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HABITAT: UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS  
REVIEW AND FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

This document outlines resolutions and decisions adopted by the General Assembly at its thirty-first session which are of relevance to Habitat: United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, discusses the follow-up required from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation (UNHHSF) pursuant to General Assembly resolutions and decisions relating to human settlements and recommends action which the Governing Council may wish to take.

Report by the Executive Director

1. Habitat: United Nations Conference on Human Settlements was held at Vancouver from 31 May to 11 June 1976. The Conference adopted the Vancouver Declaration on Human Settlements and put forward a set of recommendations for national action in the following fields: settlement policies and strategies; settlement planning; shelter, infrastructure and services; land; public participation; and institutions and management. The Conference also adopted seven resolutions entitled "Programmes for international co-operation", "Programmes for international co-operation: financial implications", "Living conditions of the Palestinians in occupied territories", "Regional and subregional meetings", "Post-Habitat use of audio-visual material", "United Nations Water Conference" and "Expression of thanks". In the last-mentioned resolution, the Conference expressed its appreciation to the Government and people of Canada, of the province of British Columbia and, in particular, of the city of Vancouver, for hosting the Conference, and to the President of the Conference. The report of the Conference is available as document A/CONF.70/15. 1/

1/ United Nations publication, Sales No. E.76.IV.7.  
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2. The Economic and Social Council, in resolution 2040 (LXI), inter alia, took note of the report of the Conference. The General Assembly, at its thirty-first session, considered the report and adopted five resolutions relating directly to the Conference. In resolution 31/109 of 16 December 1976, the General Assembly took note of the report of the Conference, and called upon the regional commissions and urged all other international organizations within and outside the United Nations system to take intensified and sustained action in support of national efforts, including exchanges of information and assistance, at the request of Governments, in the formulation, design, implementation and evaluation of projects to improve human settlements. The General Assembly, in resolution 31/109, also requested the Secretary-General to convene regional meetings, as appropriate, within the framework of the regional commissions, to establish guidelines for the co-ordination of action at the regional level and to report to the General Assembly on the results of their deliberations no later than at the thirty-second session.
3. The General Assembly, in resolution 31/110 of 16 December 1976, requested the Secretary-General, in consultation and co-operation with the Palestine Liberation Organization and in collaboration with the relevant United Nations organs and specialized agencies, to prepare and submit at its thirty-second session a report on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories. The General Assembly also urged all States to co-operate with the Secretary-General in this matter.
4. The General Assembly, in resolution 31/113 of 16 December 1976, bearing in mind specific recommendations in chapter II of the report of the Conference, requested member States and the Secretary-General, when planning the implementation of the recommendations adopted at the Conference, to bear in mind the measures that protect the decent living environment of the most vulnerable social groups. The General Assembly, in the same resolution, also requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its thirty-second session, through the Economic and Social Council, on the measures taken and the results obtained.
5. The arrangements regarding the audio-visual material prepared by Member States for the Conference were dealt with by the General Assembly in resolution 31/115 of 16 December 1976. In this resolution the General Assembly, inter alia decided to establish a United Nations Audio-visual Information Centre on Human Settlements. The Assembly recognized the importance of using the audio-visual material as an information resource in dealing with human settlements problems and invited all participants in the Conference to transfer to the Secretary-General or his designated agents the internegatives and international copyright of their audio-visual materials utilized at the Conference, including material prepared with the assistance of UNEP. In the same

resolution, the General Assembly authorized the Secretary-General to conclude an agreement with the appropriate Canadian authorities for the latter to provide the facilities and financial support to the United Nations Audio-visual Information Centre to carry out the Centre's responsibilities for the custody, reproduction and international distribution, to ensure the widest possible use of the material by Governments and other interested bodies, for the period up to March 1980, of the audio-visual materials. The Assembly also called for a review of the agreement in 1979.

