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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

Partnership Dialogues Meeting: The Regional Campaign on Secure Housing
and Land Tenure and Good Urban Governance
Beirut, 12-13 July 2004

INFORMATION NOTE

Introduction

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) will hold the Partnership Dialogues Meeting as part of launching the Regional Campaign on Secure Housing and Land Tenure and Good Urban Governance in Beirut on 12-13 July 2004.

The regional campaign dialogues, or "Partnership Dialogues", encompass four types of dialogue, namely, (a) a "dialogue of thought and the media", which will include a selected group of Arab thinkers, academicians and media personnel; (b) a dialogue of local authorities, to include representatives of municipalities and local authorities in the Arab region; (c) a dialogue of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), including representatives of NGOs working in the fields of human rights and sustainable economic, social and environmental development, in addition to issues related to housing and good urban governance in the Arab region; (d) a dialogue of partnership which will include a selected group of decision makers on the levels of member state governments, as well as representatives of Arab states taking part in the previous three dialogues.

The regional campaign to be launched by ESCWA is part of the follow-up to the implementation of the Habitat II agenda in the Arab region. Other activities undertaken by ESCWA include: formulation of the First Arab Declaration for Sustainable Human Settlement Development, or the Rabat Declaration of 1995; preparation of an Arab Strategy for Housing and Human Settlement: Principles and Conditions, endorsed by the Council of Arab Ministers of Housing and Reconstruction in its 14th Session held in November 1996; preparation of a document of basic principles and procedures for the implementation of the Habitat agenda in the Arab region, issued by the Arab high-level meeting for follow-up on the implementation of the Habitat agenda (Istanbul + 5) held in Bahrain in October 2000; preparation of the Manama Declaration Concerning Cities and Human Settlements in the New Millennium, as well as the special session of the General Assembly for the Review, Assessment and Implementation of the Habitat agenda (Istanbul + 5), held in New York in June 2001; organization of the regional expert group meeting on secure housing and land tenure and good urban governance in Cairo from 15-18 December 2003, held concurrently with the Regional Arab Conference on Improving Living Conditions Through Sustainable Urban Development, convened by the General Authority on Urban Planning at the Ministry of Housing, Utilities, and Urban Communities of Egypt.

I. PARTNERSHIP DIALOGUES AND DOCUMENTS

A. DIALOGUE OF THOUGHT AND THE MEDIA, AND THE DIALOGUE DOCUMENT

The dialogue of thought and the media strives to discuss and exchange views on the intellectual orientations which form the basis for the aims of the regional campaign. This is to take place through a strategic vision the aim of which is to highlight the specific national and regional characteristics of these intellectual orientations and ways in which to bring them out of the realm of thought and into the realm of practice in the midst of the currents of modernization and renewal which are impacting political, economic and social development tracks in the Arab states.

In addition, dialogue participants will consult on how to define the contribution of thinkers and media personnel to supporting the launching of the regional campaign.

Basic dialogue participants and those attending as commentators will conduct discussions on the basis of the articles of the dialogue document, which derives its authority from the recommendations issued by the regional expert group meeting on secure housing and land tenure and good urban governance. The dialogue will be concluded with the issuance of the “declaration of intentions” of participants.

1. *The dialogue document of thought and the media*

This document consists of the following articles:

Article 1:

Calling upon Arab societies to communicate concerning the modern concept of the role of the state and its relationship to civil society, the effect of the practice of democracy on development tracks in the Arab region, the role of all parties and societal forces in consolidating partnership in development, a consensus on legislative modernization, and involvement in the birth of a new institutional order to empower Arab societies and achieve a just distribution of the fruits of sustainable development.

Article 2:

Enhancing strategic integration on the level of developmental policies both regionally and nationally, namely, strategic integration among economic policies relating to the guarantee and improvement of income and combating the spread of poverty, social policies which aim to achieve social justice without discrimination of any kind, and housing policies concerned with providing suitable housing for all.

Article 3:

Taking into consideration the cultural dimension and factors that distinguish the customs, traditions and living conditions in Arab and Islamic countries from those existing elsewhere, and dealing with such differences with respect for particularities of these nations when applying the content of the regional campaign.

Article 4:

Reinforcing the concept of democracy in local government and the participation of all societal groups, particularly women; bearing in mind that the participation of women should not be limited to merely voting on issues presented for discussion but, rather, be effective participation in formulating and making decisions, and in policy formation, implementation and follow-up.

Article 5:

The inevitability of public, popular dialogue on means through which to deduce concepts concerned with partnership, participation and good urban governance, in a manner that reinforces cooperation between

the governmental, non-governmental and private sectors, in addition to contributing to increasing awareness on the national and local levels and support for capacity building.

