

HABITAT II CONFERENCE: PREPCOM III:
ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

BACKGROUND: THE THIRD AND FINAL MEETING OF THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS (HABITAT II, ISTANBUL JUNE 3-14, 1996) WILL BE HELD AT UN HEADQUARTERS IN NEW YORK FROM FEBRUARY 5-16. THE PRIME OBJECTIVE OF PARTICIPANTS AT PREPCOM III WILL BE TO SEEK TO FINALIZE THE TEXT OF THE "HABITAT AGENDA," THE FINAL DOCUMENT WHICH IS EXPECTED TO EMERGE FROM THE HABITAT II CONFERENCE. AS WAS THE CASE WITH PREVIOUS UNITED NATIONS GLOBAL MEGA-CONFERENCES, THE HABITAT AGENDA HAS GONE THROUGH NUMEROUS REVISIONS AND DURING THE PREVIOUS TWO PREPCOMS AND, MORE RECENTLY, AT INTERSESSIONAL MEETINGS OF A SMALL INFORMAL DRAFTING GROUP. THE UNITED STATES STILL HAS CONSIDERABLE DIFFICULTIES WITH THE CURRENT TEXT, AND HAD REQUESTED NUMEROUS POSTS TO DEMARCHE HOST GOVERNMENTS IN PREPARATION FOR PREPCOM III. THE UNITED STATES WILL FIELD A STRONG INTERAGENCY DELEGATION TO PREPCOM III TO BE HEADED, EX OFFICIO, BY HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND RESEARCH MICHAEL STEGMAN.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK: BECAUSE PREPCOM III PRESENTS THE LAST OPPORTUNITY FOR MEMBER STATES TO REFASHION THE HABITAT AGENDA INTO A POSITIVE, FORWARD-LOOKING DOCUMENT PRIOR TO THE OPENING OF THE CONFERENCE IN JUNE, THE UNITED STATES BELIEVES THAT COMMITTEE WORK SHOULD BE ORGANIZED IN A MANNER TO MAKE OPTIMAL USE OF THE TWO-WEEK TIME PERIOD. IN THIS RESPECT WE ARE ENCOURAGED THAT PLENARY SESSIONS WILL BE KEPT TO A MINIMUM AND THERE WILL BE NO GENERAL DEBATE (I.E., NO NATIONAL SPEECHES). ACCORDING TO THE ANNOTATED AGENDA, AFTER THE PLENARY OPENING SESSION ON FEBRUARY 5, WORK WILL BEGIN IMMEDIATELY IN TWO WORKING GROUPS OF THE WHOLE AS FOLLOWS: WORKING GROUP I WILL CONSIDER THE STATUS OF PREPARATIONS FOR THE CONFERENCE (AGENDA ITEM 3), WHILE WORKING GROUP II WILL FOCUS ON REWORKING AND (HOPEFULLY) FINALIZING THE HABITAT AGENDA DOCUMENT (AGENDA ITEM 4). ACCORDING TO THE PROPOSED SCHEDULE, WORKING GROUP I WILL MEET FOR ONLY A DAY AND A HALF AND THEN ADJOURN, WHEREAS WORKING GROUP II WILL MEET THROUGHOUT THE FIRST WEEK (THE SCHEDULE FOR THE SECOND WEEK IS TO BE DECIDED BY THE PREPCOM BUREAU ON FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 9).

UNITED STATES PROPOSAL: WE BELIEVE THAT FULL, OPTIMAL USE SHOULD BE MADE OF BOTH WORKING GROUPS IN CONSIDERING AND REDRAFTING THE HABITAT AGENDA. IN ITS CURRENT DRAFT (DATED OCTOBER 13, 1995) THE FINAL DOCUMENT IS POORLY WRITTEN IN PLACES, CONTAINS CONSIDERABLE OVERLAPPING PORTIONS, OMITS SOME KEY POINTS (E.G., THE DEMOGRAPHIC ASPECTS OF URBANIZATION) AND CONTAINS SEVERAL FORMULATIONS WHICH THE UNITED STATES CANNOT ACCEPT (E.G., ON TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER). CLEARLY, THE DOCUMENT WILL NEED A GOOD DEAL OF WORK, AND PREPCOM III SHOULD BE ORGANIZED AND CONDUCTED SO THAT MAXIMUM ATTENTION CAN BE FOCUSED ON THIS TASK DURING THE TWO WEEKS.

WE THEREFORE PROPOSE THAT WORKING GROUP I CONTINUE IN SESSION THROUGHOUT THE FIRST WEEK (AFTER IT HAS FINISHED CONSIDERING THE STATUS OF PREPARATIONS, CURRENTLY SCHEDULED TO END THE AFTERNOON OF FEBRUARY 6) AND THAT IT BE ASSIGNED THE TASK OF REWORKING PARTS OF THE HABITAT AGENDA, WORKING IN TANDEM WITH WORKING GROUP II. (WE RECOGNIZE THAT, GIVEN THE INCOMPLETE STATUS OF PREPARATIONS, WORKING GROUP I MAY NOT COMPLETE ITS WORK ON THIS AGENDA ITEM UNTIL AFTER FEBRUARY 6, BUT WE HOPE IT COULD TAKE UP CONSIDERATION OF PARTS OF THE HABITAT AGENDA AS SOON AS IT IS FINISHED WITH AGENDA ITEM 3.) A REASONABLE DIVISION OF LABOR BETWEEN THE TWO WORKING GROUPS WOULD BE AS FOLLOWS:

WORKING GROUP I TO FOCUS ON PARTS I, II AND III (PREAMBLE, GOALS AND PRINCIPLES, COMMITMENTS).

WORKING GROUP II TO FOCUS ON PART IV (GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION: STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION), WHICH COMPRISES THE BULK OF THE DOCUMENT. THIS IS ONLY A NOTIONAL DIVISION OF LABOR AND COULD BE ADJUSTED AS CIRCUMSTANCES WARRANT DURING THE PREPCOM.

WE HOPE THAT THE PREPCOM BUREAU AND PARTICIPATING DELEGATIONS SHARE OUR SENSE OF URGENCY IN DEVOTING MAXIMUM SECRETARIAT AND DELEGATION RESOURCES TO THE VITAL TASK OF SEEKING TO COMPLETE THE HABITAT AGENDA AT THIS PREPCOM. WE WOULD POINT OUT IN THIS REGARD THAT THE FINAL PREPCOMS FOR THE PREVIOUS UN GLOBAL MEGA-CONFERENCES ALSO FOLLOWED THIS PATTERN OF DIVIDING UP THE DRAFT FINAL DOCUMENT AND ASSIGNING INDIVIDUAL CHAPTERS TO TWO WORKING GROUPS OF THE WHOLE FOR NEGOTIATION AND REDRAFTING.