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## Second Committee

### Summary record of the 28th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 20 November 2001, at 10 a.m.

*Chairman:* Mr. Djumala (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Indonesia)

## Contents

Agenda item 12: Report of the Economic and Social Council

Agenda item 102: Implementation of the Habitat Agenda and outcome of the special session of the General Assembly on this topic

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*In the absence of Mr. Seixas da Costa (Portugal), Mr. Djumala (Indonesia), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.*

#### **Agenda item 12: Report of the Economic and Social Council**

*Draft resolution on the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields (A/C.2/56/L.27)*

1. **Mr. Hirata** (Japan) introduced the draft resolution and recalled that, at its substantive session of 2001, the Economic and Social Council had adopted resolution 2001/21 on the same issue. Noting that the draft resolution had been prepared pursuant to paragraph 4 of that resolution, he recommended that the Committee should adopt it by consensus.

#### **Agenda item 102: Implementation of the Habitat Agenda and outcome of the special session of the General Assembly on this topic (A/56/8, A/56/477, A/56/618, A/56/222-S/2001/736, A/56/306)**

2. **Ms. Tibaijuka** (Assistant Secretary-General and Executive Director of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (HABITAT)) said that, in 2001, the international community had reaffirmed the importance of implementing the Habitat Agenda for Sustainable Development and had begun to take decisive steps to strengthen both the Commission on Human Settlements and the Centre. The Millennium Declaration's goal of making significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by the year 2020 and its endorsement of the Cities Without Slums initiative was another way of restating the goals of adequate shelter for all and sustainable human settlements embodied in the Habitat Agenda.

3. Introducing the report of the Commission on Human Settlements (A/56/8) on the work of its eighteenth session, she said that delegations had engaged in intensive debates and constructive negotiations on resolutions, while substantive dialogues had been held between Habitat Agenda partners and a series of side events had been organized on matters of interest to the future of human settlements. Participants had assessed progress made with respect to revitalization and further strengthening of the organizational structure of the Centre.

4. The eighteenth session had also underscored the importance of maintaining a balance between normative and operational activities at all levels and confirmed the importance of the global campaign for secure tenure and the global campaign for urban governance in achieving the Habitat Agenda's goals of adequate shelter for all and sustainable human settlements development in an urbanizing world. At the operational level, policy advocacy had been deemed critical to promote investment policies in the areas of shelter and infrastructure development.

5. The approval of the 2002-2003 work programme and budget following intensive discussions had confirmed that revitalization of the Centre was an ongoing process. Continuing support by Member States was vital for the Centre to be able to discharge its mandate as the focal point in the United Nations system for the Habitat Agenda.

6. The Economic and Social Council had recently adopted a draft resolution on the establishment of the Committee of Permanent Representatives as an inter-sessional subsidiary body of the Commission on Human Settlements. The Committee had already been formalized. That decision was important in the light of an overall strengthening of the status and role of the Commission which, despite its responsibilities regarding the human settlements programme and the monitoring and implementation of the Habitat Agenda, still retained its original status of a "standing committee" of the Economic and Social Council.

7. The twenty-fifth special session of the General Assembly had reconfirmed the importance of the Habitat Agenda for sustainable development in all countries in the light of increasing urbanization and the centrality of cities to socio-economic growth, cultural development and integration. That session was regarded as an outstanding success in terms of the process of building global consensus through open and transparent dialogue and because it marked five successful years of progress in implementing the Habitat Agenda as an issue concerning all countries.

8. The special session had concluded its work by adopting a Declaration on Cities and Other Human Settlements in the New Millennium, which would guide the work of the Commission and Centre in the years ahead. That successful outcome was the result of collective effort. The review and appraisal process had also benefited from close collaboration among the

organizations of the United Nations system, particularly with the regional economic commissions and with civil society. The session had also rekindled the spirit of innovation and participation which had animated the Istanbul Conference. For the first time ever, a Thematic Committee had provided a forum for informal discussions, open to all Habitat Agenda partners, on the experiences from all regions of the world in implementing the Habitat Agenda.

