

RECLAIMING THE POWER OF CIVIL SOCIETY

By David C. Korten

The last United Nations summit of the twentieth century, the second UN Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), will convene in Istanbul from June 3-14, 1996. It is billed as the concluding event in a series of UN conferences that have sought to define global programs of action to heal a socially and environmentally troubled world. I believe it is more appropriate, however, to view it not as the last global conference of the twentieth-century, but rather as the first global conference of the twenty-first century.

The UN-sponsored global conferences of the past two decades have helped focus attention on many of the important social and environmental crises that have emerged as legacies of the excesses of the twentieth century. Environmental breakdown, human rights violations, runaway population growth, homelessness, poverty, joblessness, and social disintegration count among these legacies. All are manifestations of seriously malfunctioning institutions. Unfortunately, however, the official discussions have seldom even attempted to do more than produce a patchwork of toothless commitments to treat the more egregious symptoms.

Only among the civil society organizations that invariably gather for their own discussions outside the official chambers there have been consequential efforts to identify the underlying causes of the malfunction. Efforts to bring such discussions into the official forums have proven largely futile. The resulting frustration came to a head in the March 1995 Social Summit in Copenhagen. The representatives of a globalizing civil society issued a broadly-based consensus document: "The Copenhagen Alternative Declaration". It rejected the official declaration agreed to by their governments on the ground that its embrace of the neo-liberal economic system of growth, free markets, and free trade contradicted its professed commitment to eliminating poverty, unemployment and social disintegration. Even before the summit closed, more than six hundred civil society organizations from around the world had signed the declaration and the sign-ons continue.

Countdown to Istanbul

June 1995 Number 3



Habitat II

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE
ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS,
Istanbul, Turkey 3-14 June 1996

The citizen groups that participate in these global discussions want to define the problems and set the agendas instead of negotiating with their governments on bracketed language. In

11 Months to go

Copenhagen, the organizations of civil society brought forward their own definition of the global problems the official summit professed to address. The problem is, in their view, the self-same economic model that their governments have embraced as the solution - because that model inherently places corporate financial interests ahead of human interests.

The breach between the people and their governments has become a great chasm. As that chasm grows, people are coming to realize that their future depends on reclaiming the inherent power of civil society from economic and political systems ruled in secret by distant and unaccountable global corporations and financial institutions.

There are many emergent citizens' efforts to redefine the relationship between citizens and ruling states. Unlike the revolutions of the twentieth century which involved contests for state power, these revolutions seek to secure from the state the right of all people to govern themselves within the borders of their own communities. Their goal is to reclaim the power of civil society that distant corporations and governments have co-opted.

CONTENTS

Issue:

- Reclaiming the Power of
Civil Society 1
David C. Korten

- The New Paradigms 3
Jorge Wilhelm

- Editorial 2

Forum

- Women as Community Managers 5
Catalina Hinchey Trujillo

- "At Least Give Us Water" 6
Wandia Seaforth

Viewpoint

- Cities of Spirit 8
Pratibha Patel and Sheetal Shah

Update

- Youth Make Their Voices Heard 9
Kauna Nghinaunye
and Prasad Reddy

- PrepCom II Highlights 11

- Important Dates/Feedback 16

Continues on p 3.

COUNTDOWN TO ISTANBUL



Habitat II

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE
ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS,
Istanbul, Turkey 3-14 June 1996

June 1995
Number 3

Editor-in-Chief: Christina Engfeldt
Editor: Rasna Warah

Editorial Board for this issue:
G. Ludeking
J. Meeuwissen
M. Rosen
P. Swan
C. Trujillo

Design: Johan Brunkvist

Published by:

Habitat II secretariat, UNCHS,
P.O. Box 30030, Nairobi, Kenya;
Fax: 254-2-623080 or 624266/7;
Telex: 22996 UNHAB KE;
Cable: UNHABITAT; E-mail:
Habitat2@unep.no

The articles published in this bulletin express
the personal opinions of the authors and do
not necessarily reflect the official views and
policies of the United Nations Centre for
Human Settlements (Habitat).

Asked to define a city, people living in the rural areas of Africa are likely to see it only as a place of tall buildings, street lights, highways, cars, cinemas, and other similar outward manifestations and signs of modern urban life. Cynics may also denounce as a vile place where morals are corrupted and where the traditional way of life has given way to decadence. Few, if any, will speak of its importance as an engine of progress or in providing the infrastructure necessary for the efficient use of finite resources such as land and water.

Moreover, rural people anywhere will rarely associate the city with its people, particularly in Africa where there is a clear distinction between "home" (the family farm or village) and "house" (the four walls one occupies while working in the city). Hence few Africans will call themselves Nairobians or Luandans, unlike Europeans or Americans who will proudly identify themselves with the city in which they live. This identification is so strong that one can almost single out New Yorkers or Parisians in a crowd because they so strongly reflect mannerisms associated with their respective cities.

The notion that a city not only belongs to its people but is shaped by them, still faces resistance in many parts of the world. This helps explain why "squatters" and other so-called "illegals" are regularly evicted from their homes in "city beautification" exercises, and why the residents of shanty-towns, many now larger than the original cities to which they are attached and increasingly indispensable to their functioning economies, are still seen as "outsiders".

It was Shakespeare who asked "What is a city but its people?" In this third issue of *Countdown to Istanbul* we try to suggest some answers, focusing on individuals and their communities because we believe that urban development is not possible without the involvement (and consent) of the people most directly involved: the urban dwellers.

But our contributions go well beyond "city limits". They discuss how human values and needs can be a major catalyst in bringing about positive change in communities, be they rural or urban. And in a troubled world where institutions and technology threaten to alienate humanity from itself, it is encouraging to see that people-centre development is gaining ground.

Historically, young people have been the agents of change in many societies; indeed, many popular movements have originated in youth cultures. Yet, the young, more often than not, have little to say about the laws and policies directed at them and other marginalized groups who form a large proportion of the world's population. In the spirit of inclusion, which is a guiding principle of the habitat II preparatory process, we will, starting with this issue, carry a regular youth column, hoping, in this way, to give young people a stronger voice and a more visible role to play in preparations for Habitat II.

We have also devoted a large part of this issue to highlights from PrepCom II. I am happy to say that considerable progress was made and it was evident that governments, NGOs, local authorities and other interested groups that attended the session in Nairobi, put considerable energy and thought into making it the success that it was. With less than one year to go to Istanbul, we hope that this momentum will be maintained.

PrepCom II, it should be emphasized, made history. It recommended to the General Assembly that it authorize, as a departure from the normal rules of procedure, representatives of local authorities to participate in the deliberations of Habitat II. The importance of this recommendation in a conference devoted to so-called local issues cannot be stressed too strongly. The local authorities will not have a vote - that still is reserved for governments. But Habitat II must be a conference of partners — local authorities, NGOs, the private sector, youth, the elderly, representatives from every level and walk of life. PrepCom II has opened the door to them and to success in Istanbul.

Dr. Wally N'Dow
Secretary-General

Habitat II
Conference

RECLAIMING THE POWER, cont ...

It is in this same spirit that we might look to Habitat II as the first global conference of the twenty first century. Previous global conferences have accepted as given the assumptions and institutions of the twentieth century. We face growing evidence that the problems they addressed can be resolved only by a successful transition to a new era based on new assumptions and new institutional forms. Habitat II is poised to begin the global dialogue toward recreating human societies for the new era. That dialogue must embrace the lessons of our past, yet move beyond its flawed assumptions.

Consequently, it must be a very different global dialogue from those that have preceded it. Specifically, it must be grounded in the experience and aspirations of those who have borne the major consequences of the failure of twentieth century institutions and who remain in contact with the living systems of the planet on which our survival depends. It must engage civil society in its breadth and depth. Much of the leadership is coming from those who have the least to lose and the most to gain from creating just, democratic and sustainable societies for the twenty-first century - from those who have the least stake in the flawed assumptions of the past.

The time for negotiating with our own governments' bracketed language has ended. It is time for citizens groups to take the next step - engage from the grassroots in building true

citizen agendas for change. When the people lead, their governments will follow.

Citizen preparation for Habitat II appropriately centers on advancing such grassroots agenda building processes. Some of the guiding principles of Habitat II such as civic engagement, sustainability, and equity, align with the principles being embraced by progressive civic organizations. Habitat II offers a natural venue for sharing and celebrating the visions and action programs being created by ordinary people the world over. Let there then emerge from these many individual visions a shared vision and action for creating a global system that roots power in people and places power within a global framework of mutual respect, sharing and solidarity.

