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**United Nations Conference on Human Settlements  
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STATEMENT BY SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL\*\*

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## SEROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL

**PRESIDENT**

MRS. MURIEL M. MORSE  
ROOM 201, CITY HALL SOUTH  
LOS ANGELES, CALIF. 90012 U.S.A.

**SECRETARY**

MRS. DOROTHY K. MIDGLEY  
P. O. BOX 48737  
LOS ANGELES, CALIF. 90048 U.S.A.

**TREASURER**

MISS EMILY CRAWFORD  
BROOKFIELD, GARFORTH  
LEEDS, LS21 1ND, ENGLAND

**PAST PRESIDENT**

MRS. LIDA BRAMBILLA LONGONI  
VIA ERICA, 49  
16011 PINETA DI ARENZANO (GE), ITALY

**HEADQUARTERS OFFICE**

1 WHITEHALL PLACE  
LONDON, SW1A 2HE, ENGLAND

### STATEMENT FOR INCLUSION IN THE HABITAT HANDBOOK AND DRAFT PARAGRAPH FOR PRESENTATION TO THE GOVERNMENTAL CONFERENCE

Seroptimist International, an organization of executive and professional women with 1900 clubs in 50 countries of the world and a membership of over 60,000, has adopted the following statement concerning HABITAT programming for the 1975-79 quadrennium.

To participate in all facets of the United Nations Environment Programme and to work through Seroptimist programming to improve the quality of life by:

- a. improvement of our home environment, of working conditions and of food and nutrition,
- b. emphasis on population planning,
- c. upgrading and revitalizing the value of rural life.

We urge the following points to be included in HABITAT Conference deliberations and decision-making.

1. Consideration of the fact that a majority of women spend more time around their homes than do men and that improvement in homes and related facilities will have a direct bearing on their well being, their pursuits of other interests and activities including their economic welfare and the economic development of the countries in which they live.
2. Home design should take into account the best technological information we have concerning materials which require minimum maintenance, materials which do not present safety hazards and designs which increase social cohesion. Revitalization and the upgrading of the value of rural life should be encouraged including the creation of

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suitable industrial and employment opportunities to decrease migration to urban areas. Decentralization of education and health services to rural areas should be promoted in order to lower rates of illiteracy, mortality and fertility. Consideration should be given to the accessibility of neighborhood centers for women and children.

3. It is important for women to participate in planning, decision-making, and implementation of programmes relating to human settlements.
4. There should be training and orientation for women in new concepts and the use of new facilities.
5. In summary, HABITAT is an emergent priority in today's world. Together with the problem of hunger, the two themes are strongly interrelated. Every community has, at different periods of time and in different conditions, different priorities. There should be cooperation at national levels through debate and public participation:
  - a. in requalfying human settlements, so as to make them respond to today's needs and expectations.
  - b. in requalfying rural life, so as to contrast the increasing trend to urbanism, in particular promoting education and professional opportunities of rural populations, who shall not be considered second class populations, kept outside technological and cultural development of society.
  - c. in the campaign against hunger, with particular concern for a more rational employment of agricultural and alimentary resources and for education to prevent wastage in all its forms.
  - d. in the implementation of the World Population Plan of Action, in particular sensitizing public opinion on family planning and on the relationship between population problems and human rights, status of women, environment, natural resources, human settlements, nutrition.
  - e. in the improvement of working conditions, in particular informing public opinion on the problems involved, and exerting pressure on public authorities towards the ratification and application of the international instruments regulating working relationships.

On \_\_\_\_\_ by  
MURIEL M. MORSE  
*Muriel M. Morse*  
Muriel M. Morse, President  
SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL

March 15, 1976