

Mr. Chairman:

STATEMENT

BY

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Head,
Canadian Delegation
to the

Preparatory Committee for Habitat

at its resumed First Session

New York

August 25, 1975

The Canadian delegation appreciates the courtesy shown
to the preparatory for Habitat I which is contained in the Secretary-
General's written report. Mr. Pennington's remarks just now
have been very adequate and we have taken place over during the
short work since the preparatory committee has been established to
prepare the preparatory committee for Habitat I which is going
to meet here in New York at its resumed First Session. Both statements
will end that Habitat I is going to have the address that it deserves
in view of the importance of New York as with which I will deal.
We can all see the satisfaction from the immediate progress that has been made in developing the preparatory
program for Habitat I. More than one hundred countries are preparing
over two hundred presentations, which will provide a wide range
of information on different approaches and solutions to a wide range
of human settlement problems. No other U.N. Conference has had
such a practical and extensive storehouse of knowledge and experience
available to it. This world wide effort certainly exceeds the
expectations that I think we all had in January. If we can maintain
this momentum - and I am convinced that we are all dedicated to
ensuring that it is maintained - then it will be seen as the first of
several major objectives of Habitat I that has been not only met but
also successfully exceeded.

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. Chairman:

The Canadian delegation appreciates the concise review of the preparations for Habitat that is contained in the Secretary-General's written report, PC/13. Mr. Penalosa's remarks just now impressively underline how much has taken place even during the short month since that document was prepared. Both statements demonstrate that a great deal of progress has been achieved since meeting here in January, that preparations are going remarkably well and that Habitat is likely to have the success that it deserves in view of the importance of the issues with which it will deal.

We can all derive particular satisfaction from the immense progress that has been made in developing the audio-visual program for Habitat. More than one hundred countries are preparing over two hundred presentations, which will provide immediate information on different approaches and solutions to a wide range of human settlement problems. No other U.N. Conference has had such a practical and extensive storehouse of knowledge and experience available to it. This world wide effort certainly exceeds the expectations that I think we all had in January. If we can maintain this momentum - and I am convinced that we are all dedicated to ensuring that it is maintained - then it will be seen as the first of several major objectives of Habitat that has been not only met but also successfully exceeded.

Canada, as host country, was grateful to have the opportunity to participate in each of the four regional meetings. We learned important things at these meetings: we were exposed to high standards of arrangements and hospitality at Tehran, Cairo, Caracas and Geneva which we are certainly striving hard to achieve at Vancouver. We also learned a great deal about the national preparations of many countries, and about the priority concerns shared by countries at the regional level. The reports of those meetings make it clear that there is general acceptance of the importance of human settlement issues and also a substantial measure of agreement on the national and international actions required to tackle those issues.

Mr. Chairman, the number and success of the international activities since our last meeting in January clearly demonstrate how well Habitat is served by a relatively small but very dedicated Secretariat. I am sure that all delegations would join with us in expressing our gratitude and appreciation to the Secretary-General and his staff for their effective work over the past seven months.

It is convenient, I think, to group them under three main categories: arrangements for the official conference plenary and committees; the special requirements of the audio-visual program; arrangements for the accommodation, transportation, communications or, in a word, the comfort of participants, including facilities for the large number of journalists.

Also, of course, we are deeply involved in

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As the Secretary-General has suggested, the Canadian delegation welcomes this opportunity to describe briefly the current state of our preparations as host country for Habitat. Since my report to this Committee in January, the Canadian preparations for Habitat have accelerated: the financial resources to meet our host country obligations have been increased; the staff resources for the Canadian host and participation secretariats have been augmented; staff have been transferred to Vancouver, with more to follow this fall; increased financial resources have been made available to other countries to help them prepare for and attend the Conference; and Habitat as a clearly identified set of concerns and as a symbol of hope in dealing with them, is now known to many Canadians from coast to coast.

I would like, Mr. Chairman, to deal with our work under the following headings: first, the physical arrangements in Vancouver; second, our national preparations; and third, Canada's international activities and assistance for Habitat.

Preparations in Vancouver

Our host responsibilities in the Vancouver area have many dimensions. It is convenient, I think, to group them under three main categories: arrangements for the official conference plenary and committees; the special requirements of the audio-visual program; arrangements for the accommodation, transportation, communications or, in a word, the comfort of participants, including facilities for the large number of journalists

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arrangements for the non-governmental participants, the Habitat Forum, to the success of which we all attach a great deal of importance.

I am enclosing with my statement, Mr. Chairman, which will be circulated, an annex in which the Conference facilities are described in detail. I won't go into them now but I would like to assure you that the host governments of Canada, the Province of British Columbia and the City of Vancouver are confident that the Habitat meetings will take place in a pleasant and efficient setting.

The audio-visual program has been the object of particularly careful preparations, especially in view of the great interest and support that is evident from all countries. We recognize that, although all presentations should have a long and useful life after Habitat is over, the two weeks in Vancouver should be utilized as far as possible to provide opportunities for experts from different countries to come together to see the presentations that are of greatest significance for them, and to discuss them with the originating country and with others. Again, Mr. Chairman, you will find an annex to the printed version of my address, which sets out the details of our present plans for the audio-visual program.

Habitat will likely be the largest U.N. Conference ever held. The Canadian Host Secretariat has, for a long time, reserved most of the available accommodation within easy reach of the Habitat site. Some countries have already begun to notify us of the probable size of their delegation and we would appreciate such advice from other countries as soon as possible. During this session of the Preparatory Committee, my colleagues and I on the Canadian delegation would be glad to discuss the needs of individual countries with their representatives informally. The Host Secretariat will shortly be circulating a brochure on host arrangements.