This concept is in keeping with the vision of the global official organizers of Habitat II, who intend that it should:

○ *Provide a holistic perspective on the issues addressed by the preceding UN conferences and engage the discussion of difficult cross-cutting issues that the other conferences may have neglected.*

○ *Start with people working to address their needs within the context of communities located within distinct local ecosystems.*

○ *Model the processes of participatory problem-solving and decision-making in which civil society, local and national governments, and progressive business engage in creative partnership to address human needs.*

Previous UN conferences have focused on producing official, negotiated documents and global plans of action. The resulting agreements are filled with noble language and largely vacuous commitments. While Habitat II will produce a statement of principles and global plan of action, its organizers also recognize the need for new approaches to dealing with the needs of a new century and want to advance an open process in which new ideas and issues can get out on the table for public discussion.

This creates potentials for Habitat II well beyond those of previous UN conferences. It creates an opening for the organizations of civil society to come forward with their visions and agendas in a spirit of open dialogue to move our troubled world beyond the institutional and conceptual limitations of a century now coming to a close. □

David C. Korten is President and Fellow of the People-Centered Development Forum (PCD Forum) based in New York.

THE NEW PARADIGMS

The world will soon be divided into those who have access to information technology and those who don't

By Jorge Wilhelm

On the E-mail screen there was a brief message that I'll reproduce after decoding it: "Message to Directors Only. Use Code X001." The control of this company is now in the hands of Prescott & Co. The Board of this off-shore holding has decided to stop operations of the Singapore and Sao Paulo unit, shifting its operations to the South Africa unit, selling its position in order to invest this financial product, through the Hong Kong market, in German zero-coupon bonds. The Board estimates a 7 per cent cut in the group expenses, an increase of 2 per cent in profits. The 100 per cent cut of

employments in those two locations should be managed through an adequate campaign plus usual personal settlements."

Business is not as usual or, at least, concepts have changed. Technologies are changing so quickly that in any profession, the graduate comes out of school sure that what he/she learned in the first years is not applicable any more. The amount as well as the exchange of stocked information has shrunk the world but, ironically, built up new barriers and created a new social marginality: the uninformed. Capital is not where it used to be: in government central banks and

big private banks; it is mainly in stock exchanges, constantly shifting from one decision-maker to another, not regarding anything but its own reproduction in an invisible electronic flux that leaves behind wreckage and social unrest. All this at an incredible pace.

Transnationalism and information, which means knowledge, are the new paradigms. The first one was actually born in the late 1960s when some corporations re-organized their global operations, starting to work on a transnational basis. Paradoxically, while more countries are created, and nationalism is, for the moment, a

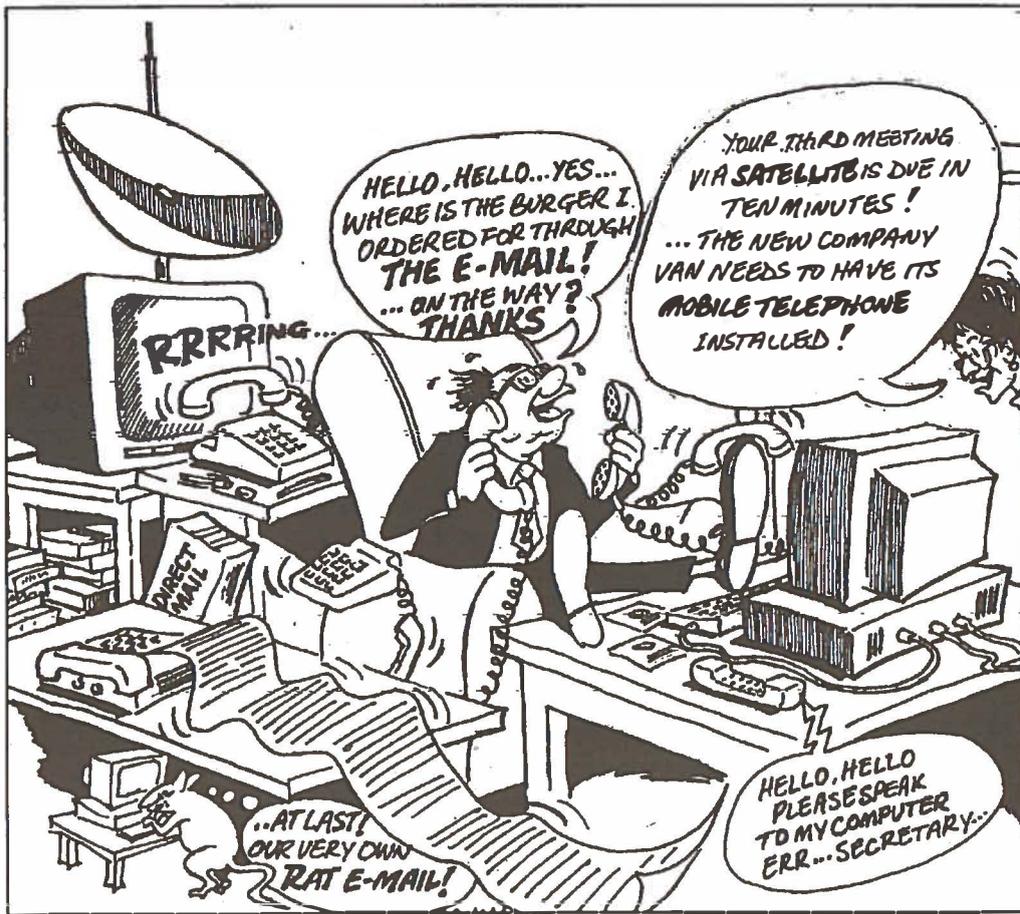


Illustration: Joseph Sanna

political trend, the global economy has re-organized in a supra-national network, invisible to both common people and government leaders.

We should try to understand the framework and nature of these changes in order to establish an adequate policy. We all thought that the fall of the Berlin Wall was the symbol of the end of the communist system and ideology. Now, without the bipolarity as a framework, we can as well realize that it can be used as the symbol of the radical change of both the socialist system and the market system. At least the way it used to be.

Does this mean that we are heading to apocalyptic disaster? Not necessarily. Humanity is just inventing new ways of getting along. Or, like Brecht wrote once: "Things are not going to be what they are, precisely because they are what they are."

Technology, information and capital shifting are decentralizing production, creating new partnerships regardless of nationality, changing the urban structure of employment, creating migrations, leaving to governments the impossible task of coping with social unrest and structural unemployment through fragile welfare states. And nowhere are these problems seen more dramatically than in cities.

In the beginning of the next century more than 50 per cent of the world's 6 billion people will be living in urban settlements which will grow at an amazing pace, mainly in underdeveloped countries (especially those in Asia and Africa), where 15 of the world's 23 largest megacities will be at the end of this decade. Cities don't only mean high density, pollution, traffic jams, homelessness, street children: problems and despair. They also mean diversity, social cross-cutting, information, culture, health facilities: opportunities and hope.

Therefore, in many countries, people migrate towards cities and people migrate from one country to cities abroad. And all this population movement will eventually bring along a rich acculturation process, which, initially, may provoke irrational prejudices, intolerance and violence, tensions, unrest and new problems of governance.

This is the framework of any discussion concerning the future of cities. It goes beyond the normal, and crucial problems of shelter, transport and infrastructure. This is the way the United Nations are preparing for the Istanbul-Habitat Conference of 1996. In the set of principles in the Global Plan of Action or Urban Agenda 21, we are working on concepts of development that

articulate economic growth with social equity and quality of life; sustainability of urban development based on the protection and enhancement of both natural and human resources; partnerships as the basis of good governance; and civic spirit as a fundamental tool to achieve the main aim of urban solidarity.

The main workshops during this year will enrich this plan and will deal with issues such as making a living in the city, moving around, the metabolism and the alternative shapes of human settlements, the city as a home, spaces of conviviality etc. Urbanism, rightly enough, is also not as usual.

In fact, the game that is starting to be played in cities is not just the usual housing and infrastructure game. The game is called building up a new society. In cities humanity has to learn to re-shape and re-orient society towards a new renaissance in which ethical values will overcome greed and social segregation, in which solidarity will substitute the intolerance of the present transitional period. □

Jorge Wilhelm, a renowned Brazilian architect and city planner, is Deputy Secretary-General of Habitat II.

"To change the mind-set of a community is a process, not an event."

—Nelson Mandela

Some development practitioners mistakenly believe that community participation and management are processes which can be imposed on communities. Communities can be forced to become involved in their own affairs by "experts" from outside the community. However, if community participation and management are to be sustainable processes, they must be initiated and implemented by communities themselves.