Article 6:

Highlighting the role of the regional campaign on secure housing and land tenure and good urban governance through defense and promotion, and in particular, by calling upon those who make development-related decisions to view secure housing and land tenure and good urban governance from the point of view of human rights and empowerment, that is, from a new perspective which causes life in both urban and rural areas to become safer and more stable, and to become a means by means of which people's economic, social, environmental, cultural and psychological needs may be met, regardless of what societal group they belong to, or their level of income.

Article 7:

Supporting the role performed by local authorities in the areas of sustainable urban and environmental development and the reinforcement of administrative decentralization, and backing the contributions being made by these authorities to modernizing the organized framework for cities' affairs in accordance with the standards of sound urban governance and the right to housing.

Article 8:

Enabling civil society to solidify the foundations of its serious participation in reducing urban poverty and alleviating its effects in the Arab region through the efforts being exerted by civil society institutions to provide housing for low-income groups and the poor, as well as through discussion of the impact of such efforts on the accumulation of social capital.

Article 9:

Providing incentives for the private sector to participate more fully in dealing with issues of citizenship and secure housing and land tenure, as well as to take part more effectively in supporting societal initiatives, be they individual or communal, that aim to limit the direct effects of poverty, which have an impact on human freedom and people's ability to lead lives of dignity.

2. A word of clarification regarding the regional campaign on secure housing and land tenure and good urban governance

(a) The aims of the campaign

This campaign aims to do the following:

- (i) To affirm the principle of the priority of human beings in development;
- (ii) To raise public awareness of the particularities of the Arab region as they pertain to people's rights to housing and land tenure, citizenship, enhancement of local government, and combating urban poverty;
- (iii) To establish developmental criteria to support national and local efforts and initiatives which aim to confront the challenges that threaten the living conditions of residents belonging to a variety of societal groups, including children, youths, women, the elderly, and those with special needs in both urban and rural areas.

- (b) *Particularities of the Arab region with relevance to the Habitat global campaigns: the campaign on secure tenure, and the campaign on good urban governance*

The particularities of the Arab region of relevance to the Habitat global campaigns consist of the following elements:

- (i) The need to launch and implement the two international campaigns in the Arab region on an integrated tract and under the umbrella of a single regional campaign under the designation, “secure housing and land tenure and good urban governance”, or, “the partnership campaign”, aiming at confronting the challenges of relevance to the content of both campaigns;
- (ii) The necessity of bridging the gap between thought and practice with respect to the concepts of citizenship, sound governance, sound urban governance, local government, integrated urban environmental management, institutional structure, participatory urban development (which includes balanced growth for both cities and rural areas), mitigation of the social, economic and environmental effects of urban poverty, reduction of inequities, and doing away with discrimination on the basis of affiliation, gender, color or ethnicity;
- (iii) The growing threat to the right to housing and the availability of suitable shelter and basic urban services to broad sectors of the society;
- (iv) The spread of urban poverty and the acute disparity in standards of living among residents of urban and rural areas, and the inadequacy of social security networks for providing social protection to marginalized groups, such as emigrants, the displaced and the homeless;
- (v) Reconstituting the structural, environmental, and cultural faces of Arab cities which have been influenced by the spread of poverty and sudden demographic changes such as emigration due to unemployment or natural disasters, wars, conflicts, the Israeli occupation and/or foreign occupation, as well as the effect of such emigration on the spread of random residency patterns and the depletion of environmental energies and resources such as water, air and soil.

B. THE DIALOGUE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND THE DIALOGUE DOCUMENT

The dialogue of local authorities seeks to highlight the developmental role of local authorities in the nations of Western Asia and the Arab region, the nature of the impediments which face these authorities in carrying out their missions, and the extent of their anticipated contribution to achieving the aims of the regional campaign.

The dialogue participants will exchange views in the context of a critical review of the aims and content of the regional campaign from the perspective of local authorities, the role of local authorities in achieving aims of the regional campaign both nationally and locally, and the mechanisms of participation proposed for establishing the general organizational framework for the national initiative, which includes implementation, follow-up, evaluation and suggested resources.

Basic dialogue participants and those attending as commentators will conduct discussions on the basis of a discussion of the articles of the dialogue document, which derives its authority from the recommendations issued by the regional expert group meeting on secure housing and land tenure and good urban governance. The dialogue will be concluded with the issuance of the “declaration of intentions” of participants.

1. *The dialogue document for local authorities*

Article 1:

Good urban governance may be defined as the outcome of the efforts of individuals, local authorities, and civil society institutions in planning and managing the city’s public affairs; it is an ongoing process

through which the various interests of those concerned are contained and transformed into principles which enhance the benefits of citizenship.