Habitat is attracting a great deal of interest among non-governmental organizations and private citizens. We expect that many of them will be in Vancouver during Habitat in order to participate in the Habitat Forum and other events. We look forward to hearing at this meeting of the Preparatory Committee about the substantive arrangements for the Forum. In Vancouver, a voluntary group called the Association in Canada Serving Organizations for Human Settlements, ACSOH for short, has been established to handle the hosting arrangements for the Habitat Forum and other NGO activities. The Government of Canada has provided substantial financial support for this Association. Under its direction, arrangements for accommodating the Habitat Forum are progressing as interest in the Forum mounts.

Before leaving the preparations in Vancouver, I would like to mention that the people of Vancouver recognize the importance of this occasion and they also are eager to welcome delegates to their city. During the period of the Habitat Conference, an exciting cultural program is planned, involving music, theatre, and other cultural presentations, both formal and informal.

National Preparations

In Canada - and I believe this is true of many countries - we see Habitat as an opportunity to review our own domestic policies and programs in human settlements; to make the people of Canada aware of the great issues involved; and to help everyone realize their individual stake in the future of our settlements. This we feel is vital to stimulate the changes needed to ensure that Canadian cities and towns - our settlements - continue to provide a satisfactory living environment for all Canadians.

To this end, and as a part of our broader host responsibilities, we are in the midst of a very extensive program of national preparations for Habitat. They are designed to ensure that all levels of government, non-governmental organizations and individual Canadians can be involved in various ways in Habitat and in the Habitat Forum. This is not the appropriate occasion to go into detail about each of these activities as they will be described in detail in the imminent issue of our Habitat Bulletin.

This Bulletin will be made available to delegations later this week. I would like to mention, however, that between now and the end of November there will take place across Canada sixteen public meetings, at which individual Canadians and their organizations are invited to make their views on human settlement matters known to the Canadian government. During this same period there will also be as many as fourteen special symposia on specific issues, such as rural-urban migration, the problems of small communities, public land ownership and national growth management. These meetings will culminate with a national conference of Canadian non-governmental groups in December. May I take this opportunity of emphasizing that we in Canada would be glad to see representatives of other countries at any or all of these events; we hope that staff from some of the Embassies in Ottawa might find it possible to attend and participate in these symposia.

In many of the countries here today, work on our audio-visual presentations is going ahead rapidly. Canada is also sponsoring a special one-hour Habitat film designed for international use on television. The film is being made by the National Film Board of Canada with the co-operation of countries in various regions of the world. This summer the film crew have been working in Canada and the USA, in Caracas, Jakarta, Singapore, Dakar and Warsaw. We in Canada are very grateful for the help that we have received on this project.

On these and other national preparations, members of the Canadian delegation would be glad to provide any additional information that you may want.

International Arrangements

Like many other countries, Mr. Chairman, Canada has been active in support of the international preparations for Habitat, both in multilateral and bilateral contexts. Through the Canadian International Development Agency and the National Film Board and in co-operation with the Habitat Secretariat, more than half a million dollars has been made available to assist approximately thirty developing countries in the preparation of their audio-visual presentations in Vancouver. Six film producers from Canada have been travelling the world this summer to help ensure that this program is successful. In addition, Canada has a program to support the attendance of up to 70 outstanding professionals from developing countries who might not otherwise have been able to attend. In conjunction with a Commonwealth country in the Caribbean we also intend to join in an experimental housing project that will utilize low cost locally available materials, as a joint demonstration project.

Under an agreement with the International Institute for Environment and Development, Canada is providing assistance for the publication - in advance of Habitat - of a book on human settlement issues by Barbara Ward. We are also making funds available for the preparation of a "Habitat Text Book" in which the lessons of the Habitat Conference can be summarized and made available to a world wide audience.

I hope, Mr. Chairman, that this report on Canada's activities as host government will prove helpful to delegates as we resume our discussions today. Since my report last January to this Committee, we have intensified and extended our national and international preparations for Habitat. These preparatory activities will continue to expand as we get closer to Habitat.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I would like - on behalf of the Government of Canada - to reiterate our complete readiness to discharge our obligations as host nation.

Members of this Committee know of the commitment Canada has had to the Habitat Conference from its beginning in Stockholm and of the importance that it attaches to its role as host. I am pleased to say that, as the Prime Minister of Canada has himself made clear, this commitment has not changed.

Delegates will know that we have recently had consultations with the Secretary-General on this matter in response to questions that have been raised with him concerning Canada's role as host of Habitat. The Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Mr. MacEachen, re-assured the Secretary-General last week by telegram that there is no change in Canada's long-standing commitment to host the Habitat Conference in Vancouver in 1976. On the question of the basis for participation in the Conference, Mr. MacEachen informed the Secretary-General,

and I have been authorized to reassure this Committee, that Canada will host the Habitat Conference under the rules that normally apply to United Nations conferences.

In this connection, Mr. Chairman, I would add that the hosting agreement between the United Nations and Canada is well advanced, and it is our hope that it will be signed in the near future.

Mr. Chairman, with these clear assurances and in the light of the thorough reports of the Secretary-General on recent and planned preparatory activities, we can proceed confidently on our way towards a successful Conference at Vancouver in June 1976.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, I would like to repeat our appreciation for the opportunity that we had to participate in recent events, especially the Regional Meetings. I would also like to underline our appreciation to the Secretary-General and his staff, and to all of those in the U.N. Secretariat and the specialized agencies for their work on which we all depend to ensure the success of our common efforts in realizing the aims of Habitat.