Community processes come from within the communities themselves not from without although they often begin because of external factors which "hit" the people and force them to come together in order to resolve a common problem such as an earthquake, flood, or civil strife. Those of us who choose to support such processes must respect the internal workings, the internal processes of each community, its organizations and its people without violating those processes, and without imposing our own demands. Our role should be one of supporting and facilitating local initiatives.

It is important to support and facilitate grassroots groups which are already actively involved in their own development. For instance, in Tanzania, a group of women from both Dar es Salaam and Dodoma implemented their own survey in order to measure women's participation vis a vis men within human settlements. With the support of Women Advancement Trust, an NGO, they have used the survey to negotiate with local authorities.

Similarly, in Zambia, women realized that they were the ones doing all the community work, especially fixing roads and communal water sources while men were reaping the benefits. When they discovered this, they

decided to remedy the situation by involving the men in the manual work as well as assuring that women were represented in the community council.

In Uganda, the women have been demanding that men be involved in community building which should be a joint effort, not the effort of

included, attend school and that all children, especially boys, be trained to be responsible members of households.

In one of the informal settlements of Popayan, Colombia, after a terrible earthquake left thousands dead and thousands more homeless and penniless, the men were heard to

say, "It is our women who organize to make a better life for our families, our communities, and themselves. Women put more heart and soul into it!" These women should be encouraged and visibly supported to do community management work, to run for the Council, or, in general, to represent the community.

But in order for women to be able to participate fully, the change has to begin at home. Men must collaborate in the day by day activities, needs, etc. of the family. They must learn to share household chores. The experience and logic of life is more important than degrees, and communities need to learn from the experience of women as well as of men.

If we are serious about building and strengthening local communities, these processes must be viewed from a gender perspective because the empowerment of the entire community is important, rather than the empowerment of one leader, one subgroup, or only men. In this regard it's important to use appropriate methods for measuring

the impact of human settlements activities on both men and women in such a way that their changing roles in terms of participation, leadership and control are captured.

True participation demands clear information, conscious choice and serious decision-making. Human beings, both individually and collectively, have the right and the need to stand up and decide for themselves. □

Catalina Hinchey Trujillo is Coordinator of the Women in Human Settlements Development Programme at UNCHS (Habitat).

In order to assure the active, conscious participation of women and men, girls and boys, in the process of building local communities, it is important to ask the following questions:

- Who is involved in the planning of the programme, project, activity (ie. men, women, girls, boys)? In what ways?
- Who participates on the team (i.e. community council, NGO, Church group)? What is the proportion of women to men? In what positions are they? Have there been any changes since the beginning of the programme?
- Are both women's and men's needs taken into consideration in both the planning and implementing stages? In what way?
- Do women hold leadership positions in community organizations? In what kind of organization? In what positions? Have there been any changes since the beginning of the programme?
- Do women, as well as men, have security of tenure and ownership of land/property? In what proportion? Has this changed since the programme began?
- How is the local government involved? How many women and men are involved from the local government? What positions do they hold? What is the relationship with the community?
- Has there been any gender-awareness training for the team, the community members? Where are these people now? Doing what?
- Is there less dependency on the Women in Development advisor than before? How is this shown?
- Are there control procedures for assuring equal participation of women and men? What are these procedures?

women alone. They also demanded training for women in construction skills and the recycling of waste.

In Ghana, women and the men involved in a base-line survey for measuring women's participation vis a vis men's in grassroots communities, discovered that 56 percent of the households interviewed were headed by young, single women. With this data they went to the Chief and asked him to speak to the elders and to demand that all school age children, girls

'AT LEAST GIVE US WATER'

Water is often a rallying point for women in poor communities

by Wandia Seaforth

I grew up in rural Central Kenya where the following Kikuyu song was popular in the 1950s.

(male voice)

Ndokiite guceera kwanyu ngikora utari kuo, kai wathiite ku ?

(female voice)

Ndathiite gutaha mai, nduge mucamukio njooke ngucerere ...

translated:

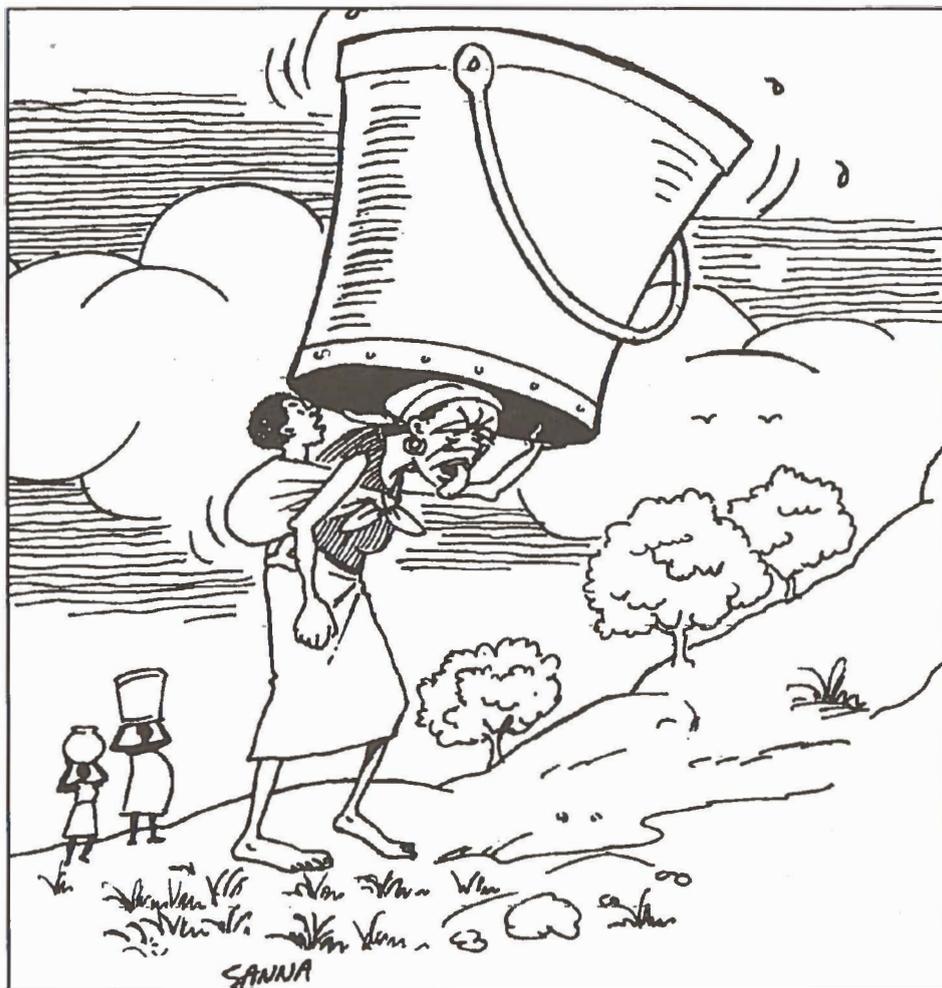
(male) I came to visit, and did not find you at home,

where had you gone?

(female) I had gone to fetch water, so that I could cook

and then I would come to visit you

The song was played on the radio and in the village dances (whose "corrupting" influence the Christian missionaries unsuccessfully tried to stamp out). It was sung to the accompaniment of local home-made guitars known as wandindi.



Visiting time for any rural young man who was not an idler was in the evening. I remember listening to the song and thinking how much more visiting time the young men had in comparison to the young women and knowing that probably the young man had, prior to going visiting, cleaned himself using water fetched by his mother or sister. Undoubtedly, young men also worked but it seemed that there was never an end to women's work, and water featured prominently on the list of endless chores.

By the time I was the age of the young woman in the song, I was going to boarding school and only returning home for a few weeks at a time, three times a year. I missed a lot of things at home, but fetching water was certainly not one of them. I used to envy my urban school mates who did not have to carry water during the school holidays. It was not until many years later that I found out that there were urban

residents who had to fetch water, and worse, often buy it at quite a high cost.

Later still, I was fascinated by accounts of women's collective efforts to provide water: the

mabati women's groups rural Central Kenya who through communal self help upgraded their roofs from thatch to corrugated iron (*mabati*), partly motivated by the fact that one could catch rain water off an iron roof; the women's water co-operatives of Lima, Peru; the water kiosks in the informal settlements of Nairobi, run by women's groups and supported by UNICEF and NGOs (significantly, the Undugu Society and the Kenya Water for Health Organisation, (KWAHO). It was interesting to see how water was repeatedly an organising point for women in poor communities all over the world.