9. In the Declaration on Cities and Other Human Settlements in the New Millennium, the Secretary-General had been invited to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session on options for reviewing and strengthening the mandate and status of the Commission on Human Settlements and the status, role and function of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat). It had been recognized that the status of Habitat and its governing body, the Commission, was not commensurate with its broad mandate of focal point in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda. That had constrained the Centre's participation in the coordination machinery of the United Nations system, with adverse consequences on the visibility, attention and support that human settlements required as a cross-sectoral dimension of development. In his report on the matter (A/56/618), the Secretary-General recommended that both the Commission and its secretariat could be re-classified to remedy that anomaly. The Commission could either become a functional commission of the Economic and Social Council or a subsidiary body of the General Assembly. While neither option contemplated any change in the mandate, membership and functioning of the Commission, the first option had budgetary implications, since all members of functional commissions of the Council were entitled to financial assistance from the United Nations in covering the travel expenses of one member of their delegation. In both cases, the Commission would be in a position to strengthen its cooperation with the Council's functional commissions and other bodies of the United Nations and to strengthen its capacity to discharge its mandate.

10. As far as the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements was concerned, the report recommended transforming it into a Programme on Human Settlements, a change in name which did not have any budgetary implications, since the Centre already functioned as a de facto programme.

11. Even if the changes constituted only one aspect of the revitalization efforts, they were critical to facilitating further gains in the other reform components already under way, in particular in the priority areas of eradication of urban poverty and the complementarity between normative and operational activities, as well as the improvement of the managerial and financial situation and the regularization of the staff of the Centre. The strengthening of the two bodies was a necessary condition to allow Habitat to discharge its coordinating functions more efficiently and to respond to the growing expectations of Member States. That institutional reform would help to concentrate efforts on resource mobilization. In that regard, the funding position of the Habitat Foundation had improved markedly, as several Member States had resumed their funding and others had considerably increased their contributions. The Secretary-General's report also pointed out the need to intensify efforts to enhance the role of Habitat in the field; to diversify sources of financing for technical cooperation projects and programmes; and to identify new avenues for inter-agency collaboration. One of the options indicated in the Secretary-General's report would be the revitalization, through partnerships with international development banks and other financial institutions, of the Human Settlements Foundation, originally created as a revolving fund to support various shelter programmes in developing countries and to strengthen housing finance institutions.

12. **Mr. Asadi** (Islamic Republic of Iran), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Twenty-fifth Annual Meeting of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Group of 77 had adopted a Ministerial Declaration in which the Ministers had reiterated the importance that the international community attached to the Habitat Agenda, the Istanbul Declaration and the Declaration on Cities and Other Human Settlements in the New Millennium, and had reiterated the urgency of accelerating the implementation of the provisions of those instruments.

13. In that regard, he welcomed the efforts to achieve the two most important objectives of the Habitat Agenda, namely, adequate shelter for all and sustainable human settlements development in an urbanizing world. More vigorous action should be taken to ensure wider and more effective involvement of Habitat Agenda partners, especially the private and

public sectors, better coordination between the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements and other relevant United Nations agencies; draw up an active strategy for financial resource mobilization; enhance the Centre's ability to promote more dynamic cooperation, both regional and international; and strengthen the linkages between the normative and operational work of Habitat, leading to pilot projects as necessary.

14. The Declaration on Cities and Other Human Settlements in the New Millennium constituted an important commitment by Member States on how to design and improve strategies to achieve the goals of adequate shelter for all and sustainable development of human settlements. To that end, the Group of 77 and China emphasized that the Commission on Human Settlements and its secretariat, as the United Nations focal point for the implementation of the Habitat Agenda, had a central role to play in assisting Member States in monitoring and accelerating the implementation of the Habitat Agenda and the outcome of the twenty-fifth special session. The Group of 77 and China also welcomed the establishment of the Committee of Permanent Representatives as an inter-session subsidiary body of the Commission and hoped that it would facilitate the work of Habitat.

15. The strengthening of the Commission and the Centre involved three major issues, namely, strengthening the mandate and status of the Commission, strengthening the role and functioning of the Centre and the need for Habitat to participate actively in the work of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, which deserved particular attention. In the view of the Group of 77 and China, Habitat, as the focal point for human settlements issues and the implementation of the Habitat Agenda, should ensure that the twin goals of the Agenda were achieved, namely, adequate shelter for all and sustainable human settlements development. It was from that perspective that the participation of Habitat in the work of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination was necessary for assisting it to improve the coordination of system-wide activities.

16. The Group of 77 and China deplored the fact that the Secretary-General's report had been submitted late, in an unedited version, which had not permitted it to thoroughly consider the report and develop a common position. That was all the more regrettable, since the

Group unequivocally supported the strengthening of the mandate and status of the Commission and the Centre.

