Dear Reader,

This is the first issue of HABITAT WORLD, a bimonthly publication of the Habitat Conference Secretariat. Its purpose is to keep you up to date on the preparatory activities leading to the Conference on Human Settlements and on the development of the key themes and issues that will be taken up at Vancouver in June 1976.

Habitat is expected to be the largest conference ever held by the United Nations, and the range of issues under the umbrella of human settlements should be of interest and concern to every citizen and every organization, private or public, throughout the world.

The challenge of the future is awesome. Towns and cities everywhere are failing to provide basic amenities and services and the quality of human life is deteriorating. Problems of unemployment, pollution, congestion, and social alienation are mounting and the population of the world will double again in about 30 years.

Past solutions to these problems have not worked. We need new techniques, new ideas and new forms of social organization. The preparatory activities leading to the Conference have created a global understanding that new efforts and initiatives are needed, and a primary purpose of HABITAT WORLD is to engage your interest in taking part in the building of this new consensus.

In future editions HABITAT WORLD will include a Letter to the Editor, and to make recommendations. (Address: HABITAT WORLD, 459 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY 10016.) We also ask you to give this issue to a friend when you have finished reading it.

June Regional Meetings Next Major Step On Road To Vancouver

Three major regional preparatory conferences for Habitat are scheduled for June of this year under the auspices of the United Nations Regional Economic Commissions. They are to be held in a full year before the World Conference on Habitat in Vancouver in order to ensure that preparatory activities are given enough time to study problems of human settlements nationally and regionally and to share fully in the formulation of themes and issues for the Conference on the agenda.

A regional conference for all of Asia and the Pacific will be held in Tehran from 14-18 June, a meeting for Africa from 21-25 June in Cairo, and for Latin America from 30 June to 4 July in Caracas. The Tehran meeting will join the countries of the Economic Commission for West Asia and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. The host of the other meetings will be the Economic Commission for Africa and the Economic Commission for Latin America.

In speeches before the ministers of the ECA and ESCAP in February and March, Habitat Secretary-General Enrique Peñalosa outlined several ways in which countries taking part in regional meetings could expect to benefit. These include:

- An opportunity to exchange views and experiences on human settlement problems in a regional context in order to formulate the themes and issues which should be taken up at the conferences;
- The opportunity to review and discuss working papers which are to be prepared by the Regional Economic Commissions and the secretariat, and to make recommendations for the final policy papers and documentation;
- A forum for the dissemination of national policy papers, such as the national reports for Habitat, for the information of policy makers and experts from other countries in the region.

In this way,” he told the ministers, “working regionally as well as nationally you can assure that the needs, views and interests of your regions will be adequately represented when we come together again at Vancouver.”

Discussions at the meetings are expected to bear on a number of themes: the establishment of national human settlement policies and strategies that consider towns and cities in relationship to each other and to the entire country; meaningful and minimum needs and standards, based on the real needs of peoples in each country; the redistribution and innovative use of resources; more efficient and low-cost means of transportation; and the implementation of firmer and fairer policies of land use.

Proposals for international cooperation and action leading to these goals and the role of international organizations and other bodies will be considered.

Habitat world

100 Countries Promise Film and Slide Projects For Showing at Habitat

Agrovilles in Brazil, micrometropolitan management in the Federal Republic of Germany, new traffic systems for Japanese cities, the upgrading of squatter settlements in Zambia, and the reconstruction of Tashkent after the earthquake of 1966 are among the more than 100 proposals for audio-visual presentations to be shown by national governments at the Habitat Conference and more are arriving each week.

The audio-visual component of the conference on Human Settlements is unique in the history of United Nations conferences and is expected to have widespread influence and interest from governments and non-governmental organizations. Each proposal will lead to a Habitat emphasis on solutions to human settlement problems, showing practical ways to the equalization of opportunity of community life in all parts of the world that are already proven to work. This programme will undoubtedly be the largest audio-visual exchange of experiences ever mounted on an intergovernmental level and could set a precedent for other conferences to follow.

Here is how it will work.

The Secretariat invited all United Nations Member States participating in the Conference to present from one to three audio-visual presentations or demonstration projects in their countries, each film or slide presentation to show the nature of a problem, the approach chosen to solve it, the results achieved and to give recommendations.

Presentations will be either on 16mm film or 35mm slides which will then be transferred to videotape cassettes for conference showing. Presentations can be of any length up to 26 minutes maximum, but the secretariat is also asking governments to supply three minute versions of each presentation. All the audio-visual presentations and the capsule versions will be translated into the five official languages of the Conference for showing at Vancouver.

At the Conference the full film and slide presentations will be shown at a special demonstration centre and to the delegations. A number of screening rooms will be available. The capsule versions will be shown at the official sessions of the Conference, both in plenary and in committee meetings. For this in conference viewing, closed circuit television monitors are to be mounted in the meeting rooms.

The Habitat audio-visual programme is being supported financially by the United Nations Environment Programme, bilateral assistance of individual countries and by the Canadian Government. While Secretariat officials insist that Habitat will not be a "film festival" in approach or content, there is no doubt that the audio-visual programme will give the Conference a vivid and exciting element for all those involved. After the Conference, it is planned that all films will be turned over to a new human settlements film library. Also, the Secretariat plans for this material to be the base for several educational films for world showing.