However, it has also been depressing to realize what profound immediate and long term effects this role as water provider has on women. In 1992 a group of grassroots and professional women from Africa, Asia and Latin America who were doing research to collect information

"It is difficult to say what is worst about living here. Nothing is good. But if we had water, it would be a little bearable. At least give us water."

DID YOU KNOW?

The poor very often pay more for water than the rich through informal, often unsafe, supplies. For example, in Nairobi, Kenya, residents of informal settlements pay water vendors 5 to 10 times more per unit of water than what other residents pay to the city authorities. This is a common pattern in many cities in developing countries.

In situations where there is no water supply, it is women and older girls who have to provide it. Medical research has documented cases of permanent damage to women's health directly attributed to carrying water, among them spinal and pelvic deformities and degenerative rheumatism. More immediate problems include exposure to water-borne diseases, chronic fatigue and the threat of miscarriage among pregnant women.

In some parts of rural Africa where women may expend as much as 85 per cent of their daily energy intake fetching water, 40 per cent of non-pregnant women and 63 per cent of pregnant women are anaemic. Incidence and severity of anaemia increase during the dry season.

that would help determine indicators on women's participation in the human settlements development process, made a startling observation: The number of school-age girls not attending school was an indicator of the absence of services, especially water. Women are responsible for cleaning, fetching water and looking after children. Where services are

lacking and women find it difficult to cope, girls are pulled out of school to help their mothers. Without education, such girls cannot look forward to a much better future life than that of their mothers - a classic case of how the poor stay poor.

Not only does the work of women as service providers take away education and leisure

time, it also takes women's time for participating in neighbourhood management at the political level. Two years ago I was talking to a Bedouin woman in one of the unrecognized villages of Israel. These were villages that did not appear on official maps, and that had services withdrawn in the late 1960s. Asked what was the worst thing about living in an unrecognized village, this woman said, "It is difficult to say what is worst about living here. Nothing is good. But if we had water, it would be a little bearable. At least give us water."

Asked whether there were women in the village committees which were fighting against non-recognition, she said,

"there are women in the committees, though not in this village, but it is difficult for women. Involvement means a lot of travelling. We have too much work already, providing for the family...getting water..."

Similarly a group of grassroots women from Bombay, India, and Bogota, Colombia in an exchange in 1990 were surprised to find how similar their problems were, among them how to balance involvement in neighbourhood associations and household responsibilities, especially water provision and child care.

A group of women from eight African countries, meeting recently in Tanzania to "network towards Habitat II" identified lack of services as one of the most pressing issues for women in urban settlements. They called for the development and implementation of strategies for sustainable provision of urban services. Two essential ingredients for this process were identified as: involvement of communities in the process; and formulation of realistic policies on informal settlements.

As I write this, it is raining. In the informal settlements of Nairobi, where more than 50 per cent of this city's population live, there will be many who will have water in their beds but none in their water jars. Perhaps one of the results of the City Summit will be a commitment by governments to suitable policy and action on informal settlements; which will hopefully lead to the provision of services, including water. This way women might have a chance to do more creative things with their time and talents. □

Wandia Seaforth is Networking and Documentation Professional in the Women in Human Settlements Development Programme of UNCHS (Habitat).

Countdown to Istanbul is a bi-monthly publication and is available free of charge. If you would like to receive a copy, please fill out the information below and return to: The Editor, Countdown to Istanbul, P.O Box 30030, Nairobi, Kenya; Fax: 254-2-623080.

NAME

OCCUPATION

ORGANIZATION

ADDRESS

VIEWPOINT

CITIES OF SPIRIT

The human spirit should occupy centre stage in all development efforts

By Pratibha Patel and Sheetal Shah

We are living in a paradoxical age. There is a lot of uncertainty yet there is also a ray of hope. There is darkness but within that darkness, there are sparks of light.

The world we see around us is ridden with numerous problems, all of which threaten the very existence of humankind. Everyday, we are assaulted with news about countries and people in crises, e.g. Rwanda, Burundi, Somalia, Bosnia, Kobe to name a few. The majority of people on Earth are in the deadly grips of poverty and hunger: human rights are still not universal rights. There is still so much that needs to be done to save and protect the fragile and delicate environment on which all our lives depend. This is the darkness.

These problems have been brought to the attention of world governments and the people of the world. The process of positive change has begun. The Conferences and Summits of the past few years are proof of that. If we analyze the achievements since Rio, we can see the emergence of a new trend, a more holistic and humane approach to solving world problems. The emphasis has been on the well being, dignity and worth of the human individual and there has been growing awareness that the individual is central in the process of change. These processes are the sparks of light.

Habitat II will be the last in a series of United Nations Conferences. As pointed out by the United Nations Secretary General, Dr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, "Habitat II is a broad spectrum opportunity, perhaps a last chance for international collaboration in institution building". Let us use this opportunity, this last chance to quicken the process of change that has started, to deepen and make these changes more durable.

Habitat II will not merely address the issue of adequate shelter for all and the challenges of increasing urbanization. The fundamental issue it will address is how we live, that is, how to live a life which is dignified, rewarding and productive. The basic issue is Quality of Life.

If Habitat II is to be successful, then it must adopt a more holistic approach. Let us not just deal with settlements, urbanization and environmental degradation. These issues are of paramount importance but let us also develop a consciousness about living standards and quality of life based on human moral and spiritual values. Let our ultimate aim be an improvement in human well-being. We can build thousands of houses but if we cannot provide emotional and spiritual stability and security, then of what use is the security of the four walls? Just as the spirit is the core of our being, so should universal spiritual values be at the core of human development.

The Human Factor

For many of the world's inhabitants the coming years are likely to be marked by poverty, unemployment, other fundamental deprivations and social disorder. The harsh realities confronting humanity cannot be ignored. However, even under the most dire conditions and in situations that may seem hopeless, there are examples of how the human spirit is capable of

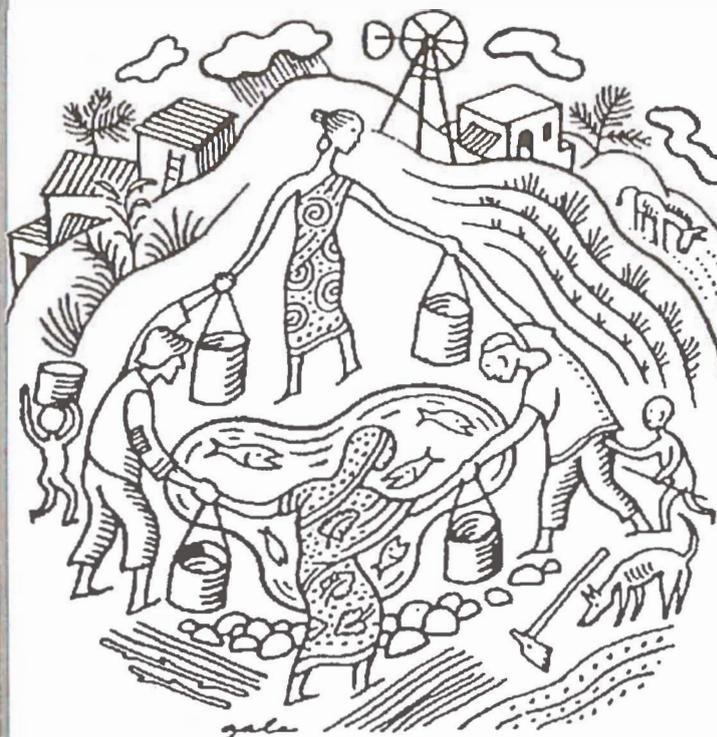
bringing forth a ray of hope.

The human factor is at the heart of development. Have you noticed the considerable determination, will and motivation of people suffering from deprivation? Their skill, self reliance, ingenuity and effort, upon which their daily struggle for survival depends, can make them competent agents for change in their circumstances, or reliable partners in implementing development programmes.

However, self-help programmes must respond to actual needs, material or other, of the community, if they are to be successful. They should also seek to involve community members in their design and execution. Equitable distribution of the fruits of economic growth will then further empower people rather than increasing their marginalization.

Poverty of Values

The root cause of poverty is a deficiency within the global human spirit. This poverty of values — the worst form of poverty — ultimately



A holistic approach is necessary if we are to successfully deal with environmental degradation.
Source: Sustainable Agriculture Newsletter

amounts to a lack of respect for the dignity of the human person and lack of self-respect. Is humanity prepared and willing to declare that the extent of poverty which now exists is simply unacceptable - morally wrong - and to take action to eradicate it?