17. **Mr. Van der Pluijm** (Belgium), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the review of the implementation of the Habitat Agenda conducted by the General Assembly at its twenty-fifth special session showed that implementation was only a qualified success. Despite the progress made and the countless promising initiatives undertaken, a quarter of the world's population was still living below the poverty line. The Declaration on Cities and Other Human Settlements in the New Millennium adopted at that session reaffirmed the political will of the international community to implement the Habitat Agenda. That was all the more important, since the Declaration clearly highlighted among the main obstacles to implementation of the Agenda, the discrepancy between the commitments entered into at Istanbul and the political will to honour those commitments. In that regard, the European Union wished to stress the key role played by local authorities in the further implementation of the Habitat Agenda, as they were the closest partners to the citizens and were historically in charge of the fulfilment of their fundamental needs. Increased cooperation among all levels of government was therefore required. The European Union remained attached to the establishment of an international legal framework on the decentralization of governments, in the spirit of the consultations held on the World Charter of Local Self-Government.

18. The European Union renewed its commitment to the two main objectives adopted at Istanbul: "adequate shelter for all" and "sustainable human settlements development in an urbanizing world", as well as its support for two campaigns conducted by Habitat in favour of "secure tenure" and "urban governance". It also reaffirmed its commitment to the achievement of the right to adequate housing and wholeheartedly supported the task of the Special Rapporteur on the issue as an integral part of the right to a decent standard of living. He recalled the European Union's commitment to gender equality with regard to rights and access to property and inheritance.

19. The European Union had high expectations of the task manager system, which should be fully utilized in order to take into account the multidisciplinary aspect of the Habitat Agenda. While the European Union

would seriously consider the Secretary-General's proposal to set up that task manager system within the framework of the Environment Management Group, it felt it important to make sure that the various dimensions of sustainable development addressed in the Habitat Agenda would be fully taken into account, and not just the environmental dimension alone. Moreover, as recalled by the Economic and Social Council, it was important that Habitat should take part in the activities of the various relevant mechanisms of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination. In the European Union's view, the implementation of the Habitat Programme and of the Declaration on Cities and Other Human Settlements should be addressed by the inter-agency mechanisms in order to streamline the use of human and financial resources and optimize results on the ground.

20. As far as the report of the Secretary-General on options for reviewing and strengthening the mandate and status of the Commission on Human Settlements and the status, role and function of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) (A/56/618) was concerned, the European Union welcomed the recent institutional trends, in particular, the establishment of the Advisory Committee of Local Authorities and of the Urban Forum, as well as the formalization of the role of the Committee of Permanent Representatives. The Union was also in favour of enhancing the status of Habitat and strengthening the United Nations headquarters in Nairobi. It was considering with interest the proposals by the Secretary-General aimed at developing the policy-making role of the Commission on Human Settlements. It would like to receive more information concerning a possible change in the status of the Commission as well as a possible change in the name of the Centre.

21. The preparations for the Johannesburg Summit on Sustainable Development would afford a unique opportunity to harness all the synergies between the Habitat Agenda and Agenda 21. At a time when half of the world's population lived in cities, it was becoming a matter of urgency to strengthen the urban and local dimension of sustainable development. The European Union expected Habitat, as well as all the other relevant organizations, including the Urban Forum, to contribute actively to the preparations, including by making specific recommendations. It was the responsibility of all countries to mobilize the group of

local authorities well beforehand. Indeed, not only had local authorities launched over 1,800 local agenda 21 initiatives throughout the world, but the large towns, regions and federal entities in various States often had at least as much power to promote sustainable development as States did at the national level. It was the local authorities which had the necessary expertise for ensuring that the essential urban and local dimension of sustainable development was taken into account. Thus, the national Habitat committees, established to prepare the special session of the General Assembly "Istanbul + 5" could be called upon to participate in assessing the implementation of the Agenda 21 chapters in their domain. Lastly, it should be ensured that there was a good turnout of local authorities for the local authorities forum in Johannesburg.

22. **Mr. Mannan** (Bangladesh) said that he endorsed the conclusion of the Secretary-General's report (A/56/477) that the review and appraisal process had shown that Member States had taken tangible steps towards incorporating the human settlements issues contained in the Istanbul Declaration and the Habitat Agenda into their national policies. He also welcomed the launching of two global campaigns for secure tenure and urban governance.