Questions for the production of audio-visual presentations have been sent to all governments, and for those countries requesting assistance in preparing the films and slides, regional film workshops are planned for the coming months.

"The project is of such broad scope," says Andreas Fugelsang, senior Information Officer of Habitat, "that we strongly urge that all audio-visual material be produced in accordance with the technical specifications and the methodology outlined in the guideline brochure. Producers should use the yellow and red sheets attached to the brochure in the formulation of their scripts."

“We hope that the presentations will be short and to the point,” Fugelsang adds, “and we hope countries will see that the 35mm slide format can be as effective or even more effective than the more expensive film presentations.”

Deadline for delivery of the audio-visual presentations (originals, double copies, separate tapes etc.) is 15 December 1975. However, this means that the meter at the Secretariat no
June Regional Meetings

national financing agencies in reaching them will also be discussed at the regional preparatory conference. New and more appropriate institutions may be required to implement new policies to improve the management of existing systems, to eradicate and train the necessary manpower and to provide greater scope for participation in decision making and for self-management. The need for and kind of new institutions to meet the challenges of human settlements will also be discussed at the regional meetings.

At each regional conference the Secretary-General of Habitat will make a progress report covering all aspects of the Habitat preparatory process to date. Reports prepared by the regional secretariats assessing the human settlement situation in the particular region will have been prepared prior to each conference. A draft statement is prepared on the state of existing human settlements throughout the world being prepared under the auspices of the United Nations Centre for Housing, Building and Planning will be presented.

All Member States have been requested to submit National Reports on the status and problems in their respective countries by March, 1975; these will be used to facilitate more specific focus at each regional preparatory conference. The status of the audio-visual programme, a major component of the Habitat Forum in Vancouver, will be discussed along with the general information programme and the parallel activities being planned for Vancouver by non-governmental organizations, to be known as the Habitat Forum.

The preparation of background papers in key areas affecting the urban environment — housing, land use, open space and recreation, transportation, urban environmental education, waste disposal, air pollution, environmental health, energy, water pollution, etc. — has been assigned to leading experts in these fields; these papers will be available for each of the regional conferences and provide a further basis for discussions.

Participation in the regional conferences will be open to members and associate members of the regional economic and social commissions and all United Nations specialized agencies, other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations concerned, representatives from non-governmental organizations whose interests are especially related to the topics of the

“A Better Way To Live” — World Contest Geared To Habitat

An international competition for amateur and professional photographers who wish to use their art and talent to help in solving some of the most urgent problems of today — the problem of human settlements — is already generating excitement and support throughout the world among photographers. The contest is a joint effort between the United Nations and the International Federation of Photographic Art (FIAP). Winning entries in national contests will be judged by an International Jury of photographic experts and will be displayed at the Conference in Vancouver in June 1975. Later, they will be exhibited on a worldwide tour. Winners will be awarded FIAP Medals and other awards presented by sponsors and organizations outside the UN system. Simultaneously with the UN Conference and the International Competition, national photographic exhibitions will be organized and displayed.

Entries should deal with themes and subjects reflecting people’s efforts to improve the quality of life and the human environment. The goal of the competition and international exhibition is to show that people CAN solve human settlement problems and create a healthy and productive environment where all can live in dignity. Many human settlements throughout the world are in danger as a result of overcrowding, lack of suitable housing, poor transport, pollution and other associated problems generated in a world where human population is growing at exponential rates and at the same time the predominant orientation of society is changing from rural to urban. The purpose of Habitat is to show that there can be answers to these problems and to elicit a cross fertilization of ideas and approaches as to how they can best be met. Photo entries should be geared to this general philosophy.

The International Competition will be open to all governments that have the necessary resources to produce more than one language version and to try to get presentations to the secretariat before the deadline whenever possible. The production of the language version will be limited to the necessary resources. The secretariat has appealed to all governments that have the necessary resources to produce more than one language version and to try to get presentations to the secretariat before the deadline whenever possible.

Delegates Speak Out On Human Settlement Problems

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First Prep Com Meeting Sets Conference Program

A broad programme of official activities leading to Habitat was endorsed at the first preparatory meeting of the UN Conference on Human Settlements, held at United Nations headquarters from 15-24 January. Habitat Secretary-General Enrique Pefiafa, in a keynote address observing the conference session, termed the 1975 The year of action.

Almost all UN member states have indicated that they will take part in the Vancouver conference scheduled for 21 May-1 June, 1976, and 100 have designated official coordinators. Nearly 100 audio-visual presentations have been proposed and more commitments to national participation are arriving daily.

Of the 56 member states of the Conference, 38 sent delegations, most of them from their home governments, and 14 other nations sent observers. This is a high level participation, including many national delegations holding governments concerned. One international committee related to human settlements affairs, reflects the importance being given to the conference at this early stage.

