

Solidarity forum is set

BY JEAN K. LEE

Habitat Secretary General Wally N'Dow is hosting the Forum on Human Solidarity on Saturday, June 8, from 9:30 AM to 5:30 PM at the Ciragan Palace. A group of the world's leading thinkers will debate on how human values impact successful cities and the future prosperity of the human race.

"Everyone at the Habitat Conference should attend," said Peter Oberlander, Senior Advisor to N'Dow. "Solidarity among people is the sense of cooperation that arises from common responsibilities or interest, from a community of attitudes and values. Despite differences of class, race or region, it is the common daily needs that impel people to work together. Nowhere is that human cooperative spirit more needed than in the cities of the world."

Oberlander, who was among the key officials responsible for Habitat I in Vancouver 20 years ago, added: "Urban life demands human solidarity to survive and to balance social, economic, environmental and political demands. Individual freedom and creativity foster a

synergy of intense human interaction. If urban life demonstrates the highest achievements of human solidarity, urban life may also threaten it. Humanity at close quarters is most creative but also most vulnerable. The strains of propinquity, vast disparities in wealth, housing, sanitation, nourishment and health care can be destructive; moral relatives make the urban soil ripe for crime and disease; with continuing environmental degradation cities breed as much human misery as they do human glory. Cities represent a unique human achievement; they are our longest surviving artifacts and greatest challenge to the 21st century." Oberlander said that the concept behind organizing the Saturday forum was that "Solidarity allows people to move in the same direction based on the sense of shared humanity, linked by common goals beyond individual nation states. Humanity has needs that only the city can provide," Oberlander said.

The forum will explore how the city—and the ever growing part of humanity that depends on it—can survive and how human solidarity, necessary for that survival, can be stimulated and nurtured.

Solidarity body meets

BY VIR SINGH

Peter Oberlander, special assistant to Habitat Secretary General Wally N'Dow, has wrestled with urban development issues for most of his life.

An organizer of the first Habitat conference 20 years ago in Vancouver, where he now lives, Oberlander witnessed the first appearance of urban issues on the world agenda.

Habitat II has highlighted the need for city governments to respond to the specific needs of residents. "The approach now is to make the consumer a producer," he said.

Oberlander said Habitat organizers have tried to identify "that subtle, fragile element that makes a building a community."

That will be the theme of an all-day discussion on Saturday involving leading architects, social historians, politicians, academics, human rights activists and others from around the world. Habitat will provide transport to the Ciragan Palace, the venue of the Forum on Human Solidarity.

Need for attention to values is cited

BY SIDDHARTHA PRAKASH

"A major global challenge facing us today is to 'humanize our cities' by placing human beings in the center" said Federico Mayor, Director General, of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Opening the dialogue on Democracy and Citizenship Mayor stressed the need for, defending the notion of a city truly based on democracy. He advocated the culture of peace, where human rights reign supreme, and education is the main vehicle that would enable us to pass from a formal democracy towards a real one. "Changes in the structure and social values of modern society have driven individuals and institutions to indulge in self seeking behavior and act as closed systems. Therefore there is a need to reconstruct social ties of solidarity and incorporate those citizens who have been marginalized and excluded by this process," said Mayor.

Isaac Mogase, Mayor of

Johannesburg provided some excellent insight into ways of successfully enforcing democracy and solidarity. He mobilized a civic movement against Apartheid in the 1980s in support of the African National Congress, who were actively campaigning for the rights of marginalized Africans who comprised the bulk of the population. Three years of imprisonment from 1986 onwards, coupled with the refusal of Africans to pay for services, finally led to the collapse of the anachronistic regime. "Today, democracy is a totally new concept for the majority of people who are being represented by a government they have elected for the first time. However, the real challenge lies in breaking down the animosity between Africans and the authorities consolidated by Apartheid. The Police force were trained to enforce Apartheid, not deal with crime," concluded Mogase. Community reinforcement programs have been implemented to placate the sense of hatred that has built up over the years.

JUNE 7, 1996

Brazilian urges poverty work

BY VIR SINGH

Community solidarity is the key to any effective response to poverty, Ruth Cardoso, the First Lady of Brazil, said Thursday. Addressing a forum on gender and urban issues, Cardoso, an anthropologist, said traditionally top-down policies have not worked because "they are fragmented and targeted on several separate groups," she said.

Cardoso called on community-based and other nongovernmental groups to explore new partnerships with their governments.

In Brazil, NGOs and the government have historically

distrusted each other, Cardoso said. While the NGOs are afraid of being co-opted by the government, the latter is afraid of losing control, she said.

But that is slowly starting to change. On Tuesday, she presented one of the 12 Habitat Best Practice awards to a Brazilian NGO from Fortaleza, a small town in northeast Brazil. The presentation made headlines across Brazil, highlighting the partnership between local authorities and community groups to transform a garbage dump into a community.

On Saturday, June 8, Cardoso will address the Forum on Human Solidarity at the Ciragan Palace.



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First Lady Ruth Cardoso of Brazil

Intellectuals on 'solidarity'

BY BRUCE A. SILVERBERG

The Ciragan Palace, one of Istanbul's most opulent venues, was the setting for Saturday's Forum on Human Solidarity, where a panel of prominent intellectual, political and institutional leaders tried to identify what values should be expressed in urban society to foster cultures of genuine human solidarity, particularly with the world's disadvantaged and dispossessed.

Initiated by Habitat Secretary General Wally N'Dow, the Forum was mainly funded by a grant from the Frank Russell Company. In his introductory remarks, N'Dow noted that this kind of event was unique in UN history and was necessary for mitigating today's problems of competition, globalization, social exclusion and poverty.

"We cannot negotiate for our survival by technique alone," said N'Dow.

Eminent American historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr. highlighted the changing role of cities and the emergence of the mega-city. "Habitat II concerns the emergence of the city, once an appendage to rural living, as the dominant unit of civilization," said Schlesinger. "Humanization of the mega-city will be a major challenge of the 21st century."

Schlesinger also condemned the



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World Bank's Ismail Serageldin with Historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr.

corruption that is rampant in many cities, saying that it "undermines social trust and is incompatible with civil society."

Ihsan Dogramaci, President of Turkey's Bilkent University, identified human dignity as the most important and fundamental human value. "We must enable the next generation to aspire to build spaces that meet their social and cultural aspirations, not just meet basic needs," said Dogramaci.

Arguing that great cities are not always great living environments but rather places where ethnic and cultural communities achieve critical mass, Indian architect Charles

Correa, expressed a view subsequently challenged by other panelists. "Every day Bombay gets worse and worse as a living environment, but it gets better and better as a city," said Correa. Millard Fuller of Habitat for Humanity was among those who disagreed, countering that solidarity is not possible when the gross inequities of Correa's Bombay example remain.

The inherent complexity of cities was appreciated by Teddy Kollek, for many decades Mayor of Jerusalem, who firmly embraces diversity. "I don't think cities should become melting pots," said Kollek. "Cities should be mosaics."