23. His Government had been making determined efforts to implement the Habitat Agenda. The Bangladesh report submitted to the special session of the General Assembly had been structured around 20 key commitments emanating from the Habitat Agenda. They had been organized under six broad themes: shelter; social development and poverty eradication; environmental management; economic development; governance; and international cooperation. In that regard, Bangladesh had created several necessary institutional structures, including a national urban observatory committee and many local urban observatories in major cities, hoping thus to connect to the Global Urban Observatory Network in order to collect and disseminate relevant data and exchange best practices on human settlements-related activities. In the past few years, his country had launched a number of housing projects for the poor, landless peasants and slum dwellers. It was also supporting the largest non-governmental organization in the country to build rental accommodation for female industrial workers in Dhaka, assisting non-governmental organizations that extended credit and offered more decent housing to the

poor, particularly women garment factory workers, and it had also joined the Grameen Bank in its efforts to that end. The Government was also trying to improve the delivery of basic services to the citizens in general, and to the poor in particular, through a number of projects. In its effort to implement the two global campaigns on security of tenure and urban governance, the Government had included a provision in its national housing policy that eviction of squatters was illegal without rehabilitation.

24. Bangladesh also welcomed the detailed report of the Secretary-General on options for reviewing and strengthening the mandate and the status of the Commission on Human Settlements and the status, role and function of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) (A/56/618).

25. In spite of general progress and prosperity the world over, developing countries continued to face a host of problems, including inadequate financial resources, unemployment, homelessness and expansion of squatter settlements, the widening gap between the rich and the poor, growing insecurity, inadequate services and infrastructure, lack of health and educational facilities, increasing pollution, inadequate water supply and sanitation and vulnerability to disaster. Against that backdrop, the special session of the General Assembly was a wake-up call for the international community to fulfil its commitment to implementing the Habitat Agenda.

26. **Ms. Wang Ling** (China) said that her delegation welcomed the outcome of the twenty-fifth special session of the General Assembly, especially the Declaration on Cities and Other Human Settlements in the New Millennium, which would foster international cooperation on human settlements development and facilitate the further implementation of the Habitat Agenda.

27. Since the adoption of that Agenda in 1996, countries had done a great deal of work in the field of housing and human settlements and had obtained some positive results. However, on the whole, it was obvious that the problems of human settlements were far from being resolved. Development was uneven from region to region and many developing countries were still facing serious difficulties in housing their population. It was therefore imperative that the international community should enhance its cooperation in that area

in order to ensure a more effective implementation of the Habitat Agenda.

28. In order to accelerate the attainment of the two major objectives of “adequate shelter for all” and “sustainable human settlements development in an urbanizing world”, which were established by the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, better implement the Habitat Agenda, promote international cooperation in human settlements and resolve the problem of human settlements globally, the work should be organized along four main themes. First, economic development and poverty eradication were the precondition for human settlements development, especially in developing countries. Indeed, it was only through attaining sustained economic growth and using appropriate public policies to support poor and vulnerable groups that poverty could gradually be eliminated and a basis established for human settlements development. Secondly, in order to develop human settlements, the particular circumstances of each country as well as their autonomy in terms of decision-making must be taken into account. Indeed, countries had different political systems, laws and regulations, management systems, economic development levels, history, culture and environment, all of which generated very different human settlements problems. While countries might be able to learn from each other, it was impossible to adopt a uniform approach and the sovereignty and laws of each country should be respected. Thirdly, sustainable development was the best means of solving problems of human settlements development. Therefore, human settlements development should be coordinated with population growth, productivity expansion, resources utilization and environmental protection with a view to sustainable development. Fourthly, the enhancement of international cooperation was another important factor, since resolving the problems of human settlements required not only domestic efforts, but also a sound external environment and effective cooperation between countries. Moreover, the improvement of the human settlements situation in developing countries was the first and foremost step to improving global human settlements. The international community, particularly the developed countries, needed to take the common interest of mankind as a point of departure and endeavour to narrow the gap between the rich and poor, demonstrate political will and create favourable conditions for the economic and social development of the developing countries. In

particular, the commitments made with respect to financing, technology transfer, the provision of expertise, market access, debt relief and debt cancellation, should be honoured so as to give developing countries the means of promoting the development of their human settlements.

