the ability of local authorities to access global capital markets. This will require *inter alia* "striving to fulfil the agreed target of 0.7 per cent of the GNP of the developed countries for ODA as soon as possible" and to increase the share of funding for adequate shelter and human settlements development programmes.

In reference to technical cooperation, the international community is expected to facilitate the transfer of knowledge and experience and disseminate best practices on sustainable human settlements development. UNCHS (Habitat) should "act as a catalyst in the mobilization of technical cooperation", particularly for enhancing the capabilities of national and local authorities to identify and analyze critical issues, to formulate and implement policies and programmes in response to them, and to manage efficiently the process of human settlements development. Global information networks containing updated information on the Habitat Agenda and on best

practices, as well as progress reports on the implementation of national plans of action, should be established.

United Nations organizations, including the Bretton Woods institutions, are requested to strengthen cooperative mechanisms to integrate commitments and actions contained in the Habitat Agenda into their policies, programmes and operations. They should establish partnerships with internal associations of local authorities and NGOs and encourage public-private partnerships in shelter and human settlements programmes.

**Section F** (implementation and follow-up of the Habitat Agenda) gave rise to in-depth discussions between the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries and the Group of 77 and China, particularly on the mandate of the Commission on Human Settlements and the functions of UNCHS (Habitat). Four night sessions were necessary to reach a consensus.

Section F states that the main intergovernmental fora at the global level for the implementation and follow-up of the Habitat Agenda will be the United Nations General Assembly (GA), the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and in particular the Commission on Human Settlements.

The General Assembly is invited to consider the follow-up to the Conference at its 51st session (autumn 1996), to review the effectiveness of the steps taken to implement the outcome of the Conference at its 52nd session (autumn 1997) and to hold a special session in 2001 for an overall review of the implementation of the Habitat Agenda.

ECOSOC is invited to review the follow-up of the Habitat Agenda at its substantive session of 1997, based on the recommendations made by the Commission on Human Settlements at its next session (28 April-7 May 1997).

The Commission on Human Settlements will promote, monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Habitat Agenda. As the governing body of UNCHS (Habitat), it will review its work programme in order to ensure an effective follow-up and implementation of the outcome of the Conference. It will also review its working methods in order to involve in its work representatives of local authorities, the private sector and NGOs.

The GA and ECOSOC are invited to review and strengthen the mandate of the

Commission on Human Settlements and to assess the functions of UNCHS (Habitat) with a view to its revitalization.

Habitat, whose primary function is to provide substantive servicing to the Commission, will be a focal point for the implementation of the Habitat Agenda. It should focus on well-defined objectives and strategic issues, including coordination of adequate shelter for all and human settlements development programmes carried out by the United Nations system, exchange of information on best practices, public information activities, analysis and monitoring of major urbanization trends, execution of operational programmes and projects, development of monitoring indicators and promotion of transparent, representative and accountable governance through institutional development, capacity-building and partnership.

All relevant agencies of the United Nations system are invited to strengthen and adjust their activities, programmes and strategies to take into account the follow-up to Habitat II, particularly at the field level, while the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the regional and sub-regional development banks and funds and all other financial organizations are invited to give higher priority to the goals of adequate shelter for all and sustainable human settlements development in their lending programmes.

Section F also states that effective implementation of the Habitat Agenda requires strengthening local authorities, community organizations and NGOs through the establishment of legislative and regulatory frameworks and capacity-building programmes.

The last sub-section of the Habitat Agenda is devoted to performance evaluation, indicators and best practices. All partners are invited to regularly monitor and evaluate their performance in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda through application of comparable indicators and documentation of best practices. UNCHS (Habitat) should provide assistance to establish guidelines for national and local monitoring and to strengthen data collection and analysis capabilities at all levels. Governments will assess the implementation of national plans of action by using key policy-oriented indicators, augmented by indicators specific to the different regions, and provide this information to the United Nations.

One major shortcoming of previous United Nations conferences has been their insufficient elaboration of follow-up mechanisms. Criticisms from the media, NGOs and Governments themselves of their limited impact on human

development have been heard on many occasions. Learning from this experience, the delegations at Istanbul took the issue of international cooperation and follow-up very seriously. They designed mechanisms which should allow the United Nations system, including the Commission on Human Settlements and its secretariat, to promote, monitor and evaluate adequately the implementation of the Habitat Agenda.

<sup>1</sup>Paragraph 201, on financial resources, contains not less than 30 bullets indicating actions to be undertaken.



## VIEWPOINT

### Sections E & F: A Realistic and Satisfactory Compromise

By Alberto Colella

Even before the Istanbul Conference started, everyone knew that the most difficult negotiations would be those on Chapters E and F of the Habitat Agenda: the chapters of the Plan of Action devoted to the practical implementation of the documents adopted at Istanbul, and the financial resources for implementation. The discussions centered on who was going to realize the goals of the Conference, how the objectives of adequate shelter for all and sustainable human settlement would be achieved and above all, where to find the money and the people to do so.

The negotiations were long and not easy, as expected, but very civilized and not without moments of fun. I think we all enjoyed them.

#### Chapter E. International cooperation and coordination

As is usually the case in United Nations discussions of financial resources, the debate on chapter E split along the lines of "developed" versus "developing" countries. The text ultimately adopted uses the language agreed on at previous major United Nations Conferences — a classic United Nations compromise — particularly for the most controversial issue: the challenges of globalized economies, official development assistance and agreed targets, innovative approaches to cooperation using new forms of partnership, and international migration.

Particularly noteworthy is the part related to the mobilization of financial resources, which contains a shopping list of ways and means to find the money needed to realize the commitments of the Habitat Agenda. The list could be considered a global compendium of the United Nations state-of-the-art thinking on the issue of international financial cooperation.

The most innovative aspect of the discussion on inter-national cooperation for sustainable human settlements



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development concerned proposals on the role of local authorities and NGOs. The European Union proposed or supported language on local-authority access to international financial markets, strengthening decentralized development assistance programmes and cooperation with local-authority associations and networks. NGO-proposed language on ensuring compliance with national laws by the private sector, including transnational corporations, was also accepted. An important commitment was also made to promote decentralized cooperation between local authorities and communities.

#### Chapter F. Institutional follow-up

I think that all the delegations at Istanbul shared a common goal: the need for effective and integrated follow-up and implementation of the Global Plan of Action. There was a long discussion, however, on how to ensure this goal.

While the implementation schema adopted at Istanbul follows the broad outlines of previous United Nations Conferences (actions of the United Nations General Assembly, ECOSOC, other United Nations bodies, etc.), it still contains some innovative solutions:

a. The primary responsibility for implementing the Habitat Agenda belongs to national governments, who should be the main actors in the implementation of the documents adopted. Therefore the Conference's main venue of

implementation is at the national level, complemented by international cooperation. This will require coordinated efforts at every level, especially the local, and the full involvement of all the actors.

b. Another completely new aspect of the implementation process is the degree of participation of the local authorities and civil society. The Istanbul Conference was the first instance of new partners joining in the United Nations negotiating process, and it was a success. A number of provisions in the final document highlight the participation of local authorities, the private sector, foundations, NGOs, and research centers in the implementation of the Agenda. To underline the importance of partnership, the European Union supported the idea that the Commission on Human Settlements should find ways to involve the representatives of local authorities and the relevant actors of civil society fully in its work in the field of sustainable human settlements.

Another crucial issue discussed was the role and future of the Commission on Human Settlements and UNCHS.

From the beginning it was clear that a number of developing countries sought strong reassurances that the Centre "would not suffer a fate similar to UNEP, which has waned in clout and cash since Rio", as representatives of the G77 and China pointed out during the negotiations. A political confrontation between developed and developing countries on this issue was

a danger to be avoided; such a clash could have jeopardized the success of the Conference.

This is why at the negotiating table the European Union, acting as a mediator, presented a full set of proposals on the objectives, functions and responsibilities of both the Centre and the Commission. These proposals strove to take into account the legitimate concerns of the G77 and China. Among other things, they:

- invited the General Assembly and ECOSOC to review and strengthen the mandate of the Commission on Human Settlements, thereby showing proper respect for the competence of the United Nations bodies involved;
- recognized the Commission's central role in monitoring implementation;
- defined the primary role of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements, located in Nairobi, Kenya, as providing substantive service to the Commission;
- drew up a list of tasks to be performed by the Commission and the Centre, focusing on areas where they could have a comparative advantage and — especially for the Centre — where specific abilities have already been proved.

The final result is a **realistic and satisfactory compromise**: the text recognizes the role of the Commission in promoting, reviewing, monitoring and assessing progress in the implementation of the goals of adequate shelter for all and sustainable human settlements development. The UNCHS will continue its service to the Commission; it should be a focal point for human settlements issues within the United Nations system, and have a major role in the implementation of the Plan of Action. Finally, the Secretary-General is requested to ensure a more effective functioning of the Centre by providing, within the limits of the current financial crisis of the United Nations, sufficient human and financial resources.

What's next? First comes the presentation of the report from Habitat II to the 51st session of the United Nations General Assembly. The General Assembly will consider the report and adopt one or more resolutions recommending the general outline of the review of the work programme of the Commission on Human Settlements (which will hold its next session in April/May 1997), which, in turn, will recommend to ECOSOC ways to review and strengthen the mandate of the

UNCHS. The ECOSOC substantive session of 1997, in Geneva, will oversee the system-wide United Nations coordination in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda, and will make recommendations.

The hope is that the Habitat II Conference is not the conclusion of a long and fruitful discussion but the starting point of a process for the effective and efficient implementation of the Istanbul commitments.

A plethora of United Nations bodies are involved in this process: I already mentioned the General Assembly and ECOSOC, the Commission and UNCHS, but dozens of other United Nations organs and forums are mentioned in the final text. The way chapter F is designed assures that at least at the United Nations level, human-settlements issues will be one of the major topics for discussion in the next years.

**Hopefully all States, United Nations organs, international and national institutions will demonstrate strong political will for the fullest implementation of the Istanbul documents.** The European Union is ready to play its part, as it showed during the negotiations.

*Alberto Colella is the Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Italy to the United Nations. The views expressed in the article are his own.*







## To Bracket Or Not To Bracket? Negotiating the Habitat Agenda

by B. Shafqat Kakakhel

When Committee I — assigned to negotiate the Habitat Agenda — began its work, I was worried but not without hope. The sheer volume of work involved in removing scores of brackets from a text comprising nearly 200 paragraphs appeared daunting. Quite a few differences had emerged during the last meeting of the Preparatory Committee (PrepCom III, held in New York in February 1996), which was unable to even consider some parts of the draft document. The North/South polarization had become pronounced. But I did not despair because informal consultations among representatives of various countries and groups since February in New York and elsewhere had indicated that their resolve to see their points of view accommodated in the Agenda was matched in equal measure by a willingness to make necessary compromises to facilitate the adoption of a document they could live with.

The main difficulties encountered by us bear recapitulation. The comprehensive nature of the major themes of Habitat II — “adequate shelter for all” and “sustainable human settlements development in an urbanizing world” — warranted a reiteration of the recommendations made by nearly all the preceding global conferences i.e. the World Children’s Summit, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), the World Conference on Human Rights, the International Conference on Population and Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women. The objectives of the City Summit had to be viewed, defined and integrated with the landmark recommendations of the earlier international meetings. This meant an inevitably bulky document. It also meant rekindling the controversies engendered during the past. It is perhaps only natural that delegates representing different socio-economic situations and priorities should view the subjects through their respective prisms and seek reflection of their points of view in the document adopted by the meeting.

Hence, the fundamentalist insistence by the OECD countries on reiterating the goal of sustainable development as defined by UNCED in contrast with the marked emphasis on sustained economic growth

sought by developing countries which suspected that sustainable development could be misconstrued to justify slowing down their economic development. More importantly, while the OECD countries assented that all actions for achieving the goals of shelter provision for all and sustainable human settlements could and ought to be taken by actors within national frontiers, The Group of 77 (G77) and China argued that in order to succeed, those actions required a conducive global economic context and deliberate affirmative actions by the developed nations in a framework of improved and enhanced international cooperation.

Perhaps the most ticklish question facing the negotiators in Istanbul was the contribution of international cooperation and the roles and mandates of multilateral mechanisms within and outside the UN system in translating the recommendations contained in the Agenda into tangible actions. OECD countries did not want Habitat II to preempt the outcome of the on-going debate on the reform and restructuring of the UN system. G77 and China were keen to see the Agenda broadly define the parameters of activities to be undertaken by the UN agencies and other multilateral organizations.

Habitat II was not a North/South arena in all matters. There was at least one major issue which transcended the North/South schism. This was the right to housing, on which differences existed within both the major groups. Most developing countries — which considered a recognition of the right to housing essentially as a moral and political obligation to serve as a catalyst for greater attention to the problem of shelterlessness — and the European Union Member States favoured a categorical reference to the right to housing. The United States of America and some developing countries looked at the issue in the light of its possible legal implications. Eventually, this subject (which had prompted a spirited debate at PrepCom II) was resolved with relative ease thanks to the significant evolution on the subject in the USA and other countries as well as the willingness of the ardent advocates of the right to housing to moderate their position.

Habitat II will be recalled as the first global conference at which NGOs effectively contributed to the official inter-

governmental negotiations. As in Rio and elsewhere, while official delegates were holding briefs aimed at protecting “national interests”, the NGOs were motivated by the objectives. They were uninhibited and unequivocal, and greatly enriched the debate and the negotiation process. I was struck by their purposefulness and commitment. The NGOs were also remarkably disciplined.

Drafting is a tedious exercise in the best of circumstances. Composing readable texts in meetings attended by some 300 women and men can be a hopeless effort. Luckily, this difficulty was widely recognized and the major groups — G77 and China, European Union, later OECD — negotiated through single spokespersons with some countries adding invaluable inputs. This quickened the speed of adopting existing texts and crafting new ones.

A significant redeeming feature of the work in our Committee was the presence of scores of delegates who had participated in the PrepCom meetings and/or served in Missions in Nairobi and New York. Personal friendships ensured that exchanges of views were invariably polite and non-polemical. I am personally indebted to my friends in the Committee and the delegates I met for the first time in Istanbul who frequently reacted to my angry outbursts with disarming humour. I was disappointed once, and only once, on the last day when we spent nearly seven hours in deciding whether sustainable settlements “promote” or “should promote” human rights. We surely could have done better!

Our Committee did eventually produce a 238-paragraph document which contains many awkward formulations but comprehensively addresses the myriad problems of human settlements and how they can and must be addressed through efforts at national and international levels. Now that the chat is over and the essay has been written, we should try to turn platitudes into plans and plans into actions.

*S. Shafqat Kakakhel was the Chairperson of Committee I at Habitat II and is the Pakistan High Commissioner to Kenya.*

## Partners' Events

### The World Assembly of Cities and Local Authorities

by Andrea Connell

The dramatic opening of the World Assembly of Cities and Local Authorities (WACLA) with the Harbiye Museum Band performing a set of rousing fanfares was most appropriate for such a historic occasion. This was the first time ever that such a widely representative group of local authority leaders from all regions of the world had convened. Their purpose, as Taysip Erdogan, Mayor of Istanbul, put it in his welcoming speech, was

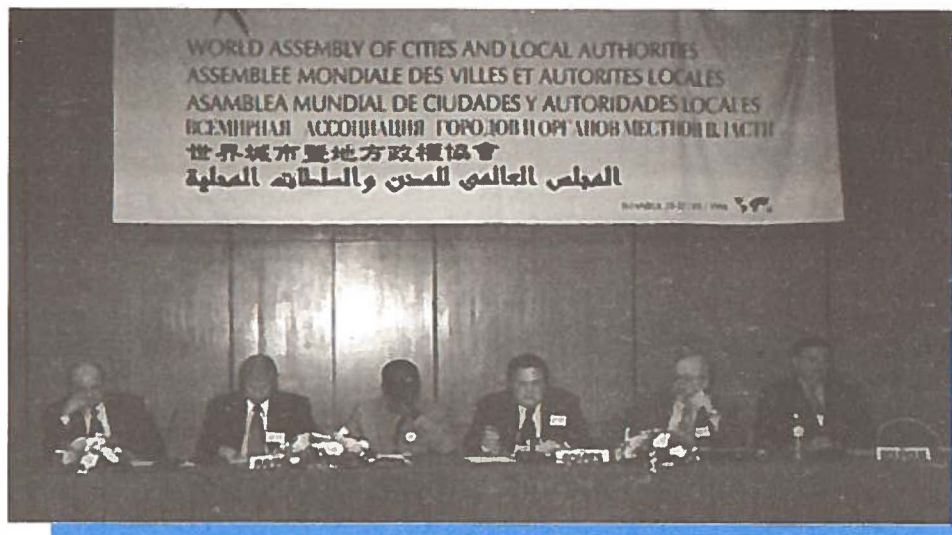
*"to underline the fact that we, as the representatives of the level of government closest to the people, have a crucial role to play in any and all efforts to solve the global problems that impact so heavily and intimately on the people of this planet."*

Over 500 local government leaders from 95 different countries attended the World Assembly on 30 and 31 May 1996, coming together to discuss the concrete, on-the-ground contributions that local authorities can make to the sustainable development of human settlements, and committing themselves to work in close partnership with UNCHS and other United Nations agencies in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda. They were joined by around 70 observers, mainly from United Nations organizations, and at least as many representatives of the press.

Such was the interest in the meeting, that the organizers were forced to turn people away at the door due to lack of space.

The speeches and debate of the World Assembly covered not only the capacities of local authorities to tackle global issues and to mobilize a wide range of local actors from all sectors, but also addressed the new relationship between local government and the international community.

There has been an important realization on the part of many international organizations and institutions, that to be effective in their programmes,



Dr. Wally N'Dow with mayors at the WACLA meeting. © A. Kalsi/UNCHS

they need to work closely with locally-accountable leaders, who are the key facilitators of change and development in their communities. The World Assembly had the honour of being addressed by top representatives from the international community, including Dr. N'Dow of Habitat, Mr. Serageldin, Vice-President of the World Bank and Mr. Mayor, Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Senior representatives from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) also embraced the new spirit of partnership in their presentations and invited closer working relationships with local government and joint efforts to address the increasingly complex problems of human settlements development.

The second day of the Assembly focused mainly on the adoption of the Declaration, which would provide a mandate and clear policy guidelines for the local authorities' delegation participating in the main Habitat II Conference. The Declaration analyzed the situation of urban and rural settlements in the light of global trends, set out a series of commitments on behalf of the world's cities and local authorities, and called upon the States, the private sector and the international community to take various measures to facilitate the governance and sustainable development of local communities.

Key points in the Declaration referred to the importance of decentralization and democratization, the need to combat social exclusion, the creativity and innovative capacity of local

leadership, the value of developing partnership approaches with all vital local forces, the transformational power of technology, and the mutual benefits to be obtained from decentralized cooperation and international exchanges of experience.

The Assembly Declaration called for a close working partnership in the implementation of the Global Plan of Action of the Habitat Agenda, both through the continuation of National Habitat II Committees and through the widening of the Commission on Human Settlements to include representation of local government and other sectors of civil society.

Many enthusiastic interventions came from the floor and a number of key amendments were introduced, including the call for a worldwide Charter for local self-government to guide national governments and international agencies on the basic principles which should underlie any democratic local-government system; an appeal for those countries without democratically-elected local authorities to be encouraged to introduce the necessary changes to allow citizens to freely elect their local representatives, and a clause seeking to strengthen the role of women in municipal decision-making.

One of the most important decisions of the World Assembly was the call for the group of international and regional associations of local authorities known as the G4+ Local Authorities Habitat II Steering Committee, which had collaborated on the organization of the World Assembly and the local government input into Habitat II, to ensure an ongoing coordination of the movement of cities and local authorities, which would serve as the united voice of local government in the negotiation of United Nations policies and programmes addressing urban





development and human settlements management.

Unable to attend the World Assembly himself, the United Nations Secretary-General, Dr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, sent a message of support and congratulations via Dr. N'Dow. It emphasized the vital leading role the United Nations now sees local authorities taking in responding to the urgent challenge of human settlements and indicated that the special status granted to the local authorities' delegation at Habitat II through Rule 62 of the Rules of Procedure, was a historic and irreversible milestone in the development of a close working partnership between the United Nations and local government.

*"This indeed is a seminal development and clearly indicates the importance that the United Nations attaches to the role of local governments in today's ever changing world...This rule change, I should emphasize, was not intended to be a brief alteration in United Nations procedures, but to institutionalize a relationship of cooperation between local authorities and the United Nations for the future."*

The World Assembly of Cities and Local Authorities was undoubtedly a great success. It has been praised as a very effective and focused contribution to the Habitat II Conference by those inside and outside the world of local government alike. Not only had a wide geographical balance and a high level of debate been achieved, but significant progress had also been made towards ensuring the existence of a permanent unified voice of local government to act as interlocutor of the United Nations and other inter-governmental organizations on behalf of all local authorities.

This excellent start was the ideal springboard for the local authorities' delegation at Habitat II. It ensured them a high profile and won the respect and confidence of many of the national delegations. The joint efforts of the delegation were rewarded in that many of the concerns of the World Assembly Declaration were taken up in the Habitat Agenda and the Istanbul Declaration.

*Andrea Connell wrote the above article on behalf of the G4+ Local Authorities Habitat II Steering Committee, now known as the World Associations of Cities and Local Authorities Co-ordinating Structure (WACLACS)*

## The NGO Forum

Held appropriately in the once grand but now somewhat dilapidated Taskila building of the Istanbul Technical University and organized on a shoe-string budget amidst a great deal of uncertainty, the parallel NGO Forum '96 surpassed most expectations. Credit for this must go to the Turkish NGO Host Committee, the International NGO Facilitating Group (IFG) and to the Forum's director, Jan Birket-Smith, whose role as the director of the NGO Forum '95, held in parallel to the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen in March 1995, brought much needed experience and expertise to the organization of the event.

According to the organizers, the parallel NGO Forum '96 registered a total of 8,550 NGO participants of which 2,565 (30 per cent) were from Turkey and 5,985 (70 per cent) were from other countries. Of the 2,598 organizations registered at the Forum, 634 (25 per cent) were from Turkey and 1,956 (75 per cent) were from other countries. A total of 23,478 day passes were also issued, largely to residents of Istanbul.

Over the 16 days of the Forum, NGOs organized over 1,700 meetings and events on many of the topics on the Habitat II Agenda and beyond. Topics discussed ranged from revitalization of traditional health practices to women in local government, illness and healing, architecture, global pressures and forces, redefining security, urban agriculture, towards violence-free cities, and sustainable transport. The Forum's computer centre was equipped with 40

computers, e-mail connections, and printing and photocopying facilities. In constant use by NGOs drafting documents and sending articles, updates and messages back home, the centre also offered training sessions on electronic communications and the Internet.

Not unlike the Beijing NGO Forum, tensions did arise between the Forum's leadership and local authorities with regard to shared NGO perceptions of an overbearing police presence both inside the grounds of the Forum and around outside NGO activities. Despite this, the warmth and hospitality of the Turkish people were constantly referred to by NGO participants from different parts of the world, and Conference participants seemed favorably impressed by the facilities and supporting arrangements organized by the host country.

Whatever its impact in the different regions of the world in strengthening the work of NGOs and in defining their collective follow-up strategies for Habitat II, the Forum's impact upon local Turkish society is likely to be one of its most important and enduring legacies. One of the issues on the minds of NGO representatives as they left Istanbul concerned how to maintain their international cooperation in the absence of conference-led and induced international NGO Forums and opportunities now that the cycle of United Nations World Conferences has come to an end.

*Source: United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS).*



NGO participants taking a break on the grounds of the campus. © A. Kalsi/UNCHS



### NGOs: Stronger, Louder, Better Organized

by Felix Dodds



Women making themselves heard at an NGO Forum Event ©Wandia Seaforth

This was my second visit to Istanbul. The two visits were split by 20 years. In 1976 I spent a month on my way to Thailand. I have fond memories of the Pudding Shop, the Blue Mosque, the bazaar and other haunts of that era. This visit was to attend the United Nations Habitat II Conference. My experience in Rio at the Earth Summit told me that I was unlikely to see much of Istanbul, other than on the way from and to the airport.

What happened in Istanbul depends much on where your focus as an individual or organization was. The fact is there were many Istanbul Conferences happening at the same time. There was the official negotiations in Committee I, the days of presentations by different stakeholders in Committee II, the speeches in the Plenary, the Dialogues on different issues such as transport, water, economy and health in the Marmaris Hotel, the NGO Forum, the other stakeholder meetings and the Best Practices exhibition at the Docks. So one's perspective on Istanbul depended very much on what one's interest or role there was.

What certainly was true was that most of the Turkish people opened their arms to welcome their guests. There were problems with the police, so some NGO representatives found themselves arrested for demonstrating with Turkish people over domestic political issues. One of the memories I will take with me from Istanbul is the shop in the Hilton Hotel which sold

guns. A different form of souvenir, I guess!

The city preparations for the Conference were finished just about on time. In fact, the final few weeks before the Conference were very reminiscent of my, and I am sure many other readers', approach to end-of-term exams. No work until the last moment and then cram it in. Well two weeks before the Conference started most people were betting on this being the Conference that nearly happened. In the end the only thing that wasn't finished was the new underground.

Over 2,500 NGO representatives were accredited to the main Conference. Less than 10 per cent were actually involved in the negotiations for the Habitat II Agenda.

Writing a full analysis immediately after a conference has finished is always a dangerous thing to do! It is easier to wait a few months to be able to take a more critical review. But I will attempt to assess the impact of Istanbul.

Habitat II was after all about two main aims: adequate shelter for all and creating sustainable human settlements in an urbanizing world.

As the Secretary-General of the Conference, Wally N'Dow, said:

*"Habitat II is more than a conference. It is a recognition by the international community ... that time is running out ... that if we want to save the future, we have no choice other than to find answers today to one of the most*

*neglected and urgent problems of our time, one that goes to the very heart of our everyday lives how we live, where we live, and above all, if we live at all."*

The NGO input to both Committee I and Committee II were facilitated by the NGO International Facilitating Group (IFG). They also had overall responsibility for the NGO Forum.

NGOs were better organized than they had been for any of the recent United Nations Conferences. Perhaps they had learnt from the way women's caucuses had operated at previous Summits. NGOs put together a composite of their amendments by 24 April 1996 and sent it to all the key Governments before the Governments met to agree on their positions. This resulted in some very significant amendments finding their way into governmental positions and into the Habitat Agenda.

A real breakthrough for the NGOs was when the United Nations agreed to bring out the NGO Composite Text as an official United Nations document (A/Conf.165/INF/8). This was the first time NGO amendments had been given official recognition. In addition, they were allowed to take the floor and speak to their amendments from a microphone. This enabled Governments to listen and respond to NGO proposals.

If a Government sponsored an NGO amendment, the Conference was allowed to debate it.

The key players in the negotiations were the European Union, the United States of America, Canada, the Group of 77 (the group of developing countries now 134-strong) and China.

Within that block the African countries played a key role as they were worried about the future role of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements — one of the few United Nations bodies with headquarters in a developing country. The real story about international implementation and follow-up is tied to the United Nations General Assembly Committee on United Nations Reform. Countries which wanted to see the Centre closed and the Commission on Human Settlements downgraded to a Sub-Commission of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) reserved their arguments for another day.

*Felix Dodds is co-ordinator of the United Nations Environment and Development UK Committee. The above article is an extract from an article published in Urban Nature (September 1996). It is reproduced here with the author's permission.*



## Habitat II Dialogues for the 21st Century

The Habitat II series of thematic Dialogues promoted by UNCHS (Habitat) brought together eminent thinkers, public personalities, business leaders, practitioners and professionals to discuss and exchange ideas on trends for the future of human settlements with a wide audience. Each Dialogue was designed to capture attention and raise awareness on crucial issues which will affect how we shall live on an urbanized planet. Although it was a Habitat II parallel activity, it was linked to the Conference through the presentation of its findings to Committee II — the innovative "hearings committee" dealing with contributions of all partners.

The Dialogues were sponsored and organized by various United Nations agencies and by the private sector. The reports from the Dialogues were presented to the plenary and accepted as a non-binding document. Following are short summaries of each Dialogue and the conclusions they reached.

In **Dialogue 1: How Cities Will Look in the 21st Century** over 550 participants from all regions and continents spent a day examining trends in the development of cities and proposed means to generate equitable and environmentally-friendly cities for the future. Their discussion confirmed that most urban growth in the future would be in the developing countries and that the majority of that growing population would be poor. They further noted that the environmental systems of the cities were showing signs of stress. In the developing world this was more often a consequence of poverty and a lack of resources whilst in the developed world it was attributable to over-consumption. It was noted that these trends and the underlying competition for resources had to be reversed; otherwise they would lead to civil and international conflict.

The Dialogue stressed the need for reformulating the planning process to become more dynamic, innovative, multisectoral, multidisciplinary, responsive, strategic, realistic, and, above all, participatory from the beginning. The need to mobilize additional resources from all partners was emphasized.

Although the present urban situation presented a bleak picture, Dialogue participants believed that "future prospects of economic opportunities and advances in science and technology provide the world

community with a reasonable optimism to create a better quality of human habitat, and therefore, a better future for cities."

**Dialogue 2: Finance and Cities in the 21st Century** focused on how unprecedented urban development needs can be financed, particularly when urban finance itself is undergoing transformation. Financial markets have been liberalized and international financial flows have rapidly expanded in recent years. On the other hand, protected sources of funding for urban finance, such as directed credits, are dwindling. However, the Dialogue concluded, as many more cities are now

Dialogue concluded that there needs to be a major effort to educate financial institutions about the fact that banking on the poor could be a viable business. On the financial sector generally, the Dialogue stressed development and liberalization, stating that if domestic and foreign private capital was to be mobilized, laws establishing private rights, enforceability of contracts, clarity of roles between levels of government and between the public and private sector were required.

**Dialogue 3: Water for Thirsty Cities** noted that the increasing competition for limited water resources



*A boy quenching his thirst: Water resource management is critical. © United Nations*

participating in the newly-emerging global environment, they could tap into new sources of finance, such as market-based financing instruments.

The Dialogue noted that "as citizens gain more influence over the services that they receive (from local governments) and get better value for the taxes and user charges they pay, they typically become willing to pay a greater part of their costs." Participants strongly argued for the increased involvement of the private sector in infrastructure finance and management. They also recommended that the United Nations and other international bodies take the initiative to encourage and facilitate global partnerships among all stakeholders at different levels and that additional resources be mobilized from all partners.

Regarding the urban poor, the

between different users and uses, as well as between urban and rural settlements, may be a potential source of conflicts between nations. The Beijing Declaration, which came out of the International Conference on Managing Urban Water Resources held in Beijing in March 1996, was used as a background document for the Dialogue.

The Dialogue stressed the need for a more holistic and integrated approach towards water resource management and recommended that water councils or water parliaments with the participation of all actors (governments, municipalities, water basin authorities, the private sector, NGOs and communities) be created. The Dialogue further recommended that land use and water rights be regularized and that appropriate tariff structures which encourage conservation and discourage wastage be applied. Governments should

also adopt legal and other measures to control water pollution such as the "polluter pays principle".

**Dialogue 4: The Future of Urban Employment** brought a diversity of actors to debate and identify future strategies and actions for alleviating unemployment and poverty in a world that is undergoing profound changes resulting from economic globalization and technological development. Despite divergent viewpoints, it was agreed that unemployment will be one of the primary causes of urban crises in the future. Hence, the creation and protection of employment is the most direct and the most effective means of alleviating urban crises.

The Dialogue suggested that the right conditions for employment-oriented growth and productivity be created. At the same time, Governments need to take action to ameliorate the harsh consequences of competition and to improve equity for all segments of society that are presently excluded. To achieve these enormously difficult tasks, policies for employment growth and productivity would have to be pursued, and investments in re-training and labour-intensive technologies would be necessary.

**Dialogue 5: Transport in the Cities of Tomorrow** concentrated on identifying strategic instruments to create more sustainable transport conditions and on the policy context necessary for the best use of those instruments. The Dialogue noted that the imbalance between the rates of growth in demand for, and supply of, road space leads to increasing road congestion, increasing air pollution, noise and accidents and undesirable social impacts as the poor suffer disproportionately from the deterioration of public transport.

Participants suggested a number of strategic instruments that can be used to address these problems: land-use densification; cleaner technologies and fuels; improved public transport and; promotion of environmentally-friendly transport such as bicycling and walking. However, these instruments need an appropriate policy context. For instance, if these systems are not economically and financially sustainable, they will collapse. Above all, priorities must be established. One of the highest priorities set by the Dialogue was the elimination of lead from transport fuels, as advocated by the World Bank. Another priority was to reduce urban road deaths and injuries, particularly in developing countries.

**Dialogue 6: Land and Rural/Urban Linkages in the 21st**

**Century** explored the evolution of land policies and land management in human settlements of all sizes, in conjunction with the changing nature of urban/rural linkages in an urbanizing world. The Dialogue recognized the strong linkages between urban and rural development and the need for balanced development whereby rural populations benefit from the same economic and social development as that experienced by those living in urban areas.

There was consensus at the Dialogue that management of land was a key issue for the sustainable development of cities and of rural areas. Land was needed not only for production and shelter but also for social and economic functions. While fundamental aspects of land policy and strategic planning have to take place at national or sub-national levels of government, it was acknowledged that a large number of responsibilities can be decentralized to local and municipal levels. New and innovative planning and management tools and procedures need to be developed, particularly where informal land settlement is prevalent. To undertake these reforms, a new type of land management has to emerge.

The Dialogue suggested that a review of existing legislation and practices worldwide with regard to women's access to land be done and that laws protecting women's rights to land and property be enforced and monitored. The Dialogue further urged Governments to remember their responsibility to respect the right to housing, including access to land as expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the General Assembly in 1948.

**Dialogue 7: Sustainable Energy in Human Settlements** noted that while industrialized countries need to urgently develop and deploy cleaner, more efficient technologies and appliances, developing countries — which have much lower per capita energy use — need to harness new, efficient energy sources to meet growing energy demands. The Dialogue concluded that while access to sustainable energy services is a basic right for everyone, energy is often produced, distributed and used in ways which are harmful and unsustainable. Participants suggested that viable technologies to improve energy efficiency and to harness renewable energy sources be promoted everywhere. However, removing barriers to meeting energy expectations without harming human health or the environment is not only a technological issue; it is a question of political will, based on awareness and consent.

The three most important messages of the Dialogue were: integrated energy planning should not be an afterthought but a priority for local authorities when initiating any form of development; successful implementation of clean, energy-efficient systems depends on the involvement of citizens and business with all parties treated as valuable, contributing partners; and sustainable energy is the cornerstone of sustainable communities.

**Dialogue 8: Democracy and Citizenship in the City of the 21st Century** explored the issue of how democracy can be consolidated to promote solidarity among citizens and to shape a new social contract. The Dialogue noted that solidarity is not simply a feature of democracy; it is a constituent element of its long-term existence. It further noted that citizenship can only be fully exercised in a city that has been "humanized", i.e. where all inhabitants are free to enjoy liberty and creativity without the fear of violence.

Participants stressed the rights of young people and women in the struggle for equality and for building the democratic city of the 21st century. They emphasized the need for public space which allows people the pleasures of urban life. The Dialogue noted that the right to housing and the right to the city are prerequisites for citizenship and urged that public/private/citizen partnerships be forged to promote civic culture.

**Dialogue 9: Cities, Communications and the Media in the Information Society** looked at how exponential growth and development in the telecommunications industry had led to the liberalization and deregulation of communications policies around the globe. Because the telecommunications industry is currently being managed by developed countries and business, there is fear among people from developing countries that they will be left out of the process used to set communications policy and will be negatively affected by the changes it brings to their societies. The Dialogue concluded that the power of technology and the information revolution had the potential to increase democracy and equality around the world and that this power should be used to promote peace and civility. Participants stressed that the key premise to universal access to information is for nations to make it a basic human right.

The Dialogue recommended that the United Nations play a leadership role in the establishment of a Web site to facilitate broad access to legal instruments pertaining to telecommunications and mass





media. The United Nations should also help to institutionalize the concept of sharing "best practices" and should foster the development of information standards and formats to enhance global access to information. The Dialogue concluded that "there is a moral obligation on the part of the United Nations, national and local government, corporations and those organizations with power, to ensure that the technological capacity for two-way communications empowers those whose voices are marginalized through the absence of power."



**Dialogue 10: Creating Healthy Cities in the 21st Century** agreed that "there is no development without health" and that health is integral to city management. The Dialogue noted that much needs to be done to improve urban health, especially among low-income groups and vulnerable groups such as women, children, the elderly and the disabled. It stressed the very high returns that can be achieved from appropriate health investments, not only in improved health but also in economic and health costs avoided. It noted that rapid environmental changes, including those associated with urbanization, lay behind the emergence or re-emergence of diseases and the spread of infectious diseases.

The Dialogue recommended that health become a part of the culture of every city, not only among health professionals but among employers, municipal agencies, NGOs, and community organizations. It recommended that Governments and international agencies re-allocate resources to health, especially for countries and cities with the weakest economies.

*Summarized by Rasna Warah, Editor and Information Officer, UNCHS (Habitat).*

## Best Practices Take Centre Stage at Istanbul

While international conferences usually focus on problems, Habitat II broke new ground by also highlighting solutions. Through a specially-convened award ceremony and an enormous exhibition, the concept of Best Practices was brought to centre stage in Istanbul.

As partnerships between central and local governments, NGOs/CBOs, the private sector, professional and labour organizations that have resulted in tangible and sustainable initiatives, Best Practices provide inspiration and solutions to some of the most pressing challenges facing our urbanizing world. Twelve such initiatives received Awards for Excellence in Improving the Living Environment at a special award ceremony, convened in plenary, on 4 June 1996.

Describing the award ceremony as "one of the most important events at Habitat II," United Nations Secretary-General, Dr. Boutros-Boutros Ghali, emphasized the innovation inherent in Best Practices. "All twelve share one common feature, whether they be from developed or developing countries. They represent change: change in the way we define problems and search for solutions in true partnerships between civil society and public and private enterprise; change in attitudes and behaviour; change in governance and management systems. They represent the spirit of invention, innovation, courage and commitment."

It was also announced during plenary that a second call for best practices would be made, with a second award ceremony to coincide with World Habitat Day celebrations in October 1998.

This year's recipients, as well as many other deserving initiatives, were on display at the Best Practices and United Nations Habitat Exhibition. The largest single-theme exhibition in United Nations history, the exhibition demonstrated the commitment of the full range of actors to the concept of sharing and exchanging experiences. From the smallest two-metre NGO photo display, to national and regional exhibitions, the displays focused attention not only on the immediate concerns of human-settlements issues, but also gave voice to the social and cultural expression of entire communities. The exhibition space also served as an important meeting and networking arena,

connected to the outside world through an ongoing conference on the Internet.

The enthusiasm and imagination evident at Habitat II has helped secure the continuation of the Best Practices Initiative as a permanent programme of UNCHS (Habitat). Conceived as a "virtual institute", the Best Practices and Local Leadership Programme (BLP) will be a global network of regional and thematic resource centres, each sharing its own particular area or field of expertise with the other members of the Programme and with the world at large. The core of the BLP will be the Best Practices database. With a search engine capable of accessing any of several hundred initiatives contained on it, this database represents a valuable tool for government officials, policy-makers and academics seeking tested solutions to problems which may well be similar to their own.

Some immediate applications of the database are to be found in local leadership development and capacity-building. Trainers, capacity-building institutions and policy advisors could use the database to respond to demand for case-study material on various issue areas, problems and solutions. Real-world experience can be easily identified and brought into the learning process by inviting those directly involved in best and good practices to share their experiences with others. More advanced applications could include organized study tours and staff exchanges.

Presently, the BLP is preparing a revised version of the submission guidelines in anticipation of the second call for submissions. Many lessons were learned from the initial round and these will be incorporated into future guidelines, selection processes and the next edition of the database. The constantly evolving and improving nature of the database will ensure that it remains a timely and user-friendly source of information on sustainable human settlement development.

The search for inspiration, lessons and solutions will continue. As Chattanooga, USA, Councilman David Crockett declared in Istanbul, "In every city there is a best practice. You just have to find it."

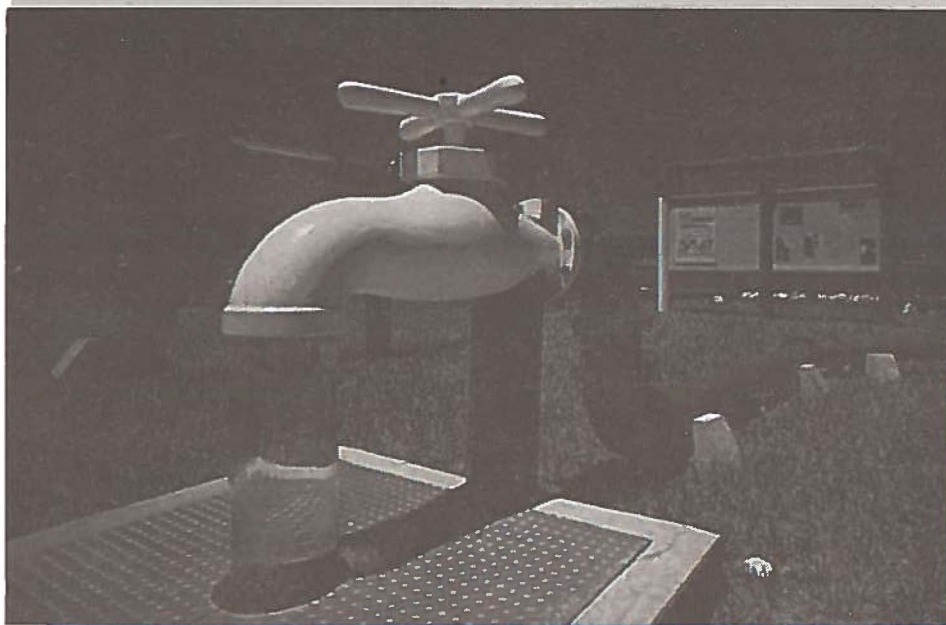
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### THE 12 BEST PRACTICE AWARD WINNERS

1. Project on Sites and Services for Family Groups with Low-Income Living in the North of Gran, Buenos Aires, Argentina
2. Integration Council in the Favelas' Rehabilitation Process, Fortaleza, Brazil
3. Metro Toronto's Changing Communities: Innovative Responses, Metro Toronto, Canada
4. Post-Calamity Reconstruction of Anhui Province's Rural Areas, China
5. Successful Institutionalization of Community-based Development in the Commune of Adjame, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire
6. A Women's Self-help Organization for Poverty Alleviation in India: The SEWA Bank, India
7. Shelter Upgrading, Agadir, Morocco
8. City Management in Tilburg, The Netherlands
9. Local Initiative Programme: Community Planning Process and City/Neighbourhood Partnership in Lublin, Poland
10. Community Information Resource Centre (CIRC), Alexandra, South Africa
11. City of Chattanooga, Tennessee, USA
12. "Don't Move, Improve", Community-owned-and-governed Urban Revitalization Project, South Bronx, New York City, USA

*Each of the next five issues of Habitat Debate will feature two of the Award-winning Initiatives. The full database is available through the Best Practices Internet Web site:  
<http://www.bestpractices.org>  
on CD-ROM and on computer diskettes.*

### Chattanooga, USA: A Living Laboratory for Sustainable Development



*An out-door museum on the present and future phases of the Tennessee Riverwalk.*

In 1969, Chattanooga was declared the "worst polluted city" in the United States. By 1990, however, the mid-sized city on the banks of the Tennessee River was recognized by the United States Environmental Protection Agency as one of the nation's best turn-around stories.

Chattanooga's initial success was only the first chapter in a story that is still being written. Cleaning the air served to galvanize the community behind a broader vision to become an "Environmental City" where environmental protection is integrated with economic development. Numerous collaborative efforts between manufacturers, government agencies, and citizens have generated the capital resources, the political commitment and the civic momentum to tackle complex issues such as affordable housing, transportation alternatives such as electric buses, recycling and job-training initiatives, river-front development and neighbourhood revitalization.

City Councilman David Crockett is one of the most outspoken champions of the new Chattanooga. Describing Chattanooga as a "living laboratory", Crockett explains that "People come to Chattanooga to see a river being cleaned up, to ride an electric bus, to visit a neighbourhood that is coming back to life."

Crockett is also an ardent proponent of sustainable development, a concept he describes as ensuring that "the prosperity of one generation builds on the prosperity of the last so that each successive generation adds to the prosperity of the last without compromising anyone's future."

The need for sustainable development, Crockett feels, is applicable to all nations, both developed and developing. "We can identify with just about every issue facing a developing country," he states.

"Short-term economic success is important for any country," he observes. "There is tremendous pressure to produce jobs, to produce growth and to produce them now. Chattanooga's experience says [that] if we do this without regard for the environment, the natural resource base and the community, we will have temporary economic prosperity followed by a period where we will need to reinvest perhaps more than we initially gained to rehabilitate our cities."

"Developing countries," he adds, "have the advantage of seeing how something worked before and how it didn't work. They have the opportunity to leapfrog, to not repeat the mistakes of the industrialized nations, mistakes which will cost these countries millions of dollars to fix."





## Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire: "The people have to participate"

In Adjame, a municipality of Côte d'Ivoire's capital of Abidjan, shrinking budgets and growing popular discontent with the quality of local service delivery coalesced to create an innovative form of community-based organization, Neighbourhood Development Committees, commonly known as CDQs.

Explains Coulibaly Seydou, Permanent Secretary to Adjame's CDQs, "People always said that the municipality was responsible for the failure of past projects: for the failure of waste management; for the failure of health care; for the failure of security. The municipality wanted people to agree on what to do and how to do it."

When the municipal budget was slashed in the wake of structural adjustment programmes, Adjame established a network of 19 CDQs to help provide basic services.

The CDQs have emerged as the focal points for new development initiatives in Adjame's neighbourhoods. "The CDQs respond to the aspirations of the people," states CDQ communication officer Diabate Zoumana. "They respond to the problems of the community. Each neighbourhood has its own specific needs and each neighbourhood goes to the municipality with its specific needs. The municipality and the CDQ get together, agree on a solution and implement it together."

Adjame adopted a strategy that is flexible enough to respond to a variety of service requests ranging from health-care to street sweeping, yet is firmly committed to ensuring that each project become self-sustaining as quickly as possible. In some cases, control of income-generating assets were assigned to a CDQ, which in turn leased the asset to an entrepreneur. The asset is then run as a business with the CDQ using the surplus revenue to fund other local initiatives.

"For example," explains Seydou, "In Adjame we have a sports stadium that needed repair. The entrepreneur rebuilt the stadium, with shops on the lower floor. But he also had to finance the construction of a health centre in the building." Granted a 10-year lease by the municipality, the CDQ not only

receives the monthly rent, but the stadium also reverts to the CDQ's control once the lease expires.

In the meantime, the CDQ uses the money to fund other less lucrative projects such as garbage collection. Even here, however, the principle of self-sufficiency is strictly adhered to. Initially, explains Seydou, "the municipality provided the brooms and the shovels, the uniforms, and three months' salary. After that, the people were responsible." "The people have to participate in the upgrading of their community, and they must participate financially also." In

many cases, the CDQs are able to mobilize up to 30 per cent of infrastructure project costs.

The reason? It is their project. The people decide on what service they need, they approach the government as a community, they obtain the government's approval and some start-up financing, and, they provide the labour. In essence, the community takes responsibility for the success of its project.

States Seydou, "The people have become more responsible for their community's destiny. They have realized they are responsible for the development, or underdevelopment, of their community because they are involved in all the projects of the municipality."



Poor service delivery in African cities has led to innovative self-help solutions such as the hand-cart above.

# Experiences Gained in Committee II of the Habitat II Conference

## Partners' "Hearings" Set Precedent for Future United Nations Deliberations

by Martti Lujanen

The Committee II experience was remarkable for more than one reason. As the United Nations is an inter-governmental organization, it has traditionally relied on Governments to take care of problems: in earlier conferences the significance of other partners was not ignored, but neither was it underlined. Habitat II, and especially Committee II, turned a new page in the history of United Nations conferences, with its recognition of the role and potential of partnership in implementing the Habitat Agenda and solving the major problems facing human settlements all over the world.

Habitat II was the first United Nations conference where the full spectrum of partners could voice their concerns and engage directly in a dialogue with the delegates. In Habitat II, the partners involved were also more numerous than at earlier United Nations conferences. For the first time, they could set the agenda and have the floor first in front of the delegations. After their introductory statements, the floor was open to discussion. Another major difference was that previously the local authorities acted as a part of the NGOs, whereas in Habitat II they acted as a distinct partner.

Committee II heard presentations by all major partner groups — parliamentarians, local authorities, NGOs, the private sector and foundations, trade unions, the scientific community, professionals and researchers, as well as United Nations agencies. The Committee also heard the outcome of the 10 thematic dialogues that took place during the Conference.

In the presentations, the partners described the results of their preparatory process and forums. They stated their commitments and described the actions they intend to undertake in order to contribute to the implementation of the Habitat Agenda, and identified the constraints that need to be overcome for them to be able to do so. The Committee not only heard presentations, it also allowed a real dialogue between the delegations and the partners, with interventions that skillfully covered the

issues central to each partner. All participants were able to ask questions on matters of special interest to them, and differing views were tolerated in the discussions. This open dialogue was a major addition to earlier conference procedures.

The following brief outline gives some examples of the outcome of individual hearings.

The representatives of local authorities stated their determination to institutionalize their coordination mechanisms, established in preparation for the Habitat II Conference. This means that the existing international local authorities' and cities' associations will join forces to be able to speak with one voice. They will also continue their efforts in pursuing the goal of a global charter for local self-government.

Private-sector representatives pointed out that it is very much in the interest of business that cities and the basic infrastructure are well managed since this ensures better operating and competitive conditions for them. For example, the representative of the Business Forum said that it was impossible to do business in cities that are broken down. One major outcome of the Business Forum was the endorsement of the concept of Industrial Agenda 21, inspired by the experiences gained from Local Agenda 21s.

The Foundations' hearing showed that even if foundations are very different in nature, they are highly relevant in many countries because they operate in many fields which directly concern the development of human settlements.

The Parliamentarians' hearing showed that even though there is a lot of international cooperation between parliamentarians from different countries, there is still a lack of substantial cooperation in the field of human settlements. For example, it would be useful for parliamentarians to know more about legislation on housing in other countries.

The importance of trade unions in implementing the Habitat Agenda was unanimously recognized. The Habitat process was seen to be relevant for the well-being of the workers. The potential of

the construction industry, which is a major stimulus for economic growth and employment, was emphasized.

The presentations by different United Nations agencies were heard in thematic clusters, which proved that there is already a lot of cooperation between agencies operating in the same or similar fields. However, more cooperation could still be achieved to make the best possible use of resources.

In the NGOs' hearing, the question of representativeness was raised. It was pointed out that no NGO can speak for all, and that there is a real diversity of opinions and interests in the NGO field — this being their real strength. The joining of forces by forming caucuses — i.e. of women and youth — has proved useful. The NGOs often represent the best expertise in different fields of human settlements development.

The experiences gained in Committee II were positive and encouraging, not only because of the spirit of cooperation and enthusiasm expressed by the partners, but also because the Governments showed their readiness and willingness for an open dialogue with the different partners. The new method was thus welcomed by all. The Committee II experience ushers in a new era of cooperation between all components of civil society, setting a new and high standard for civil-society participation. This kind of cooperation will, without doubt, continue in future United Nations procedures.

*Martti Lujanen was the Chairperson of Committee II at the Habitat II Conference in Istanbul.*





## The Committee II Process

by Shekou M. Sesay

The Committee II Hearings were a proactive innovation of the Conference that allowed parliamentarians, local authorities and other non-governmental partners — non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector, foundations, scientists, professionals, researchers and eminent personalities — to inform the Conference of their statement of mission and strategy regarding their visions of human settlements, including the implementation of the Habitat Agenda. The decision satisfied the felt need to hear the voice of civil society in a specially-created committee focusing on the role of partners in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda. This process was seen as a logical sequence in that these stakeholders, who had been very active in the preparatory activities of the Conference, or "the Road to Istanbul", were now involved fully in the Conference itself.

The various partners were requested to prepare and present a concise synthesis of their visions of the two themes of the Habitat II Conference. These presentations were taken to Committee II, in the form of "Hearings". They were also asked to state their commitments to, and implementation strategy for, the Habitat Agenda, including the constraints which should be removed by Governments, in order to make participation of all partners holistic and beneficial to the Agenda.

Each presentation by a partner was followed by a robust dialogue between the partner and the delegates in Committee II. Delegates discussed the visions and strategies for implementation of the partners and this process produced the material that was used to prepare, on a daily basis, the Chairperson's summaries of the proceedings. These summaries were not made a subject of negotiation in Committee II for formal adoption. They were, however, informally circulated to delegates and the concerned partners, for review before finalization. This way, some consensus was achieved among protagonists regarding the contents of the summaries.

The several partners' submissions were treated in a similar manner except for the United Nations system presentations, which did not involve the formal submission of written statements. These involved verbal presentations of their statements of mission and strategies

regarding the implementation of the Habitat Agenda.

The chairpersons' summaries and written submissions, as annexes, that is, the written submissions of the various partners, were tabled in Plenary and adopted as part of the Habitat II Conference Report. This represents a major innovation at a United Nations Conference.

It is now of critical importance to build upon the innovative break-through of bringing in partners and establishing partnership as a principle for the implementation of the Habitat Agenda. It would, for instance, be advisable for the Commission on Human Settlements, in its review of its work as required by the Conference, to integrate the partners (local authorities, NGOs and the private sector) in the work of the Commission. The immediate challenge is to structure innovative modalities that will engage the energies, resources and goodwill of these partners, as well as parliamentarians, in the vigorous implementation of the Habitat Agenda, at the national, regional and global levels.

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Dr. N'Dow samples a "Building Partnerships" T-shirt, presented to him by a group of NGOs at Istanbul.  
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### How the Media Viewed Habitat II

Most of the ingredients for a major public relations headache appeared to be there: critics continued to cast aspersions at the United Nations for its allegedly "extravagant" conferences amid well-publicized financial woes of the Organization; ideological disagreements persisted, "bracketing" sizeable portions of the draft final document; and sundry tangential controversies and sensations surfaced regularly to lure the media's attention away from progress on substantive issues. Yet, on the whole, Habitat II seemed to have weathered Istanbul's media storms surprisingly well, although the coverage was not without its share of sensationalism, controversy-mongering and carping.

Among many promising signs of the Habitat II coverage, a discernible turning back of the "UN summit-slamming" tide seemed to be the most positive result. Widely reported as the "last" in a series of United Nations "mega-conferences" of the twentieth century, Habitat II prompted the media to look beyond the specific problems of mass urbanization and to try to view the issues of human settlements in the broader context of the gains and goals of the preceding UN conferences. The theme of the United Nations at work as a global consensus-builder and agenda-setter thus became a prominent motif in the press coverage, helping to set the record straight on some of the rote criticisms of the United Nations being "summitted out" and to highlight the multiple benefits of the exercise.

#### UN Conference Defined as Key to the Fulfillment of UN Mandate

"Boutros-Ghali stresses need for UN conferences; opens HABITAT II with a bang", pronounced a headline in *The Washington Times*, leading off its story with an account of the UN leader's spirited defence of UN conferences as a mechanism central to the work of the Organization.

The Washington daily was far from alone in taking note of the UN Secretary-General's advocacy of conferences as essential to the fulfillment of the Organization's mandate and his vision of development as a cooperative venture pushed forward with the help of a cycle of summits, action programmes and agendas. The message was obviously not lost on the media. As a result an emphasis on the broader implications of the summit resurfaced, directly or indirectly, in

numerous news reports, analyses and commentaries devoted to the Conference. The Secretary-General's inaugural address in Istanbul and his speech at the high-level segment of the Conference made big headlines around the world and were widely quoted and excerpted.

By meeting head-on the criticisms of such "mammoth conferences" as too expensive and ineffective, the Secretary-General helped to define the terms of the debate and to inform it with a set of cogent arguments which were promptly picked up by reporters and commentators covering the summit.

Significantly, the idea of UN conferences as a useful exercise received an enthusiastic thumbs-up from the editorial board of *The Times of London*. In "Towards a habitable habitat", the paper stressed that the United Nations was most effective when it operated by persuasion and consensus. Moreover, the British daily observed that among the United Nations' "most durable achievements" in the past had been its conferences on the themes that "lie at the heart of global order: the environment, human rights, population, poverty and the position of women".

With the United Nations turning its attention to housing, *The Times* wrote that Habitat II promised to be "as contentious and as productive as Rio or Cairo". However, the paper was not troubled by the inevitability of arguments, differences and disagreements, believing that they should be aired even if they could not be resolved. The world was not looking for "a packaged UN declaration", it argued, in an apparent challenge to the No-Practical-Results school of United Nations detractors. Instead, stressed the daily, the world sought fresh ideas on how cities could remain habitable, safe and dynamic in the future.

An op-ed piece in *The Buenos Aires Herald* also drew attention to the Secretary-General's words that United Nations conferences were crucial for the future life on our planet. As for US Republican Senator Jesse Helms' attacks on such assemblies, the article quoted Melinda Kimble, US Deputy Secretary of State for Global Affairs, who argued that United Nations conferences were not a waste of time, and concluded with activist Bella Abzug's comment that Mr. Helms simply did not like the issues addressed by the various United Nations conferences. Meanwhile, *The Washington Times* noted that very little of the criticism levelled at

the United Nations by the likes of Senator Helms was heard from the delegates who had followed the United Nations leader to the podium to lay out their agendas for Habitat. For its part, the Italian daily *L'Unita* argued that although the final declarations adopted at United Nations summits often happened to be "banal", United Nations conferences gave thousands of institutions and political parties a stimulus for change.

As in many countries, media coverage of Habitat II in Brazil intensified in the 18 months preceding the Istanbul Conference, with mention of events both in the country itself and internationally. At Istanbul the prestigious daily *O Estado São Paulo* took the lead in covering the Conference, while all newspapers sent reporters and sometimes published two or three pages with photos each day. Here again, coverage ranged from international items to those of national and local interest.

With the majority of headlines and leads portraying Habitat II — and thus "the United Nations" — as trying to address crucial global problems the coverage managed to convey an overall impression of a "useful" gathering concerned with real issues. "Boutros-Ghali opens city summit in Istanbul — urban crises affect everybody", declared the Portuguese *Diário de Notícias*; "Urban woes infectious, United Nations leader warns meet", added Bangkok's *The Nation*; "UN conference warns of looming water shortages", proclaimed a headline in *The Mainchi Daily News*; "The UN HABITAT II Conference must tackle overpopulation", chimed in *The Christian Science Monitor*. *The European* highlighted the United Nations leader's comment that national borders could no longer block the troubles bred in one country's inner-city slums, and quoted him as saying that the crises of urban development were crises of all States — rich and poor.

Positive references to the goings-on at the Conference cropped up frequently in the text of news reports and analyses, with some papers sounding almost surprised that something interesting could indeed happen at such gatherings. *The Independent*, for instance, wrote that while the British as a rule did not think much about cities, there was, by contrast, "big and exciting talk" about the urban future in Istanbul.

Many papers stressed the relevance of Habitat II's agenda for their countries' needs. Typically, *Kompas* argued editorially that for Indonesia the spirit of Habitat II was very pertinent since the Conference







businesslike and sober in their hopes of what could be achieved". For the first time, experienced city mayors played a more prominent role in discussions than national government officials, observed the paper. It also quoted the Republican Mayor of Columbus, Ohio, a member of the US delegation, who welcomed the United Nations decision to hold a conference that brought together mayors, academics and business people, and stressed that there were many things the participants could talk about and learn from one another.

The *Washington Post*, too, drew attention to the fact that the Istanbul gathering was "markedly different from its predecessors", giving prominence to private, local and non-governmental organizations. The paper pointed out that the emphasis on local government and the private sector was reflected by the presence of a number of mayors in the US delegation.

Similarly, in "UN plans for world of the megacity", the *London Times* reported that for the first time the Conference laid less emphasis on State intervention and urged Governments to form partnerships with the private sector. "Private sector key to tackling urbanization problems", proclaimed a headline in The *Financial Times* over an article previewing the Conference and its agenda in a very neutral and businesslike fashion. For its part, *Tokyo Shimbun* underscored that Habitat II was characterized by the wide participation of NGOs from all over the world. *Asahi Shimbun* agreed, underscoring that for the first time in UN history, NGOs were received as partners. The *Bangkok Post*, too, saluted the fact that grass-roots activists and mayors were sitting alongside official Government delegations, instead of standing outside lobbying.

Among other notable features, the release on the eve of Habitat II of the United Nations report on the State of the World Population and the accompanying statement by Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali received wide and overwhelmingly positive publicity. Reporting that Boutros-Ghali was calling for efforts to control the inevitable march of the city, The *Independent* noted that the United Nations was pushing for the development of a number of manageable, medium-sized cities rather than a few, uncontrollable super-cities.

The question of "good examples" received wide play, with many papers running stories about, including special features on, some of the selected examples. Characteristically, The *Christian Science Monitor* reported that perhaps

the chief innovation to come out of the Conference was a kind of "greatest hits" list of urban planning. The paper quoted an American expert who praised the effort as "a very fine way of coming at the problem of making cities more liveable".

From a public information point of view, the Conference performed another important task by prompting the press to run scores of materials — background articles, analyses, statistical charts, tables, etc. — thus bringing into the public domain a wealth of information that otherwise might have remained limited to specialized publications.

Some of this information was striking enough to make its way into headlines, news-story leads or commentators' columns. A good deal of it sounded like prime material for a *Guinness Book of World Records* or *Harper's Index*. And almost invariably, the "United Nations" was cited as the "source" of this fascinating data. "For the first time in human history there soon will be more of us living in cities than in rural areas, the United Nations says in a report on global population trends", read the lead paragraph in a *Toronto Globe & Mail* news story. "UN sees huge urban growth", announced The *International Herald Tribune*.

The *New York Times* news story mentioned earlier was a good case in point: a data-filled chart, "The turn to an urban world", pointed to the United Nations as the "source"; meanwhile, sprinkled throughout the text were attention-grabbing facts and figures, such as "UN projections" that the New York metropolitan area, the world's largest in 1950, would drop to eleventh place by 2015.

A story in The *Washington Times*, "Rapid urbanization a global concern", was similarly enthused about the figures reported by the United Nations Population Fund: while it took 123 years for world population to increase from 1 billion to 2 billion, succeeding billions took 33 years, 14 years and 13 years respectively, to reach the level of 5 billion in 1987.

All of this seems to point to a potentially very promising direction in United Nations image-enhancing efforts: the theme of the United Nations as the source — a repository of valuable scientific information and scholarly projections — can become a vital component of various United Nations public information and media outreach projects.

## Much Wrangling and Sniping, but no Megacrisis at Megacities Summit

Although predominantly favourable

in its general tone, the coverage was not without negative overtones. An op-ed piece in The *Washington Times* described the Conference as "the United Nations latest instalment in its ongoing series of international shindigs in exotic locales". The *European* wrote that critics who saw the Conference as "the biggest UN circus to date" warned that there remained a real danger that the key message would be lost in the mountains of documents and arguments and millions of words produced by so many interest groups gathered together in one place at one time. A *London Times* news item led off by asserting that "the only real fun at international jamborees is found in the unofficial bit", and scattered throughout the text were a few references to "the UN circus" and "sybaritic-sounding outings".

That kind of language, however, appeared to be an infrequent exception rather than an iron-clad rule. The main thrust of a majority of reports tended to focus on substantive issues addressed at the meeting, leaving negative aspects in the background.

Even in criticism there appeared to be a growing understanding and appreciation of the difficult tasks facing the Organization. The German *Allgemeine Zeitung*, for example, stressed that while UN reports and analyses presented a clear diagnosis of the increasing problems of urbanization, the international community seemed to lack the essential enthusiasm to tackle those problems with determination. Similarly, *NRC Handelsblatt* noted a curious dilemma "the developing countries versus the developed over funding. NGOs versus Governments on the question of human rights". The paper complained that these conflicts had gained more than their share of the limelight and eclipsed the real problem because in part they were being played up by "news-hungry media which thrive on disputes". In Spain, *El Mundo* and *Vanguardia* also expressed concern that the differences of opinion among countries might endanger the results of the meeting as a whole.

The controversy surrounding the question of shelter as a human right produced big headlines and numerous stories, many of which stressed that the issue had been viewed as potentially so embarrassing for the US Government that Washington had decided not to send Vice-President Al Gore as it had originally intended. Reports highlighted the difference in the position between the United States and its European allies, and noted that Washington's proposed language of "adequate shelter for all" was criticized by UN representatives and





NGOs as an attack against a basic human right. Meanwhile reflecting some of the acrimony accompanying the debate, the Venezuelan *El Mundo* editorialized that the idea to declare housing as a universal right was "utopian and demagogical" since it was unthinkable for any State to fully support housing for each poor family.

In coverage of the conclusion of the Conference, the press made it a point to underscore that the fireworks at the closing ceremonies had been preceded by far less festive fireworks at the negotiating table over the text of the final documents. Unavoidably, last-minute debates over such seemingly distant issues as the Middle East and reproductive rights gave the press ample material to write about "hours of bickering", "down-to-the-wire haggling" and "linguistic nitpicking".

On balance, however, the positive outlook appeared to have prevailed. As *The Washington Times* noted, the Istanbul Conference might have indeed "never achieved the high profile of previous UN gatherings, and attracted relatively fewer leaders", but at the same time it had attracted much less wholesale bashing and mechanical ridiculing than some of its predecessors. And it generated an impressive volume of balanced and interested coverage that focused on substantive issues and depicted the United Nations and its various agencies grappling with vital global issues.

Most importantly, Habitat II appeared to have stemmed — and perhaps even reversed — the trend of unqualified media attacks on the idea and practice of United Nations conferences. In a rather telling example, an article in the *Independent on Sunday*, assessing the results of Habitat II in the context of "conference fatigue", stressed that previous conferences had produced "impressive results" and that there had been "remarkable progress" in achieving specific goals. The paper emphasized that the conferences forced Governments to focus their attention on long-term issues, and it cited the Secretary-General's view that they were the most effective way the United Nations had yet found of engaging public opinion behind the "decades of hard work" needed to bring solutions.

## The Fourth Estate: Who Needs Controversy?

by Rasna Warah

When the media team at UNCHS (Habitat) began preparing for the Habitat II Conference early last year, it became acutely aware of the fact that, unlike the Cairo and Beijing Conferences, Habitat II lacked controversy. We suspected that the issues addressed by Habitat II were so mundane that the media would just tune out, or worse still, not attend. After all, what is so exciting or controversial about water supply, transportation and sanitation? This worried us because, as we all know, controversy is the bread-and-butter of journalists.

Conversely, we realized that lack of controversy could also mean that journalists would focus more on the issues of the Conference i.e. shelter and urbanization. We therefore, began a targeted information campaign to bring critical issues to the attention of media around the world.

This strategy paid off. We were pleased to see that not only did the Conference receive unprecedented and unexpected media coverage (some 3000 journalists attended the Conference) but that the journalists who were there were genuinely interested in the issues as well. Major news agencies such as Reuters and Agence France Presse (AFP) brought the issue of urbanization centrestage as did major broadcasting stations such as CNN and BBC, both of which carried special programmes on the Conference and on the issues. The Turkish media was not only well-informed about the issues, but devoted whole pages to the Conference. In addition, dedicated reporters from five news agencies worked night and day to put out daily Conference newspapers every morning. These newspapers — the *City Summit A-Gender* by the African Women and Child Feature Service, *Habitat Watch* by the Women's Feature Service, *Terra Viva* by the Inter Press Service (IPS), *Vivre Autrement* and *Earth Times* by their respective teams — were often the main source of information for many delegates who could not attend the many parallel events.

This is not to say that the Conference lacked excitement. Fidel Castro's arrival, for example, led to a flutter of activity not only among the journalists but among the delegates as well, who tripped over themselves to catch a glimpse of the man who has become a legend in his own lifetime. Journalists were not so lucky: Energised by Castro's presence, I decided to join a group of journalists in a stake-out at the hotel where he was staying, only to learn that he had slipped out through a back door!

Then there were other unexpected events which caught the journalists' attention, such as the disbanding of the Alternative NGO Forum — a Forum of Turkish NGOs who chose not to associate themselves with Habitat II. And of course, the inevitable protest marches which always take place at UN Conferences.

Although we anticipated that the issue of housing rights would be the cause of much debate and negotiation (and hence, controversy) at Istanbul, we didn't quite expect the issue to be resolved as quickly and as smoothly as it did. To the relief of housing rights activists, a breakthrough came about at the end of the first week of the Conference with consensus agreement on text. The compromise language commits Governments to "the full and progressive realization of the right to adequate housing as provided for in international instruments".

What took us completely by surprise was the lack of quorum on an issue we thought was marginal to the general discussion — reproductive health care. A package deal finally emerged in the final hours of the Conference. In language which is consistent with the International Conference on Population and Development, the Global Plan of Action calls for programmes to ensure universal access for women to affordable health care "including those related to reproductive health care, which includes family planning and sexual health".

Istanbul — the city — also caught the imagination of several journalists who, no doubt, spent several nights sampling the many delights this lively city has to offer. With history breathing through its every crevice, and the sounds of Turkish pop music, traffic and *muezzins'* calls to prayer creating a perfectly harmonious mix, who could resist venturing out?

Of course, I had no time for that. I was too busy at the Media Centre answering die-hard journalists' queries such as, "Are you ABSOLUTELY SURE that Hillary Clinton is not coming?" and "UNCHS Who?". Let's hope they know now.

Rasna Warah was Editor of the Habitat II publication *Countdown to Istanbul* and is Guest Editor of this issue of *Habitat Debate*.

Source: News Distribution Section/United Nations Department of Public Information (DPI), New York.



### National Reports and National Plans of Action: A Regional Perspective

National Reports and National Plans of Action constituted the main contribution of the Habitat II process at the national level. The response at the national level was overwhelmingly positive. Most of the 124 national reports received by the Habitat II Secretariat were prepared involving a large spectrum of actors, grouped together in national preparatory committees or coordinating bodies. As part of the consultative process, many workshops, seminars and meetings took place worldwide at the local, provincial, national, sub-regional and regional levels. Many of the national reports reflect the diversity and richness of these consultations. At the national level, the main follow-up activity to Habitat II will be Plans of Action.

Urbanization rates in the region vary from less than 10 per cent to 60 per cent.

During the 1980s, the deterioration of the urban environment could be explained by poor economic growth, rapid urban growth, poor local revenue collection, rural bias in government priorities, and a poor system of urban governance which ignored the action and potential participation of civil society.

Most countries propose to reduce the gap between the formal sector which provides expensive credit, conventional employment and serviced land to high-income groups, and the so-called informal sector which incorporates more than 50 per cent of urban populations in terms of employment and provides low-standard services to the majority. Reviews of legal frameworks, as well as specific support

developed.

The development of a balanced urban network is pointed out as an essential factor for rural development and in terms of providing services to rural communities.

Formal housing-finance institutions have often failed to address the needs of the majority, and housing is mainly financed through individual and informal strategies. Financial proposals include the improvement of tax recovery for infrastructure and services and for housing, creation of secondary mortgage markets, development of savings and loans through the commercial banking system or through a housing bank, and developing and supporting housing cooperatives.

Local partnerships with the private sector (formal and informal) and with communities are considered essential to the improvement of access to basic services. Most reports consider the effective management of human settlements as dependent upon the efficiency of local authorities. Several governments propose to increase the autonomy of local authorities and to reinforce their financial and human-resource base. Many proposals deal with reducing mismanagement by local authorities to improve transparency and accountability both to central governments and to the public. More attention will be given to social and economic processes than to spatial and physical issues which have traditionally been given priority in development planning.

Some reports point out civic participation, democracy and good governance as factors that need to be developed to prevent social conflicts, ethnic and civil wars and the resulting destruction. Countries recently affected by civil wars emphasize programmes on reconstruction and resettlement of returnees, mainly in towns, and highlight the need for international financial assistance.

Though women are not legally discriminated against in access to land, credit, and employment, they are often penalized by customary laws, especially in relation to inheritance. Women, who are reported to represent between 10 and 25 per cent of heads of household in capital cities, are very often identified as key economic actors in poverty reduction and in the informal sector. Many countries propose specific action to increase



*A seamstress stitching clothes in a West African market: Most African countries propose to reduce the gap between the formal and informal sectors.*

#### AFRICA

In addition to a high national demographic growth rate often exceeding 3 per cent per year, African cities and towns face urban growth rates varying from 4 per cent to 10 per cent. Nevertheless, in the last decade, many cities have experienced a decrease in their population growth rate. This is particularly visible in large metropolitan areas where economic and population crises have worsened living conditions and resulted in urban growth shifting to secondary towns.

programmes to improve access to land titles, credit, training, and business sites, are recommended to ensure that the informal sector is recognized and legalized and has security of tenure.

For the development of urban areas, many countries propose to finance primary infrastructure and then let the market organize itself within guidelines provided by land-use planning schemes. Other services will be completed later and the cost will be recovered through taxation. Labour-intensive projects will be

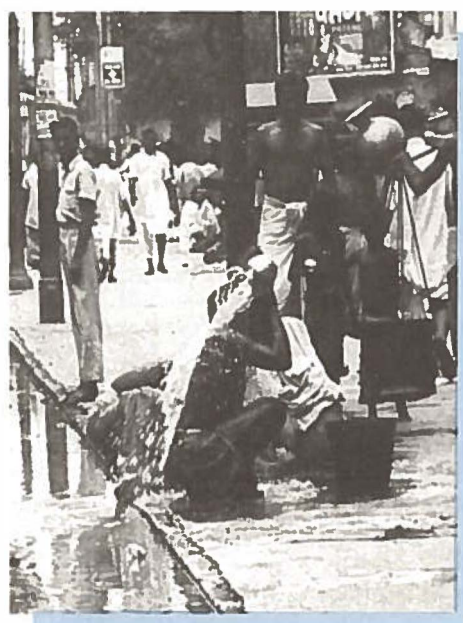




income-generation for women. NGOs dealing with street children are also being supported.

Countries recognize that domestic financial resources are essential for the development of human settlements and that international resources must be allocated to support national processes. International financial assistance is requested to rehabilitate and improve basic infrastructure and services, to restructure unplanned urban areas and to develop support programmes for micro-enterprises.

Small Island States are concerned with environmental sustainability.



*Bathing by the roadside in Calcutta: Urban renewal policies in Asia are now focussing on both the physical and the social aspects of cities.*

## ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Asia is a vast and diversified continent with population densities varying from 700 people per sq.km. (the most densely populated country in the world) to as low as 6.5 people per sq.km. Annual population growth rates tend to be between 2 and 4 per cent, with urban population growth rates often slightly higher than the national average.

Urbanization trends are also quite varied in the region. The Middle East is the most urbanized, with some countries having over 70 per cent of their populations living in urban areas. In the South-East, levels of urbanization are between 20 and 50 per cent, while in South Asia, they are between 20 and 30 per cent.

Over the past two decades, there has been a major change in housing policies with the role of Governments in the provision of housing shifting from that of

developer to that of facilitator, i.e. from public to private provision. Most Governments still report they are directly involved only in the provision of low-income housing. The low-income groups needs are reported to be met by public housing and the informal sector.

Reduction of poverty has been, and continues to be, a key priority in the less developed countries. There is a growing consensus in most countries on the significant role of urbanization in national economic development, for example, in creating jobs in the non-agricultural sector, in promoting rural-urban linkages and in harnessing the economic opportunities available in the sub-region.

Housing conditions in the poorest countries are often characterized by sub-standard housing with poor infrastructure and services. Slums and squatter settlements have proliferated in many of the large cities. The emphasis in most reports is on the provision of shelter, access to land and basic infrastructure and services for low-income groups. Urban productivity is linked to the productivity of the urban poor. Urban renewal policies should focus not only on physical aspects of neighborhoods but also on the social aspects, including employment, education and health. However, in more industrialized countries, the focus is on decreasing housing shortages for both low- and middle-income groups and on improving housing standards, particularly the per capita floor area, to meet higher standards.

The importance of mobilizing sources of finance is emphasized with proposals such as privatization of housing-finance institutions; encouraging commercial banks and private developers to invest in the low-cost housing sector with bank quotas, subsidized loans and tax exemption; promoting housing mortgages and a secondary mortgage market and encouraging and supporting community-based finance systems and housing cooperatives.

The need for sustainable land-use is acknowledged by all countries. Those with large urban populations and megacities propose to regulate the population distribution and ensure regional development by developing small and medium-sized towns and strengthening regional and inter-regional development.

The more developed countries propose to improve the management of transportation systems through the development of a more diversified transport infrastructure which takes into account environmental impacts, affordability, and energy efficiency. These

countries also highlight the need to strengthen environmental awareness and management and to ensure a more stringent enforcement of regulations.

Most countries in the region acknowledge their lack of institutional capacity to deal with human settlements and urbanization problems and propose as a starting point the review of existing institutional and legal frameworks related to human settlements. They also recommend the promotion of participatory approaches by raising public awareness and participation in development issues, by strengthening the capacity of local authorities and by supporting partnerships between communities, NGOs, CBOs and the private sector.

There is a consensus that regional cooperation is an important dimension of international cooperation. International assistance should be timely, appropriate and responsive to the needs of the recipient country. And it should be unconditional.

## CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

The level of urbanization in this region is generally about 60 per cent and the population is relatively stable. The centralized system that operated previously in most countries was characterized by low productivity and efficiency, overemployment, and a distorted pricing system. Environmental considerations were disregarded, and polluting technologies and high-energy consumption patterns were common.

The transition period is characterized by restructuring, privatization, foreign investments, trade liberalization, introduction of private land-ownership, mass privatization of housing and a rise in the property market, with the appropriate legislation already adopted or under preparation. In most countries, more than 50 per cent of the housing stock is privately-owned, although private land ownership is still not possible in some places. In some instances, the lack of individual resources has hampered housing privatization and has also caused a decline in the maintenance and rehabilitation of existing housing.

Implementation of economic reforms has raised the cost of living, increased unemployment and led to a drop in construction activities. However, the GDP of most countries is now gradually improving. Many countries seek to reduce poverty through the implementation of social reforms, the promotion of sustainable economic growth, the

development of long-term and medium-term credit; the improvement of legal frameworks for the advancement of capital markets and encouragement of foreign capital, and the use of modern technologies.

Many countries have new housing policies in place, with the key objectives being the allocation of land for private housing construction, the provision of urban infrastructure, and the development of adequate financial instruments. Additionally, there are proposals to review the legal framework for rental housing, joint housing ownership, land tenure and expropriations. Governments plan to reduce their participation in housing finance to a minimum, while maintaining their influence on the market through appropriate regulations. Other proposals for supporting the development of housing markets include ensuring the availability of materials, technology and credit, and encouraging household savings for mortgages etc.

Many countries propose to rehabilitate urban infrastructure through the involvement of the private sector by ensuring that there is adequate cost-recovery. Some countries propose to give responsibilities for the provision of infrastructure and basic services to local authorities. Improvement of water supply and water treatment is recommended in many reports. The use of sustainable energy and modern energy-saving technologies will be promoted and the efficiency of heat supply systems will be improved. Most countries indicate the maintenance and improvement of existing public transportation systems is a priority. Many plan to improve the ecological situation in industrial areas and in the largest cities. Many countries also acknowledge that their legal frameworks for disaster mitigation need to be improved.

Apart from new construction, emphasis is also placed on the rehabilitation of the old housing stock. Restoration of historical buildings and promotion of traditional architecture are often mentioned.

Urban planning used to be centrally conducted, but is now the responsibility of the local authorities, and a new legal framework for urban planning has been established or is under preparation. Urban policies will be implemented through consultative processes involving key actors, and monitoring systems will ensure follow-up.

Some countries lack a comprehensive strategy for regional planning and propose

to address unbalanced regional development through the establishment of a network of medium and large towns and the strengthening of selected villages as rural centres. Safeguarding the rural environment is also highlighted.

The responsibility and autonomy of regional and local authorities will be increased to deal with land, finance, investment planning, urban management and housing. Some countries also intend to enhance financial resources through improved tax collection. Staff training and capacity-building programmes will improve the cost-efficiency of administration of human settlements.



*A woman-headed household in Latin America: Social crises have led to growing squatter settlements in urban areas.*

## LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Despite the heterogeneity of human settlements, urban populations stand at 50 to 60 per cent and even reach 75 per cent in most developed countries. The population growth rate is higher in cities than in rural areas (where it can even be negative), but it has greatly decreased in the last decade, particularly in the largest metropolitan areas.

Social crises, limited investment resources, demographic trends and rapid urbanization have resulted in a large deficit in housing, serviced land and infrastructure, which has led to the deterioration and overcrowding of existing housing stock, and development of squatter and unplanned settlements, which may house up to 60 per cent of the urban population in some cases. Inadequate rental housing policies have hampered private investment in developing and maintaining the existing

housing stock. Conservation and rehabilitation of existing stock is a priority in some countries.

Access to potable water and adequate sanitation is still considered a key problem in many countries. Countries indicate that a more efficient cost-recovery system for infrastructure and services could be achieved through improved tax collection combined with progressive user charges. Upgrading and regularization of squatter settlements and uncontrolled urban areas remains a priority, including legalization of land tenure, upgrading housing through community-based housing institutions and the provision of loans.

New financing mechanisms were set up in answer to the gradual withdrawal of central governments from the direct provision of housing. In financing public housing, many proposals deal with the encouragement of participation of the private sector in the provision of loans and mortgages, taking into account the low demand for mortgages at market rates and the need to assist the very low income groups through new subsidy schemes and specific financial funds. For the poor, the promotion of non-conventional financial systems such as community loan systems and cooperatives is encouraged. International organizations are often identified as providers of credit for urban programmes.

The deficit in basic social infrastructure has resulted in environmental deterioration affecting major urban centres. Programmes to address contamination of water resources, soil erosion and aquifer rehabilitation are considered priorities in some countries. Progressive introduction of standards and measures is proposed to prevent and reduce the negative impacts of urban and industrial development on the environment.

Most countries propose to rehabilitate, revitalize and/or increase the density in urban historical centres, taking into account preservation of architectural heritage. Recovery of urban land in central and low-density peri-central areas is pointed out as one way of preventing costly urban sprawl which damages the environment and agriculture.

In most countries, accelerated urbanization has concentrated the population in major urban centres and resulted in an unbalanced national and regional human-settlement network. Regional economic planning and strengthening of secondary towns are key factors identified to address this issue.

Informal economic activities in some





countries represent more than 50 per cent of overall employment. Income disparities and social inequity have been on the increase in the last 20 years. Many countries, notwithstanding, have recently benefitted from improvement in social-development conditions. Most address urban poverty through national, regional and local economic programmes and they strongly link urban problems with economic development. Overcoming poverty is the most important goal in many countries, and housing is pointed out as a first step towards economic and social sustainability. Specific social programmes to address the needs of women, indigenous groups, children and youth will be developed. Support to informal-sector activities, small-scale businesses and industries through training programmes, access to cooperative credit and to business sites are also proposed.

Urban violence due to social and geographic exclusion, and the growth in drug-dealing, increasingly affect big cities, breeding forms of violent repression and resulting in a large growth in private security services. The need for security is felt more and more by the poor and some countries will develop alternative methods managed by local authorities and based on partnerships (systems of justice based on mediation and forms of community policing).

Democratization has increased the responsibilities and autonomy of local authorities and facilitated the participation of the civil society in urban management. Some countries propose to strengthen the autonomy of regional and local authorities but technical and financial assistance from central institutions is seen as necessary, particularly in less-developed regions. The goal of many urban policies is the encouragement of citizen participation, and there are many proposals to establish community consultation mechanisms. NGOs and CBOs are identified as key actors in these processes. Some countries propose to decentralize housing policies to the regional and/or municipal level and, in large metropolitan areas, to create a basic urban administration subsystem (micro-urban regions) to bring administration closer to the population.

## WESTERN EUROPE, NORTH AMERICA AND OTHERS

In many countries, a fairly high percentage of the population is elderly but the population is still slowly increasing. The level of urbanization varies between 55 per cent to 85 per cent. GNPs in the region are fairly high. In the context of budgetary

restrictions, most countries have a developed social welfare system but they are now experiencing financial difficulties in maintaining it. The recent recession has left most economies constrained by high rates of unemployment (averaging 10 to 13 per cent).

Housing policies are based on the combined principles of the market economy and public-sector intervention which plays the major role in the provision of social housing. Although there are no housing shortages and there is a widespread recognition of the right to housing, affordable housing for low-income groups and the homeless is still a problem. Inadequate policies for the integration of immigrants and other disadvantaged groups have led to social tensions in several countries. The problem of homelessness needs to be addressed by reactivating the whole housing chain by supporting access to home ownership for middle-income groups so as to free public rental housing for very low-income households.

Integrated social-development programmes will be extended in marginalized urban areas to reduce the risks of social fracture and to counteract economic, ethnic and social segregation, with positive discrimination mechanisms, extended partnerships, reinforcement of services, education, social links, public participation and security, promoting socially diverse neighborhoods, attracting and developing economic activities, housing and urban rehabilitation. Forms of new local justice and police coordinated by municipalities have been established to address the need for new forms of social regulation. Networking between experts and the local authorities is important for the exchange of experiences.

Employment creation is a major priority. Unemployment reduction plans aim at improving economic competitiveness, supporting enterprises and job creation, and addressing poverty traps that keep people out of work. Some countries intend to expand their subsidized jobs and community-management programmes which can be a means of employment creation for vulnerable groups. In some countries locally-crafted solutions and the private sector are seen as the key to the economic success of cities. The role of central governments is to support these efforts.

In the less-developed countries, emphasis is placed on the improvement of city planning mechanisms, provision of water, and the rehabilitation of infrastructure and services. Easy access to transportation infrastructure is a key factor

in urban transformation; settlements will be limited to areas where this infrastructure is already in place so as to reduce urban sprawl. Less-developed countries focus on improving their control on unauthorized land development. Several reports address the curb of decreasing populations in rural areas.

Several countries have implemented strict environmental legislation affecting urban planning, but global policies which simultaneously address economic development, social solidarity and environment at the metropolitan level are not fully developed. Most countries propose to reduce their emissions into the soil, water and air, and to improve their monitoring system.

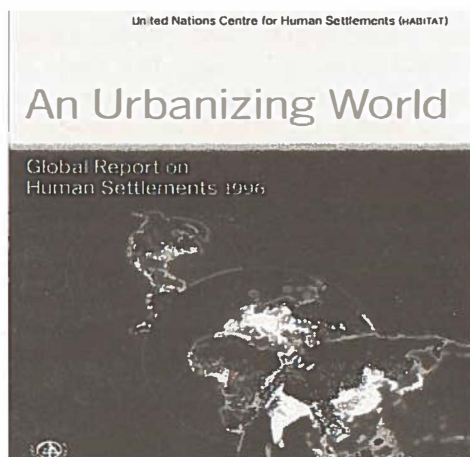
The historical and cultural heritage will be protected in major urban projects through the promotion of partnerships and the use of regulatory measures, interventions and financial incentives.

In many countries, large metropolitan areas do not benefit from adequate administration. In most countries, local authorities are responsible for the implementation of housing and urban policies. The trend is to increase their responsibility through continuous decentralization, and coordination and partnerships with central government. However, local initiatives need to respond to national priorities and the central government's involvement is essential to promote national unity and innovation and to arbitrate between contradictory local interests and contradictory values. Many countries intend to promote the participation of women in elected and professional bodies.

Some Governments indicate that they will pay increased attention to urban development in their bilateral cooperation. Priority issues in international cooperation are poverty reduction, the feminization of poverty, capacity-building and decentralization, environmental protection, encouraging democratic governance, enabling housing strategies and the empowerment of women. There is some concern, however, about the coordination between bilateral agencies, international agencies and NGOs.

*The above is a summary of a Habitat II Conference document entitled "National Reports and National Plan of Action: Report of the Secretary-General" (A/CONF.165/CRP.5). For more information on national reports, please contact your national focal point or UNCHS (Habitat).*

## PUBLICATIONS



### **An Urbanizing World: Global Report on Human Settlements 1996**

*Published by Oxford University Press  
Cover Price: £18 (paperback), £40  
(hardcover)*

The continuing economic, social and environmental transition of our planet and of humanity into societies dominated by urban areas and cities permeated all the debates, negotiations and special events of the City Summit. The substantive background to this complex and global process of urbanization was made available to the delegates of the Habitat II Conference in the form of a major publication of the United Nations, entitled **An Urbanizing World: Global Report on Human Settlements 1996**. This comprehensive piece of scientific work is the result of a global research effort which was conducted by UNCHS (Habitat) over the course of three years and which involved the contributions of eminent scholars and practitioners in the field of human settlements from all parts of the world.

In his foreword to the report, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Dr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, noted that urban settlements will become the main places for the struggle for development and social and economic progress. While in 1975 only 37 per cent of humanity lived in towns and cities, this percentage had risen to 45 in 1995. At the start of the next millennium, every second human being is expected to live in an urban area, and this trend is likely to continue. This transition into an urbanized world has enormous implications for the world economy, for social conditions, as well as for the state of

the world environment. The Report highlights the contribution of urbanization to national economic and social development. Urbanization is seen as an essential part of most nations' development towards more stable and productive economies. Well-managed urbanization has the potential to lead to improvements in the living standards of a considerable proportion of the world's population.

However, in many countries, the rates of urbanization exceed the capacity of national and local governments to plan and organize this transformation. As a result, new forms of urban poverty have emerged, manifested through poor housing conditions, insecure land tenure, and homelessness. Moreover, poorly-managed cities have negative impacts on environmental conditions.

Consistent with the conclusions of the 1996 Human Development Report of the United Nations, **An Urbanizing World** concludes that progress in different fields of social, equitable and sustainable development continues to lag behind economic growth in many countries. A large proportion of the world's population remains poor and continues to be deprived of adequate shelter, water supply and sanitation, with all the implications for persisting poor health conditions of the poor.

With increased social, economic and environmental impacts of urbanization, growing consumption levels and renewed concerns for sustainable development since the adoption of Agenda 21, the necessity for planning becomes more evident. Environmentally-sound land-use planning is central to the achievement of healthy, productive and socially-accountable human settlements. The challenge is not only how to direct and contain urban growth, but also how to mobilize human, financial and technical resources to ensure that social, economic and environmental needs are adequately addressed. Considering the limited effectiveness of current methods and approaches to settlements planning, new procedures have to be devised that can be adapted to each society's present conditions and future aspirations, based on new forms of partnership and good governance.

The **Report** points out that enabling strategies do not imply a retreat by Governments from housing and infrastructure provision, but rather the assumption of new roles. One of these new roles is ensuring there is a competitive but regulated market in land, housing finance and building materials.

Governments must also ensure that rules and regulations enable rather than restrain investments in housing and infrastructure.

The **Report** presents a rich statistical annex with tables on various aspects of human settlements for reference by practitioners, policy-makers and researchers. An unusually large collection of figures, tables and boxes throughout the report illustrate and offer examples on the topics under discussion.

*Available in bookstores, in Europe and North America and from the UNCHS (Habitat) Information Office in Geneva at \$US27.*

### **Making Cities Work: The Role of Local Authorities in the Urban Environment**

*By Don Stevenson, Richard Gilbert, Herbert Girardet, and Richard Stren  
Published by Earthscan Publications,  
London, 1996. Price: \$US 13.95*

This book is intended for people everywhere who are interested in local and global environmental issues and in how these issues are being and can be addressed by local governments around the world. Given trends in urbanization and decentralization, its main argument is that local authorities must and should be at the centre of work to improve the environment and the living and working conditions of people in general. It demonstrates how this is already happening in many cities, and how much more can be done in pursuit of sustainable urban development, particularly through cooperation among local governments around the world. It provides concrete recommendations, from the point of view of local authorities and their associations, as to how the international community, and the United Nations system in particular, can facilitate the work of local authorities and their associations in achieving local sustainable development world-wide.

Intended to be pragmatic and a guide to future public policy, the book outlines some of the practical measures that local authorities all over the world have initiated, and the policies that will help them to take this work further.

Co-authored by a group of prominent urban and environmental specialists, the book is the result of an initiative of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), with financial support from the United Nations Environment Programme, and was produced in collaboration with the International Council for Local



Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) and the United Towns Development Agency (UTDA), on behalf of the "G4+" umbrella organization of major international associations of local authorities. ICLEI and UTDA also provided the bulk of the case-study material found in the book.

### **The Human Settlements Conditions of the World's Poor**

*Published by the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat). Price \$US15.*

This publication, prepared as an input to Habitat II, provides recommendations on how to address the shelter problems of the poorest groups in society.

The publication reveals that although projections in many countries show a reduction in overall poverty figures, they also suggest that the number of urban poor will continue to grow throughout the next decade. It stresses that although they are closely-linked, there is a clear distinction between "income poverty" and "housing poverty". While some 430 million people in developing countries are currently living in "income poverty", more than 600 million are living in shelter and environmental conditions which are insecure and health-or life-threatening.

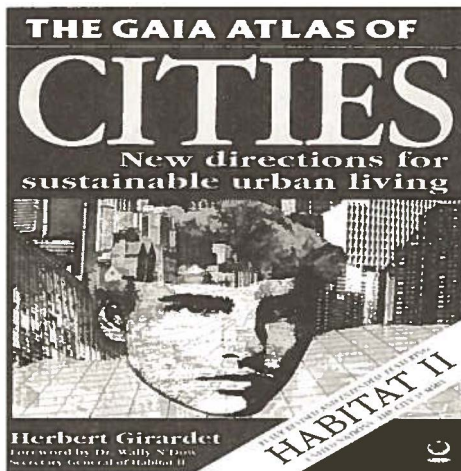
Although circumstances vary, the general picture is that the shelter sector is conspicuously under-developed in most developing countries. The publication notes that attempts by Governments in developing countries to address the human settlements conditions of the urban poor have varied enormously. Some have made great efforts, while others have scarcely addressed the problem. Almost without exception, such measures have failed to keep pace with the scale of the problem.

The publication also includes a discussion of the agenda for future research and the future roles of the various sectors in the shelter-delivery process, involving the public sector, the private commercial sector, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs).

*For more information, please contact:  
Information and Audio Visual Division  
UNCHS (Habitat)  
P.O. Box 30030 Nairobi, Kenya  
Tel: 254-2-621234  
fax: 254-2-624333*

**The Gaia Atlas of Cities: New Directions for Sustainable Urban Living**  
By Herbert Girardet

*Published by Gaia Books Ltd. Price: £10.99*



**The Gaia Atlas of Cities** has been extensively revised and updated for the Habitat II conference. The new foreword by Dr. Wally N'Dow, Secretary-General of Habitat II, sets out the main focus of the Conference.

- How can we provide adequate shelter and livelihoods for the world's ever-growing numbers of urban citizens?

- How can we achieve sustainable human settlements in an urbanizing world?

**The Gaia Atlas of Cities** addresses these key issues, analyzing the problems of expanding city populations and exploring the possibility of healing our cities, making them self-sustaining, responsible for themselves and their immediate surroundings.

Herbert Girardet examines the ecology of settlements, city dynamics and the global shift from settlement to city. He explains how a sick city makes for a sick world and just how close Earth is to her carrying capacity. A realistic look at people and cities and how they work together, this vital source book identifies ways of healing our cities and offers a wealth of ideas for recreating our own communities.

*For enquiries, contact: Lyn Hemming,  
Gaia Books Ltd, 20 High Street, Stroud,  
Gloucestershire, GL5 1AS, UK  
Tel: 01453 752985  
Fax: 01453 752987*

*Trade Distributors: D Services 6 Euston  
Street, Freeman's Common, Leicester, LE2  
7SS, UK  
Tel: (0116) 254 7671  
Fax: (0116) 254 4670*

**Local y Global: La gestión de las ciudades en la era de la información**  
**Local and Global: Managing the City in an Information Society**  
By Jordi Borja and Manuel Castells

This two-part, spiral-bound study concludes with five challenges, going beyond the obvious definitions of employment, security, the meaning of belonging, sustainability and governance. This involves a new concept of citizenship, and resolving the contradiction between the social and the political/administrative.

The authors conclude by setting out three principles or major objectives: the right to the city, legitimacy of national/international governments and partner organizations which are city partners, and citizens' rights and responsibilities.

## **WORLD RESOURCES** A GUIDE TO THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT



**The Urban Environment**

### **World Resources 1996-7: A Guide to the Global Environment**

*Jointly published by the World Resources Institute, United Nations Environment Programme, United Nations Development Programme and World Bank*

This, the seventh report in a series available in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, German, Japanese and Spanish, covers the Urban Environment. Published in support of Habitat II six chapters, comprising Part I, examine both the positive effects of urbanization and the adverse impacts on people and the environment, concluding with priority areas for improving the urban environment and community-based approaches.

Part II examines basic conditions, trends and key issues in each of the major resource categories, with many of the chapters focusing particularly on future trends. This section may also be found on the **World Resources 1996-7 Database Diskette**, which also has 20-year time series for many variables. These are available at \$US99.95 plus shipping and handling. Details from Oxford University Press in New York or locally.



## Calendar of Events

### 13-16 October 1996

32nd International Congress of ISoCaRP) on "Migration and the Global Economy"

*Location:* Jerusalem, Israel

*Organizers:* The International Society of City and Regional Planners (ISoCaRP)

*Focal Point:* ISoCaRP/AIU/IGSRP Secretariat  
Judy van Hemert, Executive Secretary  
Mauritskade 23  
2514 HD The Hague  
Netherlands  
Tel: +31-70-346 2654  
Fax: +31-70-361 7909

### 13-17 October 1996

INTA20 Annual Congress on "New Urban Communities: Responses to the Future of Cities"

*Location:* Cairo, Egypt

*Organizers:* International Urban Development Association (INTA)

*Focal Point:* INTA Secretariat at  
Nassau Dillenburgstraat 44  
NL-2596 AE, The Hague  
The Netherlands  
Tel: (int.)+31-70-324 4526  
Fax: (int.)+31-70-328 0727

### 21-22 October 1996

Fifty Years of New Towns: Today's Opportunities, Future Visions Conference

*Location:* London, UK

*Organizers:* CNT

*Focal Point:* INTA Secretariat at  
Nassau Dillenburgstraat 44

NL-2596 AE, The Hague  
The Netherlands  
Tel: (int.)+31-70-324 4526  
Fax: (int.)+31-70-328 0727

### November, 1996

Decision Making in Municipal Affairs

*Organizers:* INTA, in cooperation with the Arab Urban Development Institute, AUDI

*Focal Point:* INTA Secretariat at  
Nassau Dillenburgstraat 44  
NL-2596 AE, The Hague  
The Netherlands  
Tel: (int.)+31-70-324 4526  
Fax: (int.)+31-70-328 0727

### 8-14 December 1996

Action Planning for Cities: Neighbourhood Improvement and Community Planning — Seminar

*Location:* St. Anne's College, Oxford, UK

*Organizers:* The British Council

*Focal Point:* International Seminars Department  
The British Council  
10 Spring Gardens  
London SW1A 2BN  
UK  
Tel: +44 (0)171 389 4264/4252/4226  
Fax: +44 (0)171 389 4154

### 23-28 March 1997

The 13th Congress of the International Federation of Municipal Engineers (IFME)

*Location:* Jerusalem, Israel

*Organizers:* International Federation of Municipal Engineers (IFME)

*Focal Point:* The Secretariat  
P.O. Box 50006  
Tel Aviv 61500  
Israel

Tel: 972 3 5140000

Fax: 972 3 5175674/972 3 5140077

Internet: IFME@Kenes.ccmil.compuServe.com

### 1-5 September 1997

23rd WEDC Conference on "Water and Sanitation for All: Partnerships and Innovations"

*Location:* Durban, South Africa

*Organizers:* WEDC, Loughborough University in collaboration with the Local Organizing Committee

*Focal Point:* WEDC, Loughborough University,  
Leicestershire, LE11 3TU, UK  
Tel: +44 1509 222390  
Fax: +44 1509 211079  
E-mail: j.a.pickford@lboro.ac.uk  
Local Focal Point: WEDC 1997 Conference  
Secretariat, 18 Rapson Road, Morningson, Durban  
4001, South Africa  
Tel: +27 31 233494  
Fax: +27 31 232405  
E-mail: ci@neptune.infolink.co.za

### 12-16 October 1997

8th International Congress of WFPHA on

"Health in Transition: Opportunities and Challenges"  
*Location:* Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania

*Organizers:* World Federation of Public Health Associations (WFPHA)

*Focal Point:* WFPHA Secretariat  
c/o APHA,  
1015 Fifteenth Street, N.W.  
Suite 300  
Washington, DC 20005  
USA  
Tel: (202) 789-5696  
Fax: (202) 789-5681  
E-mail: diane.kuntz@msmail.apha.org