6. During the preparatory stage and at the Conference itself, it was recognized that though human settlements problems were national in character, the international community, at the global and regional levels, should provide valuable encouragement and support to Governments determined to take effective action to improve conditions, especially for the least advantaged, in rural and urban settlements. Consequently, the question of international co-operation was one of the major issues extensively discussed at the Conference. The Executive Director, in his address on the first day of the Conference, drew attention, *inter alia*, to Governing Council decision 78 (IV), particularly part C, in which the Council invited, without prejudice to the results of the Conference, the delegations participating in the Conference to take the following into account when considering the institutional arrangements for human settlements within the United Nations system:

(a) The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, held at Stockholm in June 1972, proclaimed that both aspects of man's environment, the natural and the man-made, were essential to his well-being and to the enjoyment of basic human rights, even the right to life itself. The first recommendation of the Conference emphasized that the planning, improvement and management of rural and urban settlements demanded an approach, at all levels, embracing every aspect of the human environment, both natural and man-made;

(b) The linkage between the man-made environment and the natural environment is of prime importance, and their interrelationship must be considered in all forums dealing with international co-operation in order to ensure the improvement of the quality of life of all peoples.

7. There was a general consensus at the Vancouver Conference on most of the key aspects of international co-operation in human settlements, and especially on the contents of regional programmes and intergovernmental and secretariat arrangements within the framework of the regional commissions. There was also a broad consensus at the Conference on the need for a global intergovernmental body and a central secretariat for human settlements within the United Nations system. The Conference recommended that the General Assembly, at its thirty-first session, should consider the annex to Conference resolution 1 and take the final decision concerning the organizational link and location of such a central secretariat within the United Nations system.

8. The General Assembly, in resolution 31/116, having considered the report of the Conference, in particular the annex to Conference resolution I, decided to defer the decision on the type of definitive intergovernmental body for human settlements and on the organizational link and location of the human settlements secretariat until its thirty-second session, by which time the guidelines from the Ad Hoc Committee on the Restructuring of the Economic and Social Sectors of the United Nations System will be in hand, the financial implications of alternative institutional arrangements will be worked out and studied in greater depth, and the regional consultations will have been completed. In the same resolution, the General Assembly requested the Economic and Social Council at its sixty-third session to submit to the General Assembly at its thirty-second session concrete recommendations on definitive institutional arrangements for human settlements within the United Nations. The Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to take appropriate measures to ensure effective preparations for the discussions on human settlements questions at the sixty-third session of the Economic and Social Council, bearing in mind the contributions made by the relevant components of the United Nations system as represented in the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination. The Assembly further requested the Secretary-General, as an interim arrangement, to ensure, through the appropriate machinery of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination, the co-ordination of the work of all the United Nations bodies concerned, with respect to their activities in the human settlements field, and to report to the Economic and Social Council at its sixty-third session on the progress made.
9. The General Assembly, in the same resolution also requested all the United Nations bodies concerned, particularly UNDP, UNEP, the Centre for Housing, Building and Planning and UNHHSF to ensure that the recommendations of the Conference are taken into account in their respective programmes related to human settlements and within their respective terms of reference, and to make their consultative services and resources available, as appropriate, for the implementation of national programmes of action and in strengthening regional co-operation in the field of human settlements.
10. The General Assembly, at its thirty-first session, also adopted two decisions relating directly to UNHHSF. In decision 31/411 A of 16 December 1976, the General Assembly decided without a vote, on the recommendation of its Second Committee, to transmit to the Economic and Social Council for consideration at its sixty-third session a revised draft resolution submitted by the Philippines on UNHHSF. 2/ The operative part of the revised draft resolution affirmed the significant role of UNHHSF in promoting the implementation of the objectives and recommendations of the Habitat Conference; invited UNHHSF to promote regional co-operation for the improvement of human settlements; invited further non-governmental

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2/ A/C.2/31/L.19/Rev.1.

organizations, financial and other institutions, as appropriate, to collaborate with UNHHSF in order to facilitate the effective expansion of its activities; urged Governments, especially those of developed countries, to support UNHHSF on a voluntary basis, to enable it to become a more effective instrument for the improvement of human settlements and for the promotion of the implementation of the objectives and recommendations of the Conference; and affirmed that UNHHSF should be appropriately strengthened so that it may achieve the full potential envisaged for it by the General Assembly.

11. In decision 31/411 B of 16 December 1976, the General Assembly took note of the report of the Secretary-General on criteria governing multilateral financing of housing and human settlements and of the comments and note thereon submitted by the World Bank, UNDP and by the Executive Director of UNEP.