Committee sessions were extremely productive and it was decided to pre-set the timetable for the preparatory process, the substantiation of the proposed conference theme and issues, and the audio-visual programme for the preparation of development plans.

Brazil

B. Brito - Counsellor to the Permanent Mission to the United Nations

"All human settlement planning has to be linked to economic and development policies. Brazil has made a significant progress in developing a national strategy for human settlements which is part of the economic development of the nation. It is very important to give attention to institutions, such as the Housing Bank of Brazil, which translate theoretical knowledge into practical application."

Iran

M. Vahedi - Minister of Housing and Urban Development

"Although the problem of human settlements in developed countries differs from those in developing countries, and as the problem of Vancouver has been described in terms of a systematic need for development plans and development studies, the problem of squatter settlements in the developing countries differs from that of the industrialized countries. A solution for the squatter settlements in the industrialized countries is not the solution for the squatter settlements in developing countries."

India

R. Gopalan - Secretary to the Government in Charge of Housing and Urban Development

"The difficulty is in reconciling the needs and requirements of developed countries with those of the developing countries. For a person without anything, something is better; for a person with something new, something better is what he wants. Interchange between the two sides should be done."

"Just as the rich and poor one nation should share the natural resources. The partnership between the rich and poor nations should be based on equality. Such a partnership is necessary for the effective development of the world. Something should be done to improve the housing of two thirds of the world."

Dominican Republic

O. Fausto Correa

Office of National Planning

"We consider human settlements as vital to our country as its economic development. We are concerned about the basic relationship between rural and urban areas and the growth of urban areas which leads to squatter settlements."
NGO's Announce Program For Habitat Forum

The two main groups of non-governmental organizations related to United Nations activities, the Conference of NGOs in consultative status with ECOSOC and the Environment Liaison Board, have together created an NGO Committee for Habitat. This Committee is composed of 14 members from different geographical areas representing a variety of concerns and professional interests. Its function is to encourage and facilitate the involvement of all professional organizations, volunteer bodies and other groups and individual citizens in Habitat.

The Committee will organize an NGO Conference called Habitat Forum in Vancouver to be held simultaneously with the official Conference. This Forum will provide for an exchange of views and experiences between NGOs as it will sponsor a series of lectures and seminars on subjects related to Habitat as well as demonstration exhibits and artistic performances.

The NGOs hope to see developed a dialogue between participants in the governmental conference and those in NGO events. The NGO Committee hopes therefore that the Preparatory Committee and other UN bodies concerned will adopt a liberal attitude to the admission of NGO observers to the governmental conference in Vancouver as well as to the regional and other preparatory meetings. For our part, we will welcome government delegates who wish to take part in the Forum.

The NGO Committee will make a special effort to promote and assist the participation of NGO representatives from developing countries in the Forum.

Although the Habitat Forum is an important element of the programme of our Committee, it is not the only one. Our aims are much more ambitious. We aim to mobilize public opinion in preparation for the Conference. The term "human settlements" covers many subjects of a technical nature on which non-governmental experts can make important contributions. The NGOs also plan to stage a worldwide discussion on at least some of the questions related to habitat which are of a "human" nature, and of which are of great urgency. These questions should be discussed back from our interrelated problems which were on the agenda of other important United Nations conferences: environmental degradation, the food crisis, scarcity of resources, population growth, etc. In these discussions, the human factor should be central, and our international responsibilities should be stressed. Hopefully the outcome will lead to suggestions for intensified international cooperation.

Without trying to be exhaustive or exclusive, the NGO Committee has decided that this discussion initially should concentrate on the following questions:

1. How should we provide all human beings with shelter and basic services? (water, sewage, health, education?)
2. How should the quality of life be improved by increasing income and the fulfillment of basic minimum human needs and the existence of cultures and social differences?
3. How should the interrelationship and parity of living standards, as between urban, rural and fringe areas be improved?
4. How can the population be involved in the decision-making on human settlements?

Canadian NGO to Handle Vancouver Arrangements

A special non-governmental organization has been created in Vancouver to handle arrangements for the NGO events. It's called the Association in Canada Serving Organisations for Human Settlements (or ACSOH for short).

ACS OH was established last year by a group of representatives of international, national and local NGOs and concerned individuals, its purpose is to stimulate, facilitate and coordinate NGO activities for Habitat. It is primarily a "hosting" organization, and has no responsibility for the substantive content of the parallel conference, which is being handled by the International NGO Committee for Habitat.

However, ACSOH is working closely with the NGO Committee on such things as arranging for meeting rooms and living accommodations, and the distribution of news about Habitat Forum to the general public. ACSOH may also be housed in attractive, modern, but relatively low-cost student accommodation. A shuttle bus service will link the university campus to downtown (about 20 min. ride) where the UN meetings will take place in a civic theatre and the large public rooms of the city's several major hotels. It is hoped that some of the NGO events, such as a daily briefing on the progress of the UN conference and public lectures, will take place downtown, too.

Arrangements for both meetings and living accommodation for NGOs will be handled by the Vancouver NGO secretariat (write: Habitat Forum, PO Box 48360, Bentall Centre, Vancouver). Registrations are already being accepted.