Article 2:

Ensuring the rights of human beings to a secure, free life in cities in which there is protection against discrimination and in which the culture of ‘civil peace’ reigns, as well as the just distribution of educational, health and [basic] urban services on the basis of infrastructures and potable water.

Article 3:

Increasing the ability of cities to balance their current economic, social and environmental needs against future needs by guiding municipal performance toward operating in accordance with creative mechanisms consistent with the launching of the regional campaign on secure housing and land tenure and good urban governance.

Article 4:

Encouraging citizenship by enabling local authorities to perform their tasks with the participation of all, particularly women, in local decision making processes; and supporting the participation of civil society institutions in developmental planning on the level of city and neighborhood councils.

Article 5:

Solidifying the foundations of administrative decentralization, which calls for the delegation of powers to local authorities based on the recognition that they are closest to the citizenry and the most capable of knowing their needs. This process may take place through the modernization of existing legislation and working on the establishment of an appropriate legislative and legal framework.

Article 6:

Practicing good urban governance and empowering local authorities to contribute to the development of the economy by improving their financial competence in the collection of fees and revenues and by developing integrative, creative administrative styles based on partnership with the private sector and civil society institutions, all of which can serve to raise the level of local performance in the distribution of services and reduction of waste.

Article 7:

Highlighting the important role of elected local authorities in furthering both local and national development, while drawing attention through the media and other public platforms to their ability to develop the public institutional order through the mechanism of mutual agreement, which is based on mediation and arbitration among local interests for the sake of arriving at a broad consensus that serves the interests of all and achieves equal opportunities for women and men under an integrated system characterized by transparency, accountability and the rule of law.

Article 8:

Reliance by local authorities on the approach of good urban governance and its aims, which are concerned with improving the quality of life, combating poverty and deprivation in cities, and working to make cities inclusive in the sense that local authorities are able to establish the foundations of participatory planning among the various societal groups in a way which guarantees the interests of the poor, the marginalized and minorities, including fair access to shelter and safe water supplies.

Article 9:

Anchoring the foundations of participatory local development through an undertaking by local authorities to apply the standards and norms of transparency and accountability in keeping with the approach of good urban governance, bearing in mind that such standards require the provision of clear information and opportunities to assess local achievements through the institutions of civil society, the media, and citizenry.

Article 10:

Good urban governance is the mechanism by means of which local authorities are able to become involved in applying good urban governance in the context of local and national particularities. In this manner, the city is developed, its environment is preserved, and its historical antiquities and its cultural heritage are protected, while support is provided for efforts exerted by both individuals and national organizations to improve living conditions in informal settlements and to fight poverty on the local level.

Article 11:

Local authorities are called upon to contribute to the launching of the regional campaign on secure housing and land tenure and good urban governance, and to exert efforts to publicize the contents of the regional campaign, anchor its foundations and affirm its criteria in keeping with the national and local particularities of each of the Western Asia countries.

2. A word of clarification regarding the regional campaign via the approach of good urban governance, or good urban management

(a) The aims of the campaign

The campaign aims to do the following:

- (i) To affirm the principle of the priority of human beings in development;
- (ii) To raise public awareness of the particularities of the Arab region as they pertain to people's right to housing and access to land, citizenship, reinforcement of local government, and combating urban poverty;
- (iii) To establish developmental criteria to support the national and local efforts and initiatives which aim to confront the challenges which face the living conditions of residents, including children, youths, women, the elderly, and those with special needs in both cities and rural areas.

(b) The particularities of the Arab region as they pertain to the regional campaign to promote good urban governance

Application of the approach of good urban governance in the Arab countries is influenced by a number of factors, the most salient of which are:

- (i) The effects of globalization and the rapid economic transformations which are impacting the way of life in cities;
- (ii) The notable changes taking place in the relationship between central authorities and local authorities;
- (iii) Growth in the role that elected local authorities are expected to play, and an increase in the participation of women in local councils;
- (iv) The emergence of corruption and managerial incompetence as impediments to the achievement of the aims of good governance and good urban governance;

- (v) The link between the improvement of living standards for city residents and the degree to which local authorities have been able to adopt good urban governance which depends on integrated governance systems.

C. THE DIALOGUE OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS AND THE DIALOGUE DOCUMENT

The dialogue among representatives of NGOs in the Western Asia countries and the Arab region will deal with the conceptual foundations and practical achievements by means of which NGOs active in the fields of the right to housing and sound urban governance have been able to make contributions.

The dialogue participants will exