



THE CITY SUMMIT'S CHALLENGE

The overall task of the Conference is to generate worldwide action to improve people's living environments. The Conference, together with international agencies and governments, will initiate and debate a Global Plan of Action for human settlements development, addressing the issues facing us during the next two decades but focusing on immediate action in the first five years (1996-2000).

New partnerships with other urban actors have been initiated and will be strengthened. These actors include local authorities, NGOs, civic and community groups, professionals and academics as well as business and industry. The success of the Global Plan of Action depends strongly on them. National Committees are already at work or are being established.

A UNIQUE CONFERENCE

A unique and powerful feature of this United Nations Conference will be the involvement of citizens, community groups, local authorities, professionals and the profit- and non-profit making private sector in national preparatory processes. In fact, their participation will be vital for the success of the Conference.

Governments have been encouraged to involve all actors in their National Committees specially local authorities. In this way, it is hoped that the Conference will be truly broad-based and participatory.

We are on the Road to Istanbul. If you want to get on it, contact your National Focal Point or the Habitat II Secretariat.

THE COUNTDOWN TO ISTANBUL

3 - 14 June 1992

United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

14 - 25 June 1993

World Conference on Human Rights, Vienna, Austria

11 - 22 April 1994

First meeting of the Preparatory Committee for Habitat II, Geneva, Switzerland

18 - 19 August 1994

Mayors' Colloquium on Social Development, New York, United States of America

5 - 13 September 1994

International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, Egypt

6 - 12 March 1995

World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, Denmark

24 April - 5 May 1995

Second meeting of the Preparatory Committee for Habitat II, Nairobi, Kenya

4 - 15 September 1995

Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, China

19-22 November 1995

Dubai International Conference for Habitat II on Best Practices in Improving Living Environments, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

January or February 1996

Third meeting of the Preparatory Committee for Habitat II, New York, United States of America

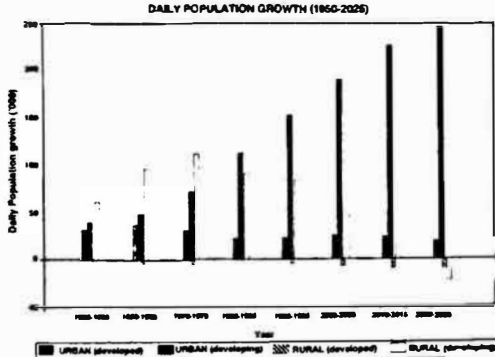
3 - 14 June 1996

Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), Istanbul, Turkey

WHY A UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON CITIES?

The grave deterioration of living conditions the world over has prompted governments to call upon the United Nations to hold the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), called "THE CITY SUMMIT" by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Dr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali. The overall goal of the Conference is to make the world's cities, towns and villages healthy, safe, equitable and sustainable. The two overall themes of the Conference are:

- Adequate shelter for all
- Sustainable human settlements development in an urbanizing world



Half of the world's population will live in cities by the year 2000

Habitat II will be held in Istanbul, Turkey, in June 1996, twenty years after the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, was held in Vancouver, Canada. That Conference drew international attention to problems in settlements of all kinds, rural as well as urban. Habitat II will build on this effort

and focus on the urbanization process, as cities and towns accommodate a growing majority of the world's population in the coming century.

For centuries, cities and towns have been the source of prosperity and progress for an ever-increasing proportion of humanity. The diversity of the skills and cultures in cities has opened new frontiers by generating economic growth, social cohesion and opportunity.

Yet in the midst of all this promise, more and more cities are faced with growing unemployment, crime, disease and pollution. Cities of hope are becoming cities of despair.

Shelter and Affordable Housing

Over one billion people around the world live in inadequate shelter - without piped water, electricity, roads, health facilities, and, in most cases, without security of tenure. The project-based support of public agencies engaged in the production and financing of housing is too limited to provide adequate shelter for all. UNCHS (Habitat) advocates the reform of government policies, institutions and regulations to enable housing markets to work more efficiently - this approach is at the heart of the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000.

Governance, Leadership and Participation

Inadequate governance and mismanagement have had a harmful effect on the physical, social and environmental structures of cities. Habitat II will encourage governments and local authorities to embark on partnerships with urban dwellers to improve management of cities. In this way, the City Summit will help to create opportunities for citizens to participate in local decision-making processes, creating innovative action through partnerships.

Urban Poverty Reduction and Job Creation

Urban poverty is rising at an alarming pace, especially among women. The informal sector - which makes a substantial contribution to the delivery of services, production, infrastructure and construction - often is the only means by which the urban poor can make a living. Local informal housing construction, for example, generates up to 20 per cent more jobs than high-cost construction. Also street hawking, waste recycling and food production are primary sources of income among the poor. The informal sector has to be strengthened and recognized in order to create more jobs, provide better housing and, consequently, make the urban poor more self-reliant.

Environmental Management and the "Brown Agenda" for Cities

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development - the "Earth Summit" held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 - designed the Green Agenda to help save a planet both endangered by excessive consumption and plagued by poverty and underdevelopment.

Yet most of the actions agreed to at Rio can only become a reality through localized action in the places where environmental threats are increasingly concentrated - cities. Again, it is the urban poor who are particularly endangered by environmental degradation and pollution. The Green Agenda will fail if the "Brown Agenda" for cities is not addressed. We have to make cities safer and cleaner. We also have to understand that only proper city planning will save our planet from further uncontrolled use of land and water.

Disaster Mitigation, Relief and Reconstruction

As cities become larger and more densely populated, they become increasingly vulnerable to natural and human-made disasters like earthquakes, floods and wars. The poor usually live in the most critical areas and in dangerously cramped living conditions. They are the most likely to lose their homes or even their lives when such disasters as flooding or earthquakes occur. Their homes are the closest to waste dumps and polluted, health-damaging areas. Better planning, construction methods and partnership action could help reduce the extent of catastrophes.

Gender-awareness

Women and men use and experience cities differently according to their roles, responsibilities and access to resources. For example, when basic services are lacking in a settlement, more often than not, it is women who take on responsibilities such as water collection and refuse disposal.

These six key-issues as well as other themes (such as Land Tenure, Urban Physiology and Transport), will be the themes of numerous workshops that are being held all over the world in order to work out practical solutions that will also be presented at the Conference.

"HABITAT II is more than a Conference. It is a recognition by the international community - an awakening, if you will - that time is running out on us, 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."

Dr. Wafiq N Dow, Secretary-General, Habitat II