Rather than enlarging existing money supplies, we must choose a more equitable system of distribution of existing wealth and resources. This is as much a moral choice as it is a political one. Many countries are

potentially rich in natural resources but their people are poor because world markets are not adequately open. What is required is a system of free and fair trade in which nations and traders are able to produce goods of their choice and export them freely for a fair price. Often, to help pay crippling external debts, many countries are forced to use much of their land for cash crops that are of little, if any, benefit to the people of their country. Countries must become self sufficient, produce their own food and be able to sell any surplus in the local market. Trading patterns must change before an economic disaster forces the whole world into long-term global recession. If prosperity is everyone's right then poverty is everyone's responsibility.

Ethical Environmentalism

Poverty is as great a polluter as is inappropriate industrialization. While industries continue polluting the environment to the detriment of us all, in rural areas poor people are forced to destroy forests, over-use soil and deplete water supplies simply to satisfy the basic needs of food, fuel and shelter. Thus preservation of the environment is not possible without improving the quality of life of those whose fight for survival forces them to live in ways that harm the environment.

Environmental awareness has become a worldwide phenomenon. People are becoming more conscious about the fact that wounding the environment constitutes a threat to humanity's survival. However, they are not always able, willing or sufficiently informed to accept the personal

implications of harming the environment. Some need to be helped to understand how their behaviour impacts the environment and to accept that new attitudes and behaviour are not only ethically correct but also necessary, while others must be offered the possibility of a less destructive way of life.

Wherever there are human beings, there must also be human values such as respect, honesty and benevolence. These values are as appropriate and necessary in politics and international relationships as they are in family relationships. The experience, transmission and enrichment of values can only be achieved through education.

There is an increasing perception that a better way of life requires a way of life in which values such as truth, integrity, respect, responsibility and love are expressed in action rather than in words or abstract concepts. An education that has human moral and spiritual understanding and values at its heart and the inculcation of them as its aim, is central to the realization of this dream. Values must become an integral part of the fabric of the human being before they are part of the fabric of society. It is the responsibility of each individual to dedicate time and effort to achieve this. And it is our collective responsibility to make individuals aware of the need for this re-education. □

Pratibha Patel and Sheetal Shah are teacher and student respectively at the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University, an international spiritual and educational institution affiliated to the United Nations as an NGO with consultative status on the Economic and Social Council.

UPDATE

YOUTH MAKE THEIR VOICES HEARD

By Kauna Nghinaunye and Prasad Reddy

At the World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen in March this year, Dr. Wally N'Dow, Secretary-General of Habitat II, said, "Youth in this Conference will have as much ground as they have the courage to take". Since the statement was made, youth have been determined to make these words become a reality; they are making every effort to make their voices heard and to impress upon governments that the problems of youth need to be addressed in the context of rapid urbanization.

Following the support given to them by Dr. Wally N'Dow, youth organizations who attended the Social Summit decided to actively participate in all UN meetings leading up to the HABITAT II conference to be held at Istanbul in 1996. They identified some key issues and priorities to help organize youth input in a way that would allow the maximum creativity and flexibility but also co-ordination towards this international effort.

According to UN statistics, in 1992 the world youth population was one-third of the world population. Today almost 80 per cent of these youth live in rapidly urbanizing cities. The youth living in rural areas will become more marginalised than they already are. In developing countries over 60 per cent of the population is under the age of 30 years; 30 per cent of this group is in the age group of 14-25 years. It is further estimated that the year 2000, half of humanity will live and work in cities and towns, while the other half will increasingly rely on cities and towns for its economic survival.

Considering the above statistics and projections, a document prepared by the Habitat II Secretariat, with contributions from Kenya Association of Youth Organizations and Youth Activities, acknowledges that "with high population growth in many developing countries and with young people being the bulk of the

work-force, youth will constitute a substantial share of the urban population".

In its statement read at the Plenary Session at PrepComII In Nairobi, the Youth Caucus said, "Young people often look to the cities for employment, shelter and development. But too often the stress of unsustainable growth and mismanagement of these communities turns their visions of hope into visions of despair. We all know that irrespective of how much a society is civilized, it can never be satisfied watching young people meeting the sunset of their opportunities at the very dawn of their existence."

It is unfortunate that there are no reliable statistics on how many young people there are who have no access to affordable shelter. There are many young people around the world who are denied the basic right of living without the fear of eviction. Then there is the problem of unemployment among the youth, which leads

them to crime, violence and drug abuse. As a result, youth are portrayed by the general public as agents of destruction, violence and apathy.

Saddled with such problems, it is only just and welcoming that the youth be made an integral part in the preparatory process leading to Habitat II, dubbed the "City Summit". This process has already given the youth a big boost, and has empowered them to take greater responsibility in decision-making and action towards improving urban life and environment. The various youth representatives from Africa, Asia, North and South America, and Europe are in the process of holding consultations with their local youth councils and formulating a plan of action for youth.

Building our Global Home is the motto for youth involvement both at the Habitat II Conference and for their future activities. They have already established a communication strategy in each region and in the Habitat offices in Nairobi and New York. These main focal points have youth representatives who will be responsible for developing the appropriate communication strategy for the region. Representatives from Europe, Latin America, Africa, Asia and Turkey are already busy lobbying with and challenging their government representatives at the UN to develop strategies to improve the situation of the youth in a rapidly urbanizing world.

The youth are also recruiting and training youth volunteers from around the world, finding sponsors to finance the publication of promotional and public relations materials. A fifteen-minute video montage called the Youth Video depicting the global situation of youth and Habitat II issues is being produced. This video would serve as an educational tool for schools and teachers, as a visual promotion aid, and as a means of raising awareness of the Conference in the telecommunications programmes of broadcasters around the world.

Very soon, the youth will be launching a newsletter for the specific purpose of reporting the work done by Youth for Habitat II and the Habitat II Secretariat. Another ambitious project that the youth have undertaken is called "Campaign Istanbul". The youth participating in the upcoming Habitat II Conference will be focussing on civic involvement in their own communities, and especially in the city of Istanbul and surrounding areas. They are identifying volunteer activities in consultation with Turkish Youth Organizations and with the Host Country Preparatory Committee for Habitat II. This project will involve international youth in volunteer activities around Istanbul.

For more information, contact Selman Erguden, Co-ordinator, Host Country Liaison and Conference Preparations at the Habitat II secretariat: P.O. Box 30030, Nairobi, Kenya; Tel: 254-2-623033; Fax: 254-2-623080/624266; Telex: 22996 UNHAB KE; Cable: UNHABITAT; E-Mail:habitat2@unep.no

Extensive consultations with media personnel are being held in the hope that a multi-media satellite link-up can be set up. These broadcasts, if materialized, will be from each of the five continents for a specific time and day during Habitat II. The live link-up would reinforce the themes of solidarity among the world's youth who are working on these issues and will highlight the commonality of their problems and the solutions.

However, the youth need the support of their local governments. Further, they need encouragement and partnership with the UN, the NGOs,



Youth representatives at PrepCom II.

the Private Sector and the Media. The Youth Statement read at the Plenary Session, summarizes the yearnings of the youth very well: "It is imperative that youth from all parts of the world participate actively in all relevant levels of decision-making processes because it affects their lives today and has implications for the future. In addition to their intellectual contributions and their ability to mobilize support, they bring unique perspectives that need to be taken into account."

The enthusiasm and the energy of the youth at the Nairobi PrepCom II no doubt posed a challenge to the government representatives present here. The youth are making definite proposals to the governments. They wish to see that governments and the international community commit themselves to increasing overall youth participation and especially support them at a proposed International Youth Consultation to be held before the PrepCom III in raising adequate resources to achieve this goal. They also propose that, as a commitment made in Agenda 21 at the Rio Summit, youth representation be definitely included in the national delegations at Habitat II.

There is no doubt that youth are enthusiastic to help improve the deteriorating habitat of the World. Their enthusiasm, however, will bear fruit only when the governments see their enthusiasm, not as a threat, but as an offer to help to BUILD A GLOBAL HOME FOR ALL. □

Kauna Nghinaunye is the African representative for Youth for Habitat II and co-ordinator of the Habitat II Youth newsletter. Prasad Reddy is a freelance journalist from India and a member of the Franciscans International, an NGO with consultative status with the United Nations.

update/ PrepCom II Highlights

SPIRIT OF PARTNERSHIP STRESSED AS HABITAT II

PREPCOM CONCLUDES:

DRAFT ACTION PLAN TO BE FURTHER REFINED

After lengthy negotiations, the Second Preparatory Committee (PrepCom II) for the Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) established an open-ended drafting group to continue preparing an action plan for consideration at Habitat II. The draft is to be reviewed at the next meeting of the Preparatory Committee (PrepCom III), which will take place in February 1996 in New York.