29. **Ms. López** (Venezuela) said that the Declaration on Cities and Other Human Settlements in the New Millennium adopted by the General Assembly at its twenty-fifth special session, set out a number of measures and initiatives that would help to overcome the obstacles to the implementation of Habitat Agenda. At that session, her country's representative had stated that Venezuela was endeavouring to improve conditions in urban and rural areas, including in the areas where the indigenous people lived, respecting the primacy of the individual, his needs and his quest for housing.

30. The right to housing was enshrined in the Venezuelan Constitution. Such right was based on the principles: of shared responsibility between citizens and the State, the involvement of the communities in the decision-making process, with the gradual realization of the right to decent, safe, comfortable salubrious housing equipped with basic services, in friendly family, neighbourhood and community human settlements.

31. However, Venezuela was facing difficulties in implementing the Habitat Agenda, such as the lack of coordination among the various authorities, the centralization and concentration of decisions and resources, the shortcomings of local organizations, the still recent involvement of communities and the lack of financial resources, which were all structural factors inherent in the development process in the most dynamic sectors of Venezuela's economy. Her Government was trying to overcome them through regulations that looked at the habitat problem as a whole, as envisaged by chapter D of the Declaration on Cities and Other Human Settlements in the New Millennium, entitled "Taking further actions". In the rural areas, emphasis had been put on agriculture, the motor of sustainable development, since the agricultural sector was not only a source of revenues but also a factor of human and social development. As far as urban development was concerned, the challenge was rather how to rehabilitate the most vulnerable areas and to make them more habitable. Her Government had addressed that challenge by creating

in one of the densely populated states a municipal housing institute which, in close cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNCHS and the Inter-American Development Bank, would have the goals of building decent housing and improving the living areas through the provision of various services such as education, health care, leisure activities, sports, open spaces, food supply and production designed to ensure that the people lived in more dignified and humane conditions. Lastly, at the national level, Venezuela had set up a committee to monitor best practices in human settlements and established a prize to be awarded for the most remarkable achievements in that area in terms of technological innovation and creativity in the social, financial and urban planning spheres, especially in the most vulnerable areas. In that regard, she stressed that Venezuela had very innovative designs in town planning, be they in human settlements development, studies on housing quality of life or the use of technologies or information. That was particularly necessary in a country where the population was heavily concentrated in high-risk areas where one of the challenges was how to plan for the decentralization of the main economic activities of the country with the involvement of the public and private sectors and local communities, and encourage people to move to other poles of development.

32. **Mr. Aardval** (Norway) said that the report under consideration (A/56/8) was a good reflection of the important work and decisions of the Commission on Human Settlements. Similarly, the high-level attendance at the eighteenth session testified to the growing relevance of the revitalized Centre. The increase in financial contributions to the Habitat Foundation also testified to the increased confidence in the Centre. Norway would double its contribution to the Foundation in 2002 to approximately US\$ 1.1 million.

33. The Declaration on Cities and Other Human Settlements in the New Millennium, adopted by the General Assembly at its twenty-fifth special session, rightly emphasized the important issues of combating poverty and tackling all of the related challenges stemming from increasing urbanization, especially in developing countries, and the increasing feminization of poverty. It recognized the important work being carried out under the umbrella of the Cities Alliance Initiative, spearheaded by Habitat and the World Bank

in close collaboration with various multilateral and bilateral partners. Norway had joined that initiative, which it regarded as a promising example of the new partnerships emerging within the United Nations system. Furthermore, Norway welcomed the rights-based approach reflected in the Declaration, especially with respect to the recognition of the role of women and the protection of their rights. The special session had been a success and the Declaration would guide common efforts in the human settlements field, supplementing the Habitat Agenda and the Istanbul Declaration.

34. The report of the Secretary-General under consideration (A/56/618), contained useful information which would serve as a good basis for the Committee's debate and would help to provide a clearer picture of the status of both the Commission and the Centre. The role and status of the two bodies should be strengthened. The Declaration published at the end of the special session had requested the Secretary-General to propose various options as to how such strengthening could be achieved. In that regard, resolution 18/1 of the Commission on Human Settlements recently adopted by the Economic and Social Council concerning the establishment of the Committee of Permanent Representatives as an inter-sessional subsidiary body of the Commission, should be borne in mind. Norway had noted with great interest the option in paragraph 31 of the report to change the Centre's name from "United Nations Centre for Human Settlements" to "United Nations Human Settlements Programme", a change which would result in certain advantages. The proposals in the Secretary-General's report must be considered in the light of General Assembly resolution 53/242, the letter and spirit of which provided a useful framework for the debate on the issue. As far as the venue and frequency of the sessions of the Commission were concerned, the meetings of the Commission should be held at its headquarters in Nairobi and the established practice of biannual meetings should be maintained. However, in the years between sessions, a forum, such as the Urban Forum, could be a useful arena for expert discussions on human settlements issues.

