



PAKISTAN

PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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STATEMENT BY
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IN THE SECOND COMMITTEE
ON AGENDA ITEMS

95b : HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

95c : U.N. CONFERENCE FOR HUMAN
SETTLEMENTS (HABIBAT II)

New York
15 November 1995

Mr. Chairman,

My intervention on Agenda item 95 b & c is in two parts. First, I would like to comment on the current status of the negotiations on the United Nations Conference for Human Settlements (HABITAT-II). Secondly, I shall share with the delegates some information regarding the efforts being made by my government to implement the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000.

Mr. Chairman,

2. The negotiations on the substantive documents to be issued by the forthcoming Conference on Human Settlements are in trouble. It may be recalled that the General Assembly had asked for the adoption of a Statement of Principles and a Global Plan of Action by HABITAT-II. The Global Plan of Action was to be "capable of guiding actions at the national and international levels" in the area of human settlements. This obviously implied the inclusion in the Plan of Action of provisions on international cooperation. Notwithstanding this, we have learnt that in the discussions of the informal drafting group on the Global Plan of Action, there has been a disconcerting unwillingness on the part of certain key countries to address the international cooperation dimension of human settlements.

3. Three arguments are being employed for the refusal to include meaningful provisions on international cooperation in the Global Plan of Action. Firstly, it is suggested that human settlements is not a critical issue which merits strong and concerted international action. For any person, with even a limited exposure to settlements problems in developing countries, this argument is not worth entertaining. The problems of the shelterless, the slum dwellers and the inhabitants of urban areas with deficient civic amenities are so severe, and cause such acute human misery, that they need to be addressed with the utmost urgency. Also, these problems are so clearly a cause of social ills and political unrest that their resolution becomes a pre-requisite for ensuring the progress of developing countries. That is why, the urgent need for focussing on human settlements has been acknowledged by international development institutions; the World Bank alone is at present financing 11,000 projects in the area of human settlement.

4. The second argument for avoiding international cooperation is that it is national governments which must assume the primary responsibility of providing adequate shelter for all. The primary responsibility of national governments in this area is undeniable. But this does not preclude the need for international cooperation. As was pointed out by the Chairman of the Nairobi Chapter of the G77 in a recent statement, if the primary

responsibility of actors within states in the field of human settlements were to be accepted as justification for inaction at the global level, the same argument would be equally applicable in the areas of human rights, environment, and gender equality. The fact that all these subjects have been discussed in international conferences, and are now being dealt with in accordance with global plans and platforms of action, fully establishes the need for similar measures in the field of human settlements.

5. A final argument being used for minimizing the role of international cooperation is that the international community cannot offer much in support of national efforts in the area of human settlements. This is incorrect. The international community can contribute greatly to the success of national endeavours to ensure shelter for all.

6. It should be realized that in any developing country, the essential pre-requisites for achieving the objective of shelter for all are land and finance at affordable prices and, to a lesser extent, the provision of appropriate technology. To fulfil these pre-requisites, international cooperation is needed at the macro and the micro levels. At the macro level, it goes without saying that if steps are taken to improve the global economic situation, the developing countries would be able to devote greater resources to the area of human settlements. Hence, international cooperation on the removal of trade barriers, on resolving the debt problem, and on the transfer of technology, would help strengthen the ability of national governments to address human settlements issues.

7. Furthermore, the developed countries can help immeasurably by taking supportive measures at the micro level i.e. by helping specific national and local initiatives. For instance, the efficient management of the mega cities that have emerged in many developing countries, would benefit greatly from the sharing of international experiences and expertise in the running of large metropolises. Also, exchange of know-how would be most useful in areas such as inexpensive building materials, mass transport systems, economic sanitation and water supply schemes. The possible areas for fruitful international cooperation are numerous. All that is needed is a realization of the urgent need for such cooperation, and the political willingness to enter into cooperative relationships in the field of human settlements.

Mr. Chairman,

8. Pakistan is committed to attain the objective of the Global Strategy for Shelter which is to facilitate adequate shelter for all by the year 2000. In accordance with this Strategy, the Government of Pakistan is taking a number of steps to enable different sectors to play a role in the provision of shelter and

services. These steps include the following:-

- Studies have been carried out to mark out the parameters of the housing problem. It has been determined that there exists an accumulated housing backlog of 6.25 million units and that there is an annual housing deficit of 150,000 units.
- Based on the above studies, a National Action Programme has been launched with the objective of making up the annual housing deficit as well as clearing the backlog. A definite time-frame of ten years has been set to achieve these objectives.
- To facilitate involvement of the private sector, housing finance companies are being allowed to operate and the development of a secondary mortgage market is being considered.
- To assist low income segments of the population to obtain housing, a revolving Housing Fund is being set up to initiate inexpensive housing projects.
- To provide a coherent, long-term frame-work for the development of new towns national and provincial urbanization policies are being formulated.

Mr. Chairman,

9. The broad issue of settlements and the specific question of providing shelter for all are complex matters. These involve tasks of such magnitude that national efforts alone are insufficient for their accomplishment. We, therefore, look forward to the holding of a well-prepared Conference on Human Settlements in Istanbul next year; a Conference that shall result in concrete commitments by all actors to address the settlements issue.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.