Given the importance of mayors, municipalities and local authorities in the success of the "City Summit", and in the implementation of its recommendations, PrepCom II recommended that the General Assembly authorize representatives of local authorities to participate without the right to vote, in the deliberations of the Conference.

During its two-week session which began on 24 April, the Preparatory Committee developed and informally reviewed a draft plan of action for the Conference which will serve as the basis for intersessional deliberations by the drafting group. The draft comprises a preamble, statement of goals and principles, and set of commitments to be undertaken by Governments in support of the objectives of Habitat II. The main themes of the Conference, which will take place in June 1996 in Istanbul, will be: "Sustainable Human Settlements in an Urbanizing World" and "Adequate Shelter for All".

"Istanbul will be the gateway to development into the next century, and this Conference will be the final conference to concretize the initiatives of previous conferences," said Dr. Wally N'Dow, Secretary-General of Habitat II. The United Nations Secretary-General had charged the secretariat with bringing the private sector into fuller participation in the conference process, he said, adding "We have achieved the spirit of partnership that must animate our preparations for Istanbul." He further pointed out that a negotiating process had been established at an early stage, which would minimize the danger of serious disagreement at PrepCom III.

Martti Lujanen, Chairman of the Preparatory Committee, said the meeting had taken a significant and unprecedented step in requesting the General Assembly to change

United Nations conference rules to allow for the participation of local government authorities in their own right. It was hoped that this initiative, along with increased participation by other partners from the non-governmental and private sectors, would enhance the ability of the Conference to come up with innovative, practical recommendations for improvement of the urban environment.

In the next nine months, the drafting group will continue with the refinement of the draft Global Plan of Action to facilitate the negotiation process at the Third Preparatory Meeting for Habitat II. In accordance with a decision by the Preparatory Committee, the current meeting has decided that the informal drafting group should meet in Nairobi no later than 31 August 1995. (In fact, the drafting group will meet 17-21 July in Nairobi.) If a second meeting is needed, it would occur in New York prior to the end of October 1995, to produce a second draft, which would be forwarded to all Member States for comments. The final draft would then be circulated at least six weeks prior to the Third Preparatory Meeting 12-23 February 1996.

DRAFT GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION OR AN URBAN AGENDA 21 — HIGHLIGHTS

Although delegates did not reach agreement on a text for the Global Plan of Action, several documents were produced as a basis for further discussion by the drafting group.

An informal working group of Prepcom II completed a first reading of the draft Global Plan of Action, highlights of which follow.

Preamble

The draft states that more than a billion people are living in poverty without adequate shelter, and that inadequate shelter and homelessness is a growing problem in both developed and developing countries. Among other things, it stresses that safeguards against air, soil and water pollution and environmental impact assessments should be made mandatory for building plan approval throughout the world. The preamble also calls for strengthening the

constitutional position and operational capacity of local governments as a key element in fulfilment of the Global Plan of Action and draws attention to the housing needs of migrants, refugees, internally displaced persons, youth and children. The importance of the role of women with respect to human settlements is also stressed.

Statement of Principles

In the draft statement of principles, eight key principles are outlined: Peace; Family; International Solidarity, Cooperation and Assistance; Government Responsibility and Civic Engagement; Sustainability; Equity; Livability and Partnerships.

According to the draft, a just, comprehensive and lasting peace is a pre-requisite and essential condition to achieve sustainable human settlements development. International solidarity, cooperation and assistance is indispensable for responding to the challenges of global urbanization, promoting effective policies, strengthening cooperation among States, local authorities and communities; and mobilizing resources.

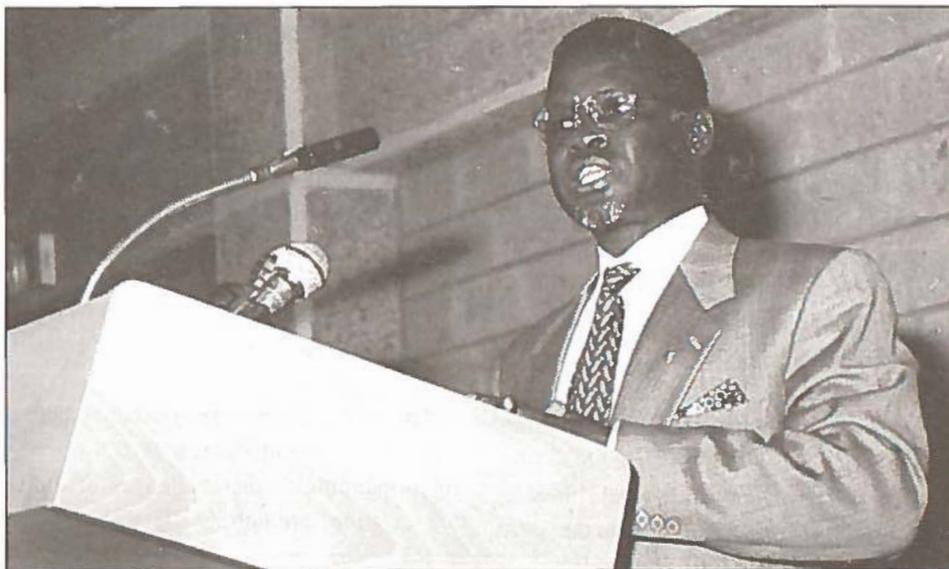
Among other things, Government responsibilities include providing guidance and planning, developing laws and regulations; assuring awareness of fundamental civic rights; mobilizing resources; ensuring transparent, effective, human settlements management; assuring security; maintaining property rights and assisting vulnerable groups.

According to the draft, all human settlements should be planned, developed and improved so as to ensure social, cultural, environmental and economic sustainability. Characteristics of equitable and livable human settlement are spelled out.

On the question of partnerships, the draft states that partnerships, between individuals, families, groups, communities, private and public sectors, countries, regions, and the international community, are essential to the development of sustainable human settlements and the provision of adequate shelter for all.

International Commitments

In the international commitments section of the draft GPA, Governments state that they would promote international peace and security as a precondition for sustainable human settlements development. They also would promote urgent and generous financial assistance for the dignified return of refugees and displaced persons to their countries or areas of origin and their resettlement in adequate and sustainable housing. Under the draft, Governments would further agree to promote technical and financial support for national plans to implement the GPA.



Dr. Wally N'Dow addressing delegates at the opening.

Donors and multilateral development banks would be encouraged to support policies to meet the goals of sustainable human settlements development and of adequate shelter for all.

National Commitments

Governments agreed according to the draft to commit themselves to, among other things, providing specific support to the poor, disadvantaged and vulnerable groups whose needs for adequate shelter were not met by existing housing markets; balancing development of urban and rural settlements; decentralizing and empowering local governments; and providing security and adequate shelter to the displaced, refugees and asylum seekers.

To this end, Governments would undertake activities at the national level which include: promoting partnerships among all actors, particularly between public and private partners; protecting people against unfair eviction from their homes and land; developing national

economic policies and strategies to ensure changes in consumption patterns and industrial practices that will conserve, renew and replace resources; ensuring a legal and regulatory framework to facilitate transparent, responsive, accountable, just, effective and efficient local government; ensuring that the due rights of the poor are respected and enabling them, especially through consultative mechanisms, to take a leading role in their own development.

Best Practices

Prepcom II also made recommendations

concerning the criteria for nomination and selection of "best practices" for presentation at Habitat II. Such practices will be valuable inputs to the conference, allowing for the sharing of information on effective ways to address urban problems. Three criteria for nomination of best practices have been selected.

First, best practices must demonstrate a **positive and tangible impact** on improving the living environment of people in areas such as affordable housing and services, extension of safe water supply and sanitation, inner-city rehabilitation, safe and healthy building materials, pollution reduction, improved waste collection, crime prevention, job creation and improved disaster preparedness. The Habitat II secretariat is particularly interested in gender-sensitive initiatives, that is, those which take into account gender specific roles, responsibilities and access to resources, ensuring that the needs of both men and women are met.

Best practices should also be based on **partnerships** among at least two actors such as

national government, local government, NGOs, the private sector, the media, academia, civic leaders and human settlements professionals.

Third, best practices should be **sustainable**, bringing about lasting change in at least one area such as the following — legislation, regulation, social policies, governance and management.

