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**LAND ADMINISTRATION FOR ECONOMIC SECURITY  
AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN EUROPE**

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Administration, in cooperation with the Bureau of the Working Party and the secretariat

**Introduction**

1. The Economic Commission for Europe has highlighted the importance of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of security as key issues for the stability and development of its region. The Commission defined two challenges that it as well as other regional institutions have to face in addressing these multifaceted aspects of security:

- (a) The need to develop broader and more integrated approaches to security by:
  - (i) Giving proper consideration to the economic and social conditions of sustainable security, and to their policy implications;
  - (ii) Assessing various economic, social and environmental risks, which may have compounding effects through interactions, both among themselves and with other dimensions of security;

(b) The need to take the conclusions of such integrated assessments to the political level, involving all relevant players, in particular the political bodies with decision-making responsibilities for security in the region.

2. At its fifty-seventh session in May 2002, the Commission invited its all principal subsidiary bodies to look closely at their work programmes in the context of security and safety. The present paper has been prepared in response to this request. It considers land administration issues in an integrated policy context: security and sustainable development.

### **Land administration as an instrument to provide secure ownership in land, investments and other private and public rights in real estate**

3. The natural relationship between man and land has a great influence on security, stability and sustainable development. Like no other resource, land has many characteristics that are vital for human society. Land represents a physical space that sustains human life and activities. Land as a function of property can be used to generate wealth and diminish poverty.

4. The management of publicly owned land is an important issue. In some cases it is occupied illegally. Sometimes the State does not even know exactly what land it possesses. The importance of integrated planning and the management of land resources derives from the unprecedented population pressures and demands of society on land, water and other natural resources. It also stems from the increasing degradation of natural resources and threats to the stability and resilience of ecosystems and the environment as a whole, in part as a result of climate change. These trends highlight the need for each country to ensure for its citizens, within the limit of its national legislation, equal access and rights to land, water and other natural resources, and to resolve competition among the national economic sectors for land resources. The challenge is to develop and promote sustainable land-use management systems as part of national and local strategies for sustainable development. Governments are encouraged to provide transparent, effective, participatory and accountable governance conducive to sustainable development and responsive to the needs of people. The social and health aspects of land-use systems deserve particular attention and should be integrated into the overall planning process.

5. The major risks to security and peace in the ECE region now appear to reside in a number of internal sources of instability. New State borders and land disputes can become sources of conflict between individuals, ethnic groups and nations. Good land administration systems, however, can prevent disputes, protect State land and land tenure for ethnic minorities, and possibly help prevent international conflicts.

6. The level of land administration and its supporting information infrastructure is often an indicator of the level of a society's organization. In countries where the land administration system is not fully developed, chaotic and uncontrolled expansion of human settlements, lack of security in terms of health and safety in informal housing construction, abusive use of agricultural land, corruption, and degradation of the environment may result. The pressures are increasing in line with population demands for more land, water and natural resources. These issues reflect the constantly changing status of society as well as the level of development and economic possibilities of different countries. Good land administration is a tool by which governments are able to implement policies aimed at creating conditions for the sustainable development of their countries and economic security for their people.

7. A land administration system has always been seen as an important tool for guaranteeing security of tenure. It is important to guarantee and strengthen security of tenure and develop and support appropriate forms of tenure for all socio-economic groups. It is well-known that a system of registration of private rights to land facilitates security of credit. Land registration offers reliable procedures for creating and securing mortgages. The financial sector, providing loans for development and investment, can flourish where land rights are guaranteed. This is because banks and lending institutions can secure their total loan and investment portfolio through individual mortgage registration, across the many separate properties of a large population of private owners and businesses. Access to mortgage finance makes the development and diversification of medium and small businesses possible, thus promoting commercial responsiveness to internal and external demand. It increases the scope for inward investment. Importantly, it generates employment opportunities that might otherwise be constrained or non-existent. For the homeowner, access to finance makes it possible to improve and develop existing property, so increasing the value of the national housing stock. Thus, it contributes to security in many aspects: it reduces migration to other countries, increases jobs opportunities, and prevents outflow of capital. Land administration has very direct consequences at the local level: it helps to establish security not only of tenure but also from a social and economic point of view, and it promotes the democratic development of a society.

8. Societies which have internal stability and a functioning economy recognize that, to a large degree, this was achieved thanks to an effective system for registering private land rights and an inexpensive system of real estate transfers. Land registers, and the information that they produce, are vital for land management and real estate taxation, the banking sector, urban planning and infrastructure development, environmental management and for producing statistics. So they create possibilities for ensuring economic development and government revenue as well as a balanced distribution of wealth at a national level. In view of the current progress in information technology, the process of globalization, and the need for access to information, the reasons for establishing or modernizing land administration systems become even stronger. All ECE countries are therefore engaged in modernizing their cadastre and land registration systems to improve customer services and have accurate data available at the right time.

9. The objectives of environmental policies in the ECE region are aimed at protecting the environment and human health and ensuring the effective use of natural resources. The information already held in land registers is of great importance for environmental protection and control. However, there is an increasing need for more environment-related information to be included in land information systems. An information base that provides detailed and specific harmonized information for different policy areas and which is accessible to the general public is now regarded to be of significant importance for the environmental aspects of security. The management of such comprehensive land administration system must be able to accommodate new users' demands and to take advantage of modern technologies as they become available. Information should be made accessible and then disseminated as widely as possible. In order to be effective, there is a need for a concerted effort to inform and train people so that they know what information is available and how it can be retrieved and used.

10. The delegations are invited to discuss the following questions:

- (a) How does the work programme of the Committee on Human Settlements relate to the economic, social and environmental dimensions of security in the ECE region? Is there a way for the Committee to respond better to the challenges and potential threats to security that are of relevance to its field of responsibilities?
- (b) To what extent can land administration contribute to promoting economic security and sustainability, taking into account the effects that it has on investments in housing, on urban development, on work force mobility, on international migration, and on the economy as a whole?
- (c) What priorities should be established in countries in transition to meet security and political stability challenges in the drawing-up of land policies and the creation of an appropriate land administration system?
- (d) How does one ensure a well-structured land information system, wide use of data and data accessibility to the general public?