



**UNITED NATIONS**



**Habitat:**

**United Nations Conference on Human Settlements  
Vancouver, Canada, 31 May-11 June 1976**

Distr.  
LIMITED

A/CONF.70/WG/14

11 July 1975

ENGLISH

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH/FRENCH

UN LIBRARY

11 JUL 1975

DATA COLLECTION

AD HOC INTERGOVERNMENTAL WORKING GROUPS  
Geneva, 22-26 September 1975

REPORT OF THE MEETING OF EXPERTS HELD AT  
DUBROVNIK FROM 20-23 MAY 1975

### Introduction

1. This report concerns a meeting of experts convened at the Inter-University Centre in Dubrovnik from 20 to 23 May 1975 by the secretariat of Habitat: United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, to be held at Vancouver in 1976.
2. The purpose of the consultation was to engage the capacities of a distinguished group of participants, whose names are listed in the annex to this report, to assist the secretariat in formulating a challenging ideological framework which will guide the next stages of the preparatory process.
3. The participants had before them a number of documents, including a review of the conceptual development of the Conference, which is reproduced as document A/CONF.70/WG/13.
4. The meeting comprised eight working meetings. The first four were plenary meetings. The next two were meetings at which four distinct groups took up certain themes for more detailed study. The last two were plenary meetings, held after a period of consultation and synthesis during which a drafting committee drew together the ideas proposed during the plenary meetings and the arguments developed by the working groups.
5. A comprehensive argument thus emerged which was presented during the final meeting. After discussion and amendment, the argument was accepted in principle by most of the experts present.
6. The main points that emerged from the meeting as a whole have been summarized by Juan Pablo Terra, consultant to Habitat, and are to be found below. The report maintains more or less the structure of the argument as it was presented at the last meeting; however, it has been enriched by the addition of individual and group contributions made by the participants during the earlier part of the meeting.
7. A final word of thanks is due to the Director of the Inter-University Centre at Dubrovnik and his staff for their excellent services and the warm hospitality they provided during the meeting.

/...

PRELIMINARY TEXT

1. Human settlements and development

8. We are facing a world-wide crisis with respect to human settlements. Its manifestations in relation to the environment are particularly acute in the large cities of developing countries; however, serious problems, though different in nature, also affect the urban centres of developed countries, as well as rural areas, particularly in the third world.

9. Settlements are the reflection of societies themselves. Inequalities in the development process, resulting from abrasive relationships of domination and dependence, both within each country and between countries, are among the major causes which have led to the crisis.

10. Development is not a linear process. Developing countries are not at stages already passed by developed countries and it cannot be said that their evolution is in the direction of the present situation of the latter or that it is merely a matter of time before they reach it. The very expression "developing countries" does not always reflect reality - sometimes it is only a desire. Under-development, as it exists, is the product of unequal economic and political relations among nations, based on domination and dependence. This situation is manifested at all levels, including that of human settlements.

11. A number of different classifications of countries and of social groups within each country can be proposed. However, what cannot be denied are the disparities between countries, regions and even sections of cities. These disparities, which are generally tending to increase, reflect the confiscation by certain groups of a disproportionate share of the available resources and the wasting of space and goods to the detriment of the general interest. The core of the problem is the relation between dominant and dominated countries, between rich people and poor people.

12. A large proportion of the human settlements in areas of the world dominated by the industrialized countries were established and grew in an already existing situation of dependence. Domination has not only contributed to the unequal distribution of wealth but has also dictated an organization of human settlements serving purposes other than those of interest to the peoples concerned. Furthermore, it has set in motion processes of exportation and imitation, both of material goods and cultural technological standards and models, which have, in many cases, contributed seriously to aggravating the existing problems.

13. With respect to human settlements, historical evolution has led to a separation between the various needs and has made the satisfaction of those needs dependent on a money economy. This trend appears to lead, in different ways, to a dead end, both in the industrialized countries and in the rest of the world. However, there is an increasing awareness of the fact that basic human needs cannot be dissociated from each other and that neither the profit motive nor large-scale bureaucratic planning will necessarily provide adequate solutions.

/...

