



# Habitat II

## Spirit of partnership reinforced as PrepCom III concludes

UNITED NATIONS— Dr. Wally N'Dow, Secretary-General of the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) said today that the major achievement of the third session of the Preparatory Committee Meeting (PrepCom III) was "the recognition of the importance of partnerships between national governments, local authorities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector".

"At this PrepCom, the right of NGOs and local authorities to provide suggestions and contributions during the negotiations was reinforced," Dr. N'Dow added. "These partners have actively participated in this meeting and will have a strong role in Istanbul. This establishes a precedence for the future involvement of civil society in United Nations deliberations."

Dr. N'Dow said that since the Habitat I Conference, which took place in Vancouver, Canada, in 1976, it has become apparent that in addition to providing leadership, the role of national governments now includes facilitating community action.

"People in communities must be encouraged to act. However, they need the support of governments who have a major role to play in fostering this process because any process that does not have the full participation of people has no future at all."

Dr. N'Dow said that PrepCom III had made significant progress in a number of areas, including a commitment by delegations to the goal of gender equality in human settlements development. However, he noted that the meeting had also generated intense debate on a number of issues notably the right to housing, resources and post-Conference follow-up.

When asked why the question of housing rights had proved to be so contentious, Dr. N'Dow said that part of the problem lay in the fact that there was no definitive international legal instrument dealing solely with the right to housing. However, he said he was confident that this issue would be resolved at Habitat II. "The important thing is that we continue to work together in the spirit of cooperation and stimulate progress in the United Nations system and in international cooperation," he concluded.

This third session of the Preparatory Committee for Habitat II, which concluded today, was attended by all United Nations member States and 128 non-governmental organizations. The main task of this final PrepCom before Habitat II was to negotiate the Habitat Agenda — Habitat II's Global Plan of Action. Over 20,000 participants are expected at the Habitat II Conference, which will take place in Istanbul, Turkey in June this year.

**For more information, please contact:**

Christina Engfeldt  
Chief, Information and External Relations  
UNCHS (Habitat)  
P.O. Box 30030  
Nairobi, Kenya  
Fax: 254-2-624060  
E-mail: [christina.engfeldt@unep.no](mailto:christina.engfeldt@unep.no)

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