Press Conference Highlights

At a closing press conference to round-up PrepCom II, **Dr. Wally N'Dow, Secretary-General of Habitat II**, was joined by Mr. Martti Lujanen, Chairman of the Preparatory Committee, Regional Group Chairpersons, representatives of local government associations, youth, and various Government leaders.

Dr. N'Dow described the road to Istanbul as "difficult, exciting, full of challenges...but full of opportunities". One of those opportunities concerned the involvement of municipal authorities. **Mr. Lujanen** said "To create a structure is historical, to create understanding of the importance of local authorities is even more important." **Paul Bongers**, speaking on behalf of local authorities, stated that "Local government is government", and as such should be represented in national committees, contribute to national action plans, and be represented in delegations.

The role of the private sector was emphasized by **H.E. Mr. Amath Dansokho of Senegal**, Vice-Chair of the Africa Group, while Dr. N'Dow explained the specifics of their participation at Istanbul: an international trade fair, a private-sector conference with some 500-700 participants, and UNCHS advocacy for national governments to include the private sector. **Youth representative Ms. Maria Figueroa** said that they had also drawn up their own action plan towards more sustainable human settlements, an international youth consultation to decide priorities, a campaign to instill a civic sense, and youth's own best practices — all around the theme of "**Building our global home**".

The Regional Group representatives agreed that the session was a success. They spoke of the vision represented by the Conference itself, of the consensus already reached, and stressed partnership and commitment. **H.E. Professor Jonathan Ng'eno** on behalf of the **Government of Kenya** mentioned that the second session had made it clear that while African Governments were still concerned with rural areas, they recognized and accepted the global movement towards urbanization. □

PREPARING FOR THE NEW URBAN FUTURE

By Martin Valatin

Between 24 April and 5 May, 1995, delegates - mainly diplomats and civil servants - from all over the world - met at the UNCHS (Habitat) headquarters in Nairobi to help prepare a draft Plan of Action to be endorsed by world leaders at the Istanbul Summit. Presenting the organization with a cheque for US\$ 1 million, Michael Cohen of the World Bank said he hoped the document would be "as simple as possible, easy enough for a child to understand".

U.N. agreements of this sort, reached by consensus, form recommendations which are not necessarily binding on the signatories - in this case a series of principles and goals followed by commitments to be carried through by national plans of action. How far these plans reflect reality or are implemented in practice will vary from country to country (there are already rumbles about producing an alternative plan for the U.K.) but part of the value of the process lies in its function as a tool to understand the dynamic of what is happening in the world's cities or as a kind of lens to bring these challenges into focus.

Cities worldwide are growing at a rate of a quarter million inhabitants per day; half the world's population will soon be living in urban areas (expected to be over 65 per cent by 2030) and more than half the urban population in the Southern Hemisphere lives in "informal" shanty settlements. This is the "New Urban Future". Despite claims that developments in communications mean that cities are losing their function, pressures like G.A.T.T. and agricultural mechanization mean people in rural areas increasingly see their chances of survival enhanced by urban dwelling.

In the Europe of a century ago, progress was understood in terms of stamping out rural practices by means of regulations. Yet people who know how to live frugally and recycle waste could be an enormously positive force in the creation of more sustainable ways of life (though too often it is their dependence on cash incomes that drives them out of villages). The challenge is to provide space for people's creative energies before they become "citified" and to find a balance between making newcomers to the city welcome and encouraging further exodus from rural areas. As Charles Correa puts it, "Every objective of today's environmentalist, including the recycling waste (and) balanced eco-systems, has existed for thousands of years in the vernacular habitat of the peoples of this planet. What doesn't exist is the urban context in which these solutions are viable. Our responsibility, then is to help modify our cities so these solutions become viable."

The issue of rights and responsibilities was the focus of much debate at PrepCom II. The U.S. delegation's tactical objection to the concept of "Housing Rights", which although dismissed as "a blip on our radar screens" amounted to the diplomatic equivalent of kicking sand in people's faces. (As a statement of intent rather than a legal obligation, housing is included in the 1948 Declaration on Human Rights and numerous successive treaties and conventions; the right to housing is enshrined in the constitutions of over fifty countries and as recently as May 1993 the U.S. agreed to a resolution by consensus on "the Human Right to Adequate Housing".) The U.S. argument was for "right" to be replaced by "need" (to be satisfied by the "market").

Ambassador Nelson Lavina of the Philippines stated, "The U.S. has opened a can of worms. Now the issue will go to Istanbul, which is a political forum, and where politically they will lose; legally too." But this may mean that important matters drop off the agenda. To quote the late President Truman, "If you can't convince them, confuse them."

The most memorable quote came from David Hales of USAID who said, "Housing rights? You might as well talk of mashed potato." Maybe there will always be those with a vested interest in obscurity - quite a number of delegations were "glad the Americans are taking a firm line on it so that we can slipstream in behind them".

Martin Valatin is a representative of ARC-PEACE (International Architects Designers Planners for Social Responsibility), an NGO in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES TO TAKE MAJOR ROLE IN HABITAT II

On May 1, 1995, the Secretary-General of Habitat II, Dr. Wally N'Dow, officially handed over signed copies of the Lisbon Protocol to the representatives of international associations of local authorities. This is the first time ever that the U.N. has signed a protocol with the worldwide collaboration of local authorities and their associations, called G4+.

The protocol was issued in Lisbon on 16 March this year after a meeting of presidents of the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA), the World Association of Metropolises (Metropolis), Summit Conference of Major Cities of the World (Summit) and the United Towns Organization (UTO) on behalf of all the other associations of G4+ and the Secretary-General of Habitat II. In addition to the four organizations mentioned, G4+ is comprised of Eurocities from Europe, Arab Towns Organization (ATO) from the Arab countries, Citynet from Asia, Union of African Cities from Africa and local government associations from Latin America and from North America. The protocol commits these associations of local authorities to take a major role in preparations at the national level, in deliberations at Habitat II itself and in the follow-up to the Conference.

The Lisbon Protocol cites the Secretary-General of the United Nations Dr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali's call for local authorities and city governments to play a full role in the Habitat II which was made at the opening of the first Preparatory Committee in Geneva last year:

"Because so many of the problems and solutions being addressed by Agenda 21 have their roots in local activities, the participation and cooperation of local authorities will be a determining factor in fulfilling its objective. Local authorities construct, operate and maintain economic, social and environmental infrastructure, oversee planning processes, establish local environmental policies and regulations and assist in implementing national and subnational environmental policies. As the level of governance closest to the people, they play a vital role in education, mobilizing and responding to the public to promote sustainable development."

Dr. N'Dow called the local authorities "the real captains of human settlements" and a "sine qua non for Habitat II."

"We cannot afford not to have the local

authorities with us", Dr. N'Dow told the delegates from the second meeting of the Habitat II Preparatory Committee attending the briefing.

Mr. M. Diop, the Mayor of Dakar, said, *"It is the first time that the United Nations has signed a protocol with a group of organizations representing cities. Through this the whole world becomes a partner in the Habitat II process."*

Mr. Paul Bongers, Special Consultant for G4+ said, "The issues at stake do not only concern symptoms, but rather the root causes. Local levels of government are not simply interest groups or non-governmental organizations. Local authorities have the ultimate responsibility to their constituencies."

The first meeting of the preparatory committee held in Geneva last year stressed the need for national delegations to comprise a range of key partners including local authorities. The Lisbon Protocol confirms the commitment of local authorities to participate within the national committees and delegations to ensure a successful outcome for the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements: Habitat II. □

DUBAI PREPARES FOR BEST PRACTICES CONFERENCE

The Municipality of Dubai, often described as one of the best-managed municipalities in the developing world, will financially support 8 of the 20 Best Practices selected for presentation at an international conference to be held in November this year, according to Mr. Obaid Salem Al Shamsi, Assistant Director General for Administrative Affairs, Dubai Municipality. Of the 20 Best Practices, 2 are from North America, 6 are from Europe, 3 are from West Asia, 2 are from Latin America, 4 are from Asia and 3 are from Africa.

Best Practices are defined as "actions, initiatives or projects which have resulted in tangible and measurable improvements in the quality of life and in the living environments of people in a sustainable way". These actions must be easily replicable and must be the result of partnerships between NGOs, local governments, central governments and the private sector.

Jointly organised by the Municipality of Dubai and UNCHS (Habitat), the Dubai International Conference for Habitat II on Best Practices in Improving Living Environments,

which will be held from 19-22 November 1995, will provide an opportunity for representatives of local authorities, national governments, NGOs and the private and professional sectors to share, discuss and learn from each others' successful practices in tackling some of the world's most pressing shelter and urbanization problems.