Follow-up required from UNEP and UNHHSF pursuant to  
General Assembly resolutions and decisions  
relating to human settlements

12. As stated in paragraph 2 above, the General Assembly in resolution 31/109 urged international organizations within and outside the United Nations system to take intensified and sustained action in support of national efforts, including exchanges of information and assistance, at the request of Governments, in the formulation, design, implementation and evaluation of projects to improve human settlements. UNEP and UNHHSF are taking these General Assembly directives into full consideration in further developing their respective programmes of activities.

13. With regard to General Assembly resolution 31/110 on the living conditions of the Palestinian people, UNEP and UNHHSF stand ready to collaborate in whatever manner the Secretary-General may deem appropriate in preparing the report called for by the resolution.

14. Resolution 31/113, in which the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to bear in mind the measures that protect the decent living environment of the most vulnerable social groups, when planning the implementation of the recommendations of the Habitat Conference, is being kept in view in the development of UNEP's programme of activities and in UNHHSF's responses to Governments' requests for assistance in matters related to the most vulnerable social groups.

15. The contribution of the non-governmental organizations to the Habitat Conference reaffirmed the importance of those organizations in promoting the goals and objectives of United Nations Conferences and mobilizing public opinion for their support. The Habitat Forum, which took place simultaneously with the Conference, was an important event

which provided useful, substantive input to the Conference itself. The provisions of General Assembly resolution 31/114 on collaboration between the United Nations and non-governmental organizations with regard to world-wide intercommunal co-operation are seen as an endorsement of the efforts already made and give UNEP and UNHHSF an additional impetus in their collaboration with non-governmental organizations concerned with human settlements.

16. An important resolution of the Habitat Conference (endorsed by the General Assembly in resolution 31/115), which UNEP is closely following up with the other United Nations bodies concerned, led to the establishment of the United Nations Audio-visual Information Centre on Human Settlements. In accordance with Conference resolution 5, the Secretary-General entered into an interim agreement with the University of British Columbia for the safe-keeping, organization, preparation and distribution, in response to requests of audio-visual materials contributed for use at the Conference. This agreement, which originally covered the period from the end of the Conference to 31 December 1976, has, by mutual consent, been extended to 31 March 1977 in order to permit the conclusion of a definitive agreement with the appropriate authorities of the Canadian Government for the operation of the United Nations Audio-visual Information Centre. Negotiations are currently under way with the Canadian authorities on the content of this definitive agreement. The United Nations Office of Legal Affairs has prepared and submitted to the Canadian authorities the outline of a draft agreement to be used as a basis for discussion. The Office of Financial Services (Budget Division) has also prepared for inclusion in the agreement a number of paragraphs covering the financial and budgetary aspects of the arrangement. These provide for the establishment of a trust fund into which the contributions to be made by the Canadian Government for the financing of the Centre will be deposited. Representatives of UNEP and other departments and offices (the Office of Public Information, the Centre for Housing, Building and Planning and the Office of Personnel Services) are associated with the Office of Legal Affairs and the Office of Financial Services in the negotiations with the Canadian authorities. Pending the final decision to be taken by the General Assembly at its thirty-second session with respect to institutional arrangements for the human settlements programme, the Office of Public Information, through its Radio and Visual Services Division has been designated as the focal point in the United Nations Secretariat with responsibility, once the agreement with the Canadian authorities has been concluded, for acting on behalf of the United Nations in connexion with any matters arising out of the agreement requiring action by the United Nations. The agreement itself is to cover a three-year period ending 31 March 1980. It may be of interest to note that, during the early months of the interim agreement with the University of British Columbia (July-November 1976), 160 requests were received for general information on the Centre or for specific audio-visual materials held by the Centre. Of these, 25 emanated from Governments, 12 from United Nations agencies, 12 from television companies and 41 from various private sources. During the same period, the University of British Columbia responded to 17 requests for material, giving priority to requests from Governments and United Nations agencies.

17. With regard to General Assembly decision 31/411 B on criteria governing multilateral financing of housing and human settlements, UNHHSF is bearing in mind the various recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report on that matter in developing its programme of financial assistance to developing countries and in its collaboration with multilateral financing institutions.