## 2. General standards and imported models

14. While problems exist throughout the world and there are certain analogies between these problems, it would be illusory to try to solve them by setting the same goals or using the same means. Problems and solutions can be viewed only within the context of local conditions and perceptions. At present, there are no standards which can be validly applied on a global and permanent basis, or even on a local basis, except certain minimum standards such as those in respect of food or other biological needs. Furthermore, minimum needs must be viewed dynamically, since they are linked to a changing environment. Very often, the setting of norms or standards for housing or services, or for the very design of settlements, has strengthened the position of the dominant groups which have formulated them. When investments which are beyond the means of the many are required, the effect is to contribute to the concentration of resources in housing for the most privileged, thus aggravating the situation of the rest. The goals set in accordance with these standards have often been at variance with the real needs of the people.

15. This is particularly obvious in the case of the imitation of standards borrowed from developed countries. However, the transplantation is not always done by mere imitation. Study groups and the banks which support them, as interpreters of so-called universal value standards, have generally transformed housing policy into a source of profit through speculation in land, the requisite public works and the housing itself. The so-called elimination of "marginal" quarters, the modernization of construction or the improvement of vehicular traffic have resulted in the adoption of inadequate technologies, a rise in imports, the squandering of resources and an increase in inequalities.

16. What emerges from these facts is a certain human-settlements ideology aimed at enabling the developing countries to "catch-up with" the developed countries by a "modern" urbanism which seeks to solve problems by a transfer of methods and techniques, but which in reality is a transfer of models. Thus it is sought to give urban centres the character of "affluent cities" and carry out land development in a process which for many countries amounts to nothing more than organizing the drain of people and resources.

17. If the real conditions of various categories of countries are considered, their differences with respect to available resources will be clearly seen.

18. The developed countries have personnel, financial means, modern machines and industrial products at their disposal and are limited only in the availability of manpower. Furthermore, the latter is proportionately very costly.

19. Under-developed countries which are semi-industrialized have personnel, financial means, machines and industrial products in lesser quantity, but an abundance of manpower. Under-developed countries which are major exporters of raw materials have only financial means and manpower. Under-developed countries without resources have only manpower.

/...

20. The two intermediate categories are characterized by having the financial means of purchasing technology, modern machines and industrial products without necessarily combining them in the interest of the country so as to help solve its problems, particularly unemployment.

21. In any event, these differences suffice to show that a satisfactory combination of factors, both economic and social, is not the same for each situation. Consequently, the solutions and methods applied cannot be the same.

22. However, the differences which determine solutions and make the transfer of models unacceptable are not only economic. There are also, inter alia, differences of ideology, culture and social and political régimes which help to explain why the problem of human settlements differs from one country to another and even within each country, and why the application of so-called universal solutions does harm.

23. However, while the harm caused by the transfer of models is obvious, it would be a serious error to attribute all ills to it. For one thing, such an opinion could lead to a perpetuation of paternalist conservative traditionalism, ignoring the fact that social changes in the developing countries are, to a large extent, prompted by the aspiration of peoples to share some of the benefits of the modern world and that changes which have already been effected and are irreversible, such as population growth and cultural changes resulting from access to information and heightened awareness, make it impossible to retain traditional models.

24. Furthermore, such an opinion would lead to neglect of all that the peoples of the third world can learn and use through a critical adaptation of the knowledge and experiences acquired in the world and to failure on their part to claim all the support of the international community to which they are entitled.

25. Finally, such an attitude could lead to the deferment of a sufficiently critical analysis of the errors made by the developing, i.e. dependent, countries, their understandable deficiencies and the internal social factors which have contributed to the current crisis. The result would be ignorance of their real possibilities for action and of the resources still at their disposal for the establishment of a human settlement policy within the framework of a self-development effort.

### 3. Need for a new human settlements policy

26. It must be affirmed that such a policy is essential in each country in order to avoid aggravating all existing problems, squandering resources, slowing down development and creating conditions which might further jeopardize the quality of life and make subsequent efforts at rectification too expensive and too difficult. However, because of the very magnitude of the problems involved their solution requires new concepts, new models, new technologies, new instruments and a radical change in the use and distribution of all resources, particularly human capabilities.

/...

27. It should again be stated that such far-reaching and radical changes in production and distribution methods can only be considered as part of a global restructuring of society. Furthermore, the true scope of the problems - particularly of the problem of population growth/migration - means not only that existing concepts are not working, but also that they are not applicable. It thus provides an opportunity - and gives rise to a responsibility - to abandon the process of merely making minor adjustments of existing methods. It is from this perspective that the criticism of human settlements in their existing form should be made while alternative solutions are sought and subjected to experimentation.

#### A new division of responsibilities

28. The first question is to ascertain who it is that takes decisions and how, for the problems involved can be solved only on the basis of human initiative in all its forms. At the country level, and within a country, in relations between various groups, confidence in their own possibilities, initiative, decision-making and effective participation in execution are requisite conditions for a truly human development which will meet the needs and genuine aspirations of peoples.

29. This does not mean a denial of the importance either of action at the national level by central Governments, without which there would be no national human settlements policy, or of planned effort, or of incorporating the question of human settlements in the national economic and social development policy. What it does mean is the need to redistribute competences and responsibilities at the various levels in order to achieve all these objectives.

30. Between the central Government and the local base there are various levels of decision-making and problem-solving, both those corresponding to territorial units of various categories and those within specialized bodies entrusted with specific tasks. The problem consists of defining the role of each in the decisions which determine the setting in which the majority of the people live their lives.

31. On the one hand, it is essential to stress the unity of an over-all view of human settlements which should not be impaired by unco-ordinated decisions taken for each specific action: shelter, land, services, etc. The emphasis placed on shelter, as if it summarized the entire housing problem, may even conceal the basic problems, namely, those of organizing productive activities in physical space. The fact is that structural changes have taken place in the rural world and in methods of urban-industrial production which have led to unbridled urbanization, the crises of cities and the impoverishment of the countryside, but are also opening possibilities for change.

32. With respect to the role of each territorial level, the response will be different depending on the country involved. Generally speaking, it appears that in the developed countries central organization and control are among the dominant concerns, while in the most deprived countries it is participation at the lowest level which determines success or failure with regard to human settlements.

33. However, it is hardly likely that the devolution of powers and means of action

/...



to the regional and local levels can succeed unless the people become aware of their deprived position and of the pretended ignorance of their needs. A mere plan imposed from above cannot determine the scope of the activity to be undertaken at the base and the forms which it shall take. If such a plan is meaningless in itself, mere increased awareness will not suffice. The people must organize themselves politically at various levels, seize the initiative with respect to the construction and transformation of the environment in which they spend their daily lives and query the assumptions put forward by the planners. This means a modification of organization and power relationships for the benefit of the groups most interested in change and will give real meaning to these priority objectives, greater confidence on the part of the group in its possibilities, and more equality.

34. In the countries of the third world, where financial and administrative resources are very limited, every decision should be taken in the light of established priorities and should entail only what the local communities themselves can do. One of the roles of the State must be that of guaranteeing the rights of each community over the resources necessary for its own development.

4. New models of action

35. Any setting of norms or standards must take into account the levels and rates of economic, technological and cultural development of each group, the aspirations and preferences of the group and the interest of society as a whole.

36. Decentralization and deconcentration meet different needs in the developed and in the most deprived countries. In the former, they are a response to rising costs resulting from congestion in large concentrations, while in the latter they reflect a refusal to allow imported urban civilization to continue to lead to the impoverishment and deculturation of the rural inhabitants, who constitute the majority of the population, and to hamper their self-development.

37. While accelerated urbanization has increased tertiary activities, large sectors of the urban population can devote part of their time to primary and secondary production. Spatial, economic and cultural models can be adjusted to resolve conflicts in respect of employment, particularly those concerning industry and handicrafts.

38. Frequently, there have been negative effects when central Governments have undertaken to solve the housing problem by direct housing construction. Among these effects, mention should be made first of all of their high cost, which has resulted in their benefiting middle-income groups; secondly, there is the mediocre functional quality of the product; finally, such programmes have the effect of accelerating migration to the cities. For these reasons, among others, it would seem advisable to use resources to contribute indirectly to improving housing by allowing for greater local initiative with respect to housing construction. Particularly in vast areas of the third world, self-help construction and improvement of housing on the basis of investment of human resources seem to be the only realistic way of meeting the needs of the majority.

39. However, discontinuance of direct construction does not mean that the role or obligation of the State with respect to human settlements is reduced. On the contrary, the State must extend its activities by offering specialized services in such fields as education, health and public transportation which cannot be obtained through available means only; it must undertake vigorous efforts with respect to policies relating to the soil and other resources; it must adopt policies aimed at limiting or reducing population concentration in certain favoured areas when that concentration is excessive. In so doing it should rely not on prohibitions and controls but on training at local levels and a system of aid and subsidies.

40. A community facilities policy cannot be dictated by the logic of profit, nor can it be subject to the play of market forces; rather, it must respond to the desire for optimum efficiency and the need for solidarity.

41. With respect to moderately priced rental housing, one of the effective ways of reducing costs is to eliminate or substantially reduce the cost of urban land.

/...



42. In this connexion, emphasis should be placed not only on local materials, adequate technology and the organization and formation of local communities. Greater importance should be attached to ecological aspects, giving due consideration to the environment, halting its degradation and ensuring its long-term improvement.

#### 5. Problem of technologies

43. Mention has already been made of the serious errors committed in many cases in the choice of technology. It is essential to stress the need for appropriate selection, permitting the use of indigenous resources, and the importance of establishing the requisite services and infrastructures.

44. Thus the technology to be applied to construction should use resources which are locally available in order to obtain the optimum use of material resources and better use of human resources. This often means using materials such as wood, brick, tile, quarry-stone and stabilized earth. This should be interpreted not as discouraging invention but, on the contrary, as a stimulus to innovation in place of copying the techniques of "developed" countries.

45. Construction technology cannot be dissociated from the various aspects of the environment, especially the density of human settlements. It is only in areas of very high density, where capital is abundant and labour expensive, that resort to the most modern technology (industrialized construction) is economically justifiable in that it lowers costs, such as the costs of installation and transport. Furthermore, such high densities may be out of proportion to the possibilities which the area has to offer. Indeed, in developing countries this is usually the case.

46. Technologies which save resources and are capable of being used in such a way as to consume little energy, or which produce new sources of low-cost energy for light and heat (for example, solar energy, natural gas installations), deserve high priority. This is an area in which international co-operation can be helpful.

47. The appraisal of alternative technologies should be based on cost-benefit analyses which take into consideration social and environmental dimensions and not on cost reckoning as practised in private firms.

48. It is important to have a policy which encourages research and the dissemination of technological innovations to meet existing needs at the national and local levels.

#### 6. A resources policy

49. The development of urban and rural human settlements necessitates prudent use of all physical, financial and human resources. As the world's resources are limited and in some cases non-renewable, consideration must be given to reallocating them so as to benefit the most underprivileged groups or countries.

/...

50. The problem of human resources has already been considered from various points of view in the foregoing paragraphs. Nevertheless, it should be stated that the use of the population as a resource calls not only for measures of spatial and social restructuring, stimulation of initiative and allocation of specific responsibilities, but also for training and education. Active training, geared to society, the environment, management of human settlements and housing technology, can play an extremely important role, particularly in the less developed countries. In particular, it should be remembered that expansion of human settlements can lead to a shortage of physical resources and skilled manpower. This calls for rapid training of the necessary manpower.

51. As far as material resources are concerned, in addition to selecting the technologies which are best suited to the conditions within a given country, it will be necessary to create the economic and social conditions which will make such resources accessible to the poorest strata of the population.

52. Greater use of local building materials, under appropriate economic conditions and in appropriate quantities, depends on the availability and distribution of raw materials and other resources. Planned exploitation of raw materials is essential to any human settlements policy.

53. In allocating resources, it should be borne in mind that the aim is to meet human needs (physical, psychological and social) and that such resources are not negotiable in a market economy.

## 7. Land

54. Land - particularly urban land - is both a natural resource and a capital asset. As a natural resource, always limited in quantity and at times even scarce, it must be allocated so as to satisfy the needs of all. As a capital asset, it should be noted that any increase in its value is mainly due not to individual effort but to the decisions and investments of society as a whole and of the local community, and therefore it belongs to society and the community.

55. The need for land is not simply a need for physical space. Land is also necessary to provide access to the labour market, to employment opportunities and even to credit facilities; to provide access to relatives, friends and others; to provide access to water, medical treatment, education, trade, communications and transport. All these factors are closely linked with land use. The use of land and of the services and facilities which that implies must be considered as a human right.

56. In general, there is sufficient land to meet the needs of existing human settlements and for their possible future growth, but it is often poorly utilized, badly allocated, wasted and even destroyed. The right to land must be measured in minima and maxima which prevent it from being monopolized and misused.

57. A policy ensuring that there is enough land for human settlements, that it is allocated and used to meet needs and that any appreciation in value of a social origin is returned to society, is an essential part of a settlements policy.

/...

58. Private appropriation of value added to land by society as a whole leads to the accumulation of enormous profits from one generation to the next, and tends to raise the price of land artificially, thus making it difficult or impossible for the poorest sectors of the population to acquire it and consolidating and increasing the disparities which are at the root of the current crisis.

59. In most countries, what is called for is new urban legislation based on needs rather than on market mechanisms, on priority for the dispossessed classes and on forms of ownership which take account of the characteristics of society and emphasize responsibility and dynamism on the part of the local community. The new legislation must provide public authorities at the various levels with the necessary means for the purchase of land, the creation of reserves to permit programming of future expansion, the allocation or reallocation of land, the control of land use and the recovery of land value added through taxation and other measures.

60. It is essential to provide for forms of financing which will enable this machinery to operate. For this purpose, it should be noted that means of financing can be made available by the central Government or local authorities, which can also mobilize private savings in various ways.

61. In conducting land policy at the national level, a broader approach must be adopted than at the town level. Such a policy must contribute to the establishment of urban and rural growth poles, the improvement and strengthening of medium-sized towns, and the construction of new large towns, and must give positive direction to population distribution, where necessary, and establish a suitable human settlements structure.

62. Naturally, the assumption by the public authorities of an active role in matters concerning land use is not sufficient to bring about automatic solutions to the problems. However, given the present scale of urban growth, such action is a prerequisite, without which no solution would be possible. It is also important that this policy should not be based on short-term private or public planning. The construction of human settlements must be undertaken without losing sight of the problems of the quality of life of future generations.

#### 8. Scope of the task

63. In conclusion, a few observations are called for regarding the position of the international community with regard to the problems of human settlements.

64. The international community has a role of cardinal importance to play first and foremost in establishing a new international economic order which will achieve more just relationships between nations, and which will in particular provide countries producing raw materials with an equitable share of the final value of products. But its role does not end there; one of its tasks is to promote the accelerated transformation of human settlements.

/...

65. It has a clearly defined responsibility with regard to international migrations. The flow of people from countries which are poor or which have been stricken by disasters of one sort or another is towards countries where they hope to find employment, higher incomes and a better standard of living. This flow has reached such proportions that it may have disturbing consequences for human settlements in both groups of countries. Accordingly, an international code of rights and responsibilities in this field must be drawn up.

66. In addition to the tasks enumerated above, the international community can make an important contribution, by strengthening technical information and assistance, provided that it takes account of the special nature of the human settlements situation in the various countries, and by providing financial support to the poorest countries to assist them in implementing innovative policies.

67. In short, the human settlements crisis cannot be tackled without raising the question of the transformation of society itself. This transformation constitutes a challenge to man's capacity for creation and renewal and is inseparable from the over-all problem of development. It calls for increased citizen awareness, the destruction of forms of domination, and the substantial reduction of disparities within the framework of new institutions, new instruments, new technologies, new models and new concepts, and of a new role for the individual both within each country and in the international context.

ANNEX

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS a/

Experts

Abdelhamid Ait Younes  
Directeur des Programmes  
Secrétariat d'Etat au Plan  
Algiers (Algeria)

Salah Al Shaikhly b/  
President  
Central Statistical Organization  
Ministry of Planning  
Baghdad (Iraq)

Serge Antoine b/  
Secrétaire général  
Haut Comité de l'Environnement  
14, Bld. du Général Leclerc  
92521 Neuilly-sur-Seine  
(France)

Diego Arría  
Gobernador de Caracas  
Gubernación de Caracas  
Caracas (Venezuela)

Mourad Ben Embarek  
Architect  
Immeuble BNDE  
Rabat (Maroc)

Ajit Bhalla  
Project Manager  
World Employment Programme  
ILO  
Geneva (Switzerland)

Jacques Bugnicourt  
In charge of IDEP/UNEP/SIDA Environment Training Programme  
B.P. 3370  
Dakar (Senegal)

---

a/ All the participants other than the United Nations Secretariat attended in their personal capacity and not as representatives of any institution or organization.

b/ Participated for only part of the time.

/...

A/CONF.70/WG/14

English

Annex

Page 2

Fernando Cardoso  
Centro Brasileiro de Analise e Planejamento (CEBRAP)  
Rua Bahia 499  
São Paulo (Brazil)

Adolf Ciborowski  
Director General  
Research Institute on Environmental Development  
Haukego 8  
Warsaw (Poland)

Charles Correa  
Architect  
249 Dadabhai  
Naoroji Road  
Bombay (India)

Laughlin Currie  
Consejero  
Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Planeación  
Bogotá (Colombia)

Pierre Dansereau  
Professeur d'écologie  
Université du Québec à Montréal  
Case postale 8888  
Montréal, Québec H3C 3P8 (Canada)

Haim Darin-Drabkin  
Director of Research  
Land Use Research Institute  
Karni 10 - P.O. Box 17143  
Tel-Aviv (Israel)

Selma Diaz  
Director del Instituto de Planificación Física  
Provincia de Oriente  
La Habana (Cuba)

David Donnison b/  
Director  
Centre for Environmental Studies  
62 Chandos Place  
London WC2 N4HH (United Kingdom)

---

b/ See foot-note on page 1.

/...



Tahki Farvar  
Director  
Centre for Endogenous Development Studies  
46 Sahba St.  
Amirabad Avenue  
Teheran (Iran)

Yona Friedman b/  
42, Bld. Pasteur  
75015 Paris (France)

J. W. S. de Graft-Johnson  
Director  
Building Research Institute  
Ghana Academy of Science  
University Post Office Box 40  
Kumasi (Ghana)

Albert Hirschman  
Institute for Advanced Study  
Princeton, New Jersey 08540 (United States)

Otto Koenigsberger  
Director  
Development Planning Unit  
University College, London  
10-11 Percy Street  
London W1P 9FB (United Kingdom)

William Lim  
Architect  
Design Partnership  
Golden Mile Shopping Centre  
Singapore (Singapore)

A. Mascarenhas  
Professor of Geography  
University of Dar es Salaam  
Dar es Salaam (Tanzania)

Nuno Portas  
Ministère de l'Administration Interne  
Place du Commerce  
Lisboa (Portugal)

---

b/ See foot-note on page 1.

A/CONF.70/WG/14

English

Annex

Page 4

Panayotis Psomopoulos

Vice-President

Athens Centre of Ekistics

World Society of Ekistics

24 Strat Syndesmou St.

P.O. Box 471

Athens 136 (Greece)

John Turner

Architectural Association Graduate School

34-36 Bedford Square

London WC1 B3FS (United Kingdom)

Otto Weber

Professor of Physical Chemistry

Institute for Medical Research and Occupational Health

Yugoslav Academy of Arts and Sciences

M. Pijade 158

41000 Zagreb

(Yugoslavia)

#### Special guests

Maurice Strong

Executive Secretary of UNEP

Johan Galtung b/

Director

Inter-University Centre

Frana Bulica 4

50000 Dubrovnik

(Yugoslavia)

#### Other participants

Aleksander Dordević

Secretary-General of the Council

for Human Environment

Yugoslavia

Peter Javanovic

Head of Group for Environment

Federal Committee for Health and

Social Policy

Yugoslavia

---

b/ See foot-note on page 1.

Vojislav Nikolić  
First Secretary,  
Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Yugoslavia

United Nations Secretariat c/

Steven Groak, Consultant to Habitat  
Guy Lemarchand, United Nations Development Programme  
Eduardo Neira, Economic Commission for Latin America  
Enrique Peñalosa, Secretary-General of Habitat  
Vicente Sanchez, United Nations Environment Programme  
Juan Pablo Terra, Consultant to Habitat  
Duccio Turin, Deputy Secretary-General of Habitat  
Ernest Weissman, Consultant to Habitat

-----

---

c/ Listed in alphabetical order of names as the members of the Secretariat were invited to attend in their personal capacity, not as representatives of the organizations to which they belong.