35. **Mr. Kikaya** (Kenya) said that the twenty-fifth special session of the General Assembly had given the United Nations Member States and Habitat Agenda partners an opportunity to formulate further actions that would help to overcome the obstacles impeding the

realization of the goal of adequate shelter for all and the development of sustainable human settlements. In that regard, his delegation welcomed the Declaration on Cities and Other Human Settlements in the New Millennium and wished to highlight the commitment made by Governments to reduce poverty, intensify efforts both at the international and national levels in the global fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic, implement past commitments in the field of human settlements and reconfirm the role of the Commission on Human Settlements and the United Nations Centre on Human Settlements in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda.

36. While his delegation welcomed the progress made so far in the revitalization of the Centre, it believed that the Centre should adopt a more practical approach to its activities, by initiating and monitoring programmes in member countries. The Centre could no longer rely on extrabudgetary resources alone to finance its core activities. The General Assembly should continue to increase the regular budget provision for Habitat.

37. His delegation supported the proposals of the Secretary-General to regularize the status and mandate of the Commission and the status, role and function of the Centre. With regard to the Commission, Kenya concurred with the Secretary-General that its mandate should remain unaltered. However, with regard to its status, his delegation wished to propose that the Commission should become a subsidiary body of the General Assembly, reporting to it through the Economic and Social Council. That option did not have financial implications. Kenya also supported the proposal of the Secretary-General to transform Habitat into the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, which would enhance its effectiveness. In addition, Habitat should participate in the Administrative Committee on Coordination in line with relevant General Assembly and Economic and Social Council resolutions.

38. **Mr. Abreha** (Ethiopia) said that his delegation attached great importance to the goals of achieving adequate shelter for all and sustainable human settlements development. It therefore fully supported the outcome of the special session of the General Assembly, the Declaration on Cities and Other Human Settlements in the New Millennium, which should serve as a guide for achieving those goals. His delegation also welcomed the work of the Commission



on Human Settlements as well as the high level of participation in its deliberations. However, since the General Assembly had not defined the status of the Commission, it was considered to be a Standing Committee of the Economic and Social Council although it had been given an enhanced role by the Habitat II Conference. It should therefore become a full-fledged commission, preferably a subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Council.

39. Turning to the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), he noted that its role had expanded as a result of an integrated programme covering research, policy advice, training and technical cooperation. Moreover, the Centre had benefited from growing financial and political support from Member States following the Istanbul Conference. However, there was a need to strengthen the Centre's operational capacity, particularly in the areas of training, capacity-building, urban economic analysis and housing finance. Its presence in the field also needed to be enhanced. In addition, in the light of the increased responsibilities of the Centre, his delegation supported the Secretary-General's proposal to change the Centre's name from United Nations Centre for Human Settlements to United Nations Human Settlements Programme.

40. **Mr. Mabhongo** (South Africa) noted that a quarter of the world's urban population lacked access to adequate housing and basic services. The increasing urbanization of poverty was a disheartening phenomenon. Globalization had added to the difficulties of human settlements development in cities. Moreover, the lack of integration of urban and rural development affected those in rural areas most, as they were often the most deprived of essential services. It was therefore imperative to underscore the importance of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements and the Habitat Agenda. The Centre should be strengthened, especially in the area of finance. His delegation had taken note in that regard of the recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his report (A/56/618). The Millennium Summit had pledged to significantly improve, by the year 2020, the lives of people living in slums through the "Cities Without Slums" initiative, which complemented the Centre's two global campaigns. The special session of the General Assembly for an Overall Review and Appraisal of the Implementation of the Outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements had reaffirmed the importance of the Habitat Agenda and it

was to be hoped that the World Summit on Sustainable Development would contribute to the further implementation of that Agenda.

41. South Africa, which had received support from the Centre in the framework of various projects, believed that housing policy required partnerships between governments, local authorities, housing institutions and international development organizations. The right to housing was enshrined in South Africa's Constitution. South Africa was also endeavouring to give priority to the needs of the poor and special groups, especially the handicapped and women. However, many other challenges still remained, including the development of capacity at all levels of government to fulfil the right to adequate housing, the broadening of consumer choices in houses and tenure, and dealing with the social, economic and legal implications of the HIV/AIDS pandemic on human settlements programmes as well as mobilizing additional resources. His Government was committed to implementing the Habitat Agenda and to strengthening the housing policies and programmes in order to contribute to the goals of the Habitat Agenda.

42. **Ms. Raguž** (Croatia) said that, in appreciation of the tireless efforts of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), her Government had recently made a symbolic voluntary donation to the Centre. The Habitat Agenda had been carefully examined by the General Assembly at its twenty-fifth special session and the adoption of the Declaration on Cities and Other Human Settlements in the New Millennium reconfirmed the objectives of the Istanbul Declaration and the Habitat Agenda, as well as those of the Millennium Declaration, including the eradication of poverty, the provision of adequate shelter for all and the development of sustainable settlements.

43. Croatia had taken a number of steps to evaluate the obstacles encountered and progress achieved as a country in transition. Her Government had also agreed to several recommendations of the National Committee for Habitat for launching various activities to advance the implementation of the Habitat Agenda at the local level. The Habitat Agenda and national report prepared for the special session would provide the basis for preparing human settlements development strategies and a housing policy. Furthermore, Croatia was going to compile a statistical database in accordance with the Habitat methodology and launch pilot projects in order to monitor data at the country level, in addition to two

special programmes — the Welfare-supported Housing Construction Programme and the Programme of Care for Victims of the Homeland War.

44. In addition to institutional reforms and development, a broader and more comprehensive strategy was required at the local, national and international levels and it was vital to educate all the actors concerned. Indeed, education and public awareness programmes for officials were a prerequisite for coherent interactions between national institutions and other players. Partnerships between national governments, local authorities, non-governmental organizations and other groups of civil society also had a pivotal role to play.

45. Croatia fully supported the work of the Commission and the Centre and concurred with the arguments put forward for the revitalization of the mandate and status of the Commission by transforming it into a full-fledged functional commission of the Economic and Social Council or a subsidiary body of the General Assembly, reporting to the Economic and Social Council.

46. **Mr. El-Atrash** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that, despite the tireless efforts of Governments and their partners, the human settlements situation in some parts of the world still left much to be desired, mainly as a result of widespread poverty and the lack of financial and material resources. Most of the poor did not have housing and the lack of financial resources at the local level prevented many countries from meeting the urgent needs of human settlements; moreover, substantial obstacles blocked access to information and communication technologies on equal terms.

47. All parties, including financial institutions of the United Nations, must therefore redouble their efforts in order to ensure that the Habitat Agenda was translated into concrete policies and measures. They must take other initiatives to ensure the sustainable development of human settlements and to guarantee a future for coming generations. In the spirit of the Habitat Agenda and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the international community should make efforts to assist peoples living under foreign occupation, including the Palestinian people, to recover their rights and dignity.

48. Aware that the right to decent housing was a fundamental right, the Libyan Government had adopted a number of laws geared to attaining the goal of shelter

for all. Financing and loans systems had been improved, financial institutions and individuals had been invited to become involved in the general efforts by providing the necessary resources and the State continued to finance the construction of housing for low-income people and to do what was necessary to close the development disparities between different parts of the country, in accordance with the guidelines laid down in the Habitat Agenda and the Declaration on Cities and Other Human Settlements in the New Millennium adopted at the twenty-fifth special session of the General Assembly on the topic. The Government had also taken steps to establish sewage systems throughout the country and to ensure that everyone had access to free health care and safe drinking water.

49. In order to assist disadvantaged groups the Government had put in place a sustainable development policy which permitted the majority of the population to now live in rural areas, had raised per capita income to about \$8,100, provided the people with free education, health care and housing, had reduced the prices of fuel, electricity and water to the minimum and had stabilized the unemployment rate at around 5 per cent. As far as efforts to ensure gender equality were concerned, in 2000 women accounted for about 20 per cent of the work force and at least 50 per cent of students, all levels of the educational system taken into account. Obviously, all that progress had been achieved despite the iniquitous sanctions imposed by the Security Council on the country in 1992, contrary to international law and to the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

50. He drew attention to the problem of landmines that had been left in many areas of the country at the end of the Second World War. As a result, the land affected could not be used for farming or for pasture nor was the underground water accessible. Since those mines had killed hundreds of Libyan citizens, the international community must demand that the countries responsible for laying the mines take the necessary measures to remove them and compensate the victims. Italy had recently signed an agreement to that effect and it was to be hoped that other countries would follow suit.

51. His Government would collaborate with all interested parties at both the regional and international levels in efforts to ensure the sustainable development of the Libyan people and the implementation of the Habitat Agenda as well as to the implementation of the

General Assembly resolutions on that subject, provided that their provisions were compatible with the shariah.

52. **Mr. Lee Kyung-chul** (Republic of Korea) said that, as part of the efforts to stimulate economic and social growth in less developed parts of the world, greater attention should be given to improving human settlements.

53. In 1996, participants in the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements had drawn up a well-designed framework for human settlements development, namely, the Istanbul Declaration on Human Settlements and the Habitat Agenda. That international commitment had been reaffirmed on the occasion of the recent session of the General Assembly. However, much remained to be done to fulfil the goals outlined in the Habitat Agenda, although some of the urbanization-related problems had been tackled with some success through national and international efforts. The deliberations in that regard showed that persisting poverty in the developing world was the root cause of the unsatisfactory performance in human settlements. Consequently, priority attention should be devoted to poverty eradication. As noted in the Declaration on Cities and Other Human Settlements in the New Millennium adopted at the special session, while individual Governments had the primary responsibility for the implementation of the Habitat Agenda, they also needed assistance from the international community.

54. The objectives in that area, namely, adequate shelter for all and sustainable human settlements development, together constituted one of the key elements in his Government's national development strategy. The Republic of Korea had made remarkable progress in the area of housing over the past few years, largely as a result of the implementation of the five-year programme on the construction of two million new houses. His Government had also taken steps to enable low-income citizens to enjoy stable housing services through such measures as low-interest loans and the building of public rental housing units.

55. Concerning the follow-up to the Habitat Agenda, his delegation believed that progress achieved at the national and international levels should be examined within the framework of regular reviews.

56. **Mr. Howell** (Acting Director of the Liaison Office of the International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that, as part of the follow-up to the Summit on

Social Development, ILO had recently organized the Global Employment Forum to combat poverty and social exclusion. "Creating Decent Work in the Twenty-first Century", a ten-point plan, had been adopted. It covered various questions relating to international trade, information technology, entrepreneurship, education and training, health and safety, labour market policies and social protection. Some of those themes would be taken up at the 2002 International Labour Conference. To that end, preparatory studies were under way on the urbanization of the informal economy. In that regard, ILO called for improved policy coordination at the local level, including representative organizations of the poor. The Conference would discuss jobs, rights and social protection in the informal economy. The ILO Governing Body had just allocated resources to worldwide employment promotion until 2003 through small enterprises, employment-intensive investment, skill development and microfinance, particularly for women. Urban development strategies featured strongly in the regional "Jobs for Africa" programme, which aimed to mobilize public and private investment for the poor. Low-income settlements would be upgraded, basic services that reached the poor would be improved and jobs would be created. Funding had recently been made available for promoting employment-intensive infrastructure development in Africa. ILO was supporting partnerships between municipal governments and local stakeholders. Training programmes for employment in the informal economy had also been put in place. In many countries, ILO was involved in programmes executed by Habitat.

57. There was a persistent and unacceptable gap between the needs and rights of poor people and the chance for them to build a decent life. An effort must be made to match the desire of millions to live in sustainable, secure settlements with their need for work. While pro-poor investment, such as labour-based slum upgrading created many jobs, much more could be done through supporting micro and small enterprises and improving social protection for their workers. Jobs were at the heart of urban upgrading. If the huge new cities were to work properly, work for the poor must improve. More and better jobs would lead to better living conditions and to a decent environment in urban settlements.

58. The mandate of ILO was to promote policies and institutions for social justice and to create jobs. That included respect for fundamental principles and rights at work, promoting social dialogue and strengthening and extending social protection, which was in line with the Declaration on Cities and Other Human Settlements in the New Millennium. His organization sought productive local economies and the strengthening of urban governance, achieved in partnership between employers' and workers' organizations, municipal authorities, international agencies and the Governments of Member States. Concerted action was indispensable to transforming impoverished urban settlements into prosperous cities.

*The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.*