18. General Assembly resolution 31/116 on institutional arrangements for international co-operation in the field of human settlements contained elements which will be of special interest to the Governing Council. In the first paragraph of the resolution, the General Assembly took into account the paragraphs agreed to by the Habitat Conference, as contained in the preamble and sections I to IX of the annex to resolution I, with due respect to foot-note b/ of section X of that annex.

19. The following matters are brought to the attention of the Governing Council:

(a) In section II of the annex to Conference resolution I, the Conference recommended that one of the main functions and responsibilities of the global intergovernmental body should be to exercise over-all policy guidance and supervision of the operations of UNHHSF;

(b) In section III of the annex, the Conference recommended that the human settlements secretariat should comprise the posts and budgetary resources of, inter alia:

(i) The appropriate section of the Division of Economic and Social Programmes of UNEP directly concerned with human settlements, with the exception of the posts required by UNEP to exercise its responsibilities for the environmental aspects and consequences of human settlements planning;

(ii) UNHHSF;

(c) In section VI of the annex, the Conference recommended that there should be an assessment of the effectiveness of existing United Nations programmes in the field of human settlements, with a view to ensuring that they conform to the priorities established by the Conference;

(d) In section X of the annex, the Conference recommended, as one alternative, that the human settlements unit should be integrated into UNEP and that its Director should report to the Executive Director of UNEP. As to the location of the central secretariat, the Conference recommended as one of three possibilities the city of Nairobi.

20. As mentioned in paragraph 8 above, the General Assembly decided in resolution 31/116 to defer until its thirty-second session the decision on the type of definitive Intergovernmental body for human settlements and on the organizational link and location of the human settlements secretariat. The decision will be based primarily on concrete recommendations by the Economic and Social Council at its sixty-third session. The Economic and Social Council will take into account the work of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Restructuring of the Economic and Social Sectors of the United Nations System, the financial implications of alternative institutional arrangements, the results of regional consultations and the report of the Secretary-General on co-ordination in the field of human settlements.

21. The Governing Council may wish to take the following factors into account while considering the implementation of General Assembly resolution 31/116:

(a) The General Assembly did not expect the Governing Council to attempt to make definitive recommendations relating to institutional arrangements for human settlements within the United Nations system. However, as UNEP is one of the relevant components of the United Nations system represented in the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination, the Governing Council is given the opportunity by the resolution to make a contribution for the Secretary-General to bear in mind while taking the appropriate measures, called for in the resolution, to ensure effective preparations for the discussions at the sixty-third session of the Economic and Social Council. The Governing Council is therefore invited to express its views on the question of institutional arrangements for human settlements. Those views could be communicated to the Secretary-General for the purpose mentioned earlier;

(b) The Executive Director prepared and transmitted to the Secretary-General an in-depth review and analysis of activities being undertaken by UNEP and UNHHSF in the field of human settlements to be used in preparing the Secretary-General's report to the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination on the four subjects which the Committee will consider in depth at its seventeenth session. The relevant parts of this UNEP contribution will be reflected in the Secretary-General's report on co-ordination of human settlements activities within the United Nations system called for in the resolution;

(c) In view of questions raised during the thirty-first session of the General Assembly about the financial implications of the various alternative institutional arrangements for international co-operation in the field of human settlements, the Executive Director expects to co-operate fully in determining the financial implications of locating the central secretariat at Nairobi as part of UNEP, according to the plan presented in document A/CONF.70/6;



(d) With regard to the provisions of resolution 31/116 that refer explicitly or implicitly to UNEP and UNHHSF, the Executive Director has taken the necessary measures to ensure that both UNEP and UNHHSF comply with the General Assembly directives.

Suggested action by the Governing Council

22. The Governing Council may wish to adopt a decision along the following lines:

"The Governing Council,

"Taking note of the report and intentions of the Executive Director regarding the implementation of General Assembly resolutions relating to human settlements,

"Authorizes the Executive Director, pursuant to section III, paragraph 2, of General Assembly resolution 31/116 of 16 December 1976, to transmit to the Secretary-General that part of the report of the Governing Council on the work of its fifth session dealing with Habitat: United Nations Conference on Human Settlements - Review and follow-up activities, as soon as it is adopted by the Council."

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