Best Practices selected for Dubai will also form part of an exhibition during the Habitat II Conference in Istanbul.

ISTANBUL 'CENTRE OF THE WORLD'

PREPARES TO HOST 'CITY SUMMIT'

ISTANBUL, SITUATED MIDWAY between North and South, East and West, is ideally suited to host Habitat II, the Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, to be held there from 3 to 14 June 1996. Displaying in its structure elements of the Byzantine, Roman, Ottoman and Turkish civilizations, it is at the same time a laboratory of problems and solutions. With an estimated population of 10 to 12 million, it is gearing itself to become a world city as it improves its infrastructure: transport, communications and so on.

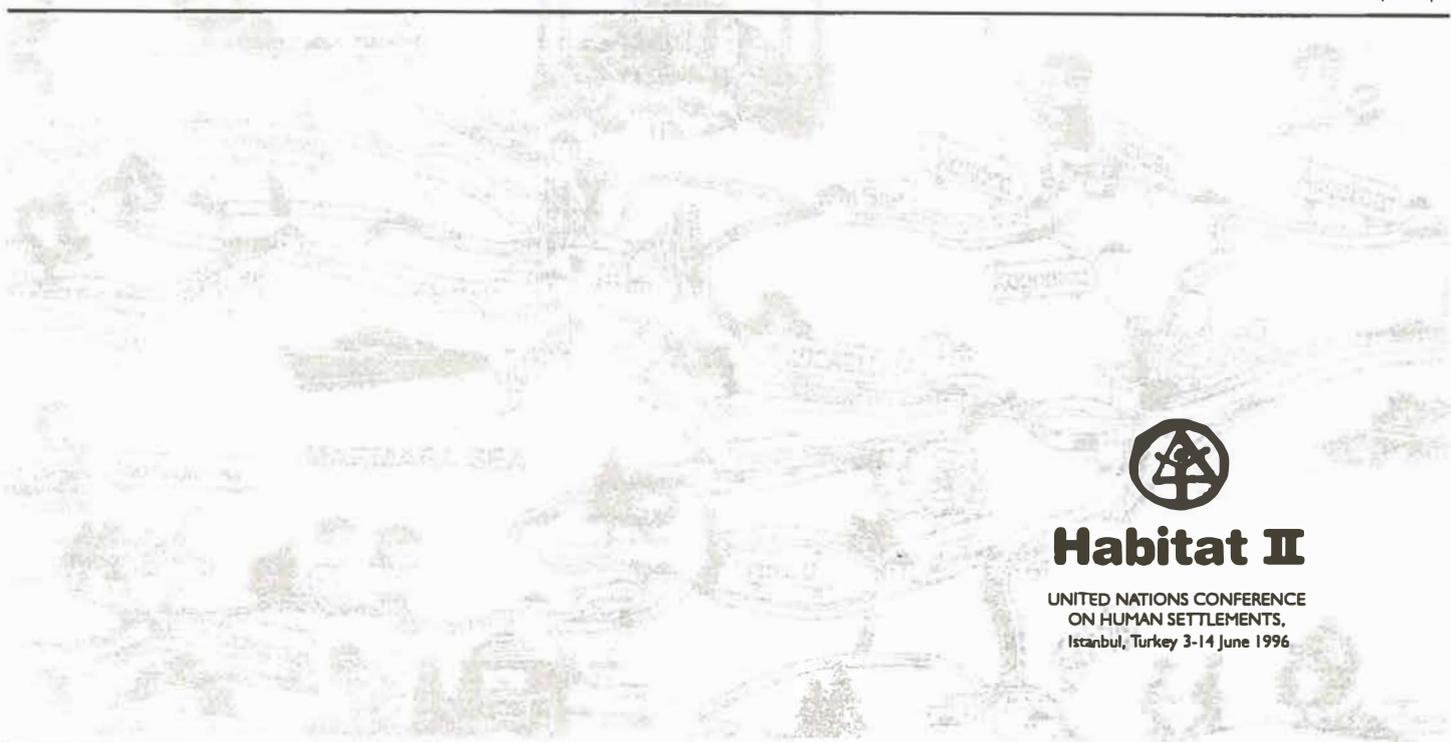
Mr. Yigit Guloksuz, President of the Housing Development Administration of Turkey, described progress in Conference preparations and intended facilities at a press conference during PrepCom II. The "Conference Valley", located in the middle of Istanbul, overlooking the Bosphorus, would provide a convenient location for the Conference itself and parallel activities. The Valley, which will become a pedestrian area closed off to non-participants, boasts a congress centre, two cultural centres, a concert hall, an open-air amphitheatre, a

convention hall — plus the meeting halls and classrooms of Istanbul Technical University.

Among the parallel events will be an International Trade Fair on Housing and Construction Technologies and Human Settlements; it will focus on low-cost, environmentally-sound and appropriate products and technologies. The Habitat II secretariat is organizing an exhibition on best practices; the hosts have commissioned two exhibitions: one on the evolution of the city of Istanbul and the second on housing and settlements in Anatolia.

Officers of the United Nations Department of Public Information (DPI) in New York and the Habitat II secretariat in Nairobi had recently visited the site. They described the modern facilities available for press in the cultural landmark: electronic hook-ups, closed-circuit television coverage of the plenary, venues for press conferences. The Turkish delegation also reassured journalists and delegates of security in Istanbul, which would provide a platform for all participants to express their views and opinions, and participate in discussions.

Illustration by Faruk Kapak



Habitat II

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE
ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS,
Istanbul, Turkey 3-14 June 1996

IMPORTANT DATES

28-30 August 1995

Ecology 1996, Gothenburg, Sweden

3-7 September 1995

32nd IULA World Congress, The Hague, Netherlands

4-15 September 1995

Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, China

10-13 September 1995

Habitat Urban Finance Conference, Washington D.C., USA

25-29 September 1995

XXIII IAHS World Housing Congress, Singapore

2 October 1995

World Habitat Day, Curitiba, Brazil

16-20 October

Regional Meeting of African Ministers, Johannesburg, South Africa

19-22 November 1995

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

December 1995

Final National Reports due

12-23 February 1996

Third meeting of the Preparatory Committee for Habitat II, New York, USA

3-14 June 1996

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

The Habitat II Partners Liaison Team has a number of documents available upon request for interested NGOs and other partners. These include:

Guide for NGOs and CBOs to Habitat II
NGO Accreditation Form for Habitat II
Rules and Procedures for NGO Participation in Habitat II
Briefing Note on NGO Participation at the Second Preparatory Meeting in Nairobi
Contact Information for the NGO International Facilitating Committee
List of NGOs Attending Preparatory Committee Meeting in Nairobi
List of NGOs Accredited to Habitat II
Habitat II Information on the Internet

In addition, we can provide NGOs and CBOs with other Habitat II information and official documents. For more information, please contact the Habitat II Partners Liaison Team at:

PO. Box 30030, Nairobi, Kenya
Tel: 254-2-624-243
Fax: 254-2-623-080
Email: habitat2@unep.no

FEEDBACK

INFORMATIVE BULLETIN

Thank you for Countdown to Istanbul. I find it very informative and will forever treasure it in my reference library.

Malaki Otieno
Machakos, Kenya

LOCAL GOVERNMENT INVOLVEMENT

We appreciate your concern about local government involvement in localizing Agenda 21. We in Pallisa Town Council in Uganda appreciate your efforts in promoting Best Practices. In this regard, we find your publication Countdown to Istanbul very informative and educative.

I.O. Naigere
Mayor
Pallisa Town Council
Uganda

BEST PUBLICATION

As a founder member of the International Co-operative Housing Committee, I have been involved in global housing issues long before UNCHS was established. I must say that Countdown to Istanbul is the best and most useful publication I have ever received from UNCHS.

Peter Elderfield
Director
Building and Social Housing Foundation
Coalville, U.K.

INTERESTING IDEAS

I was glad to read Fantu Cheru's and Shlomo Angel's articles entitled "Blessing or Curse? The Effects of SAPs on the Urban Poor in Africa" and "The Future Lies in a Global System of Competitive Cities" respectively in the February issue of Countdown to Istanbul. There were many ideas in these articles that interested me, including the declining living standards in Africa despite market forces being set in place, the plight of the young in cities and villages, the unimportance of "community" in an age of weakened nation-states and that settlements/cities are for everyone. I look forward to seeing more of these writers' work in print.

Lance Olsen
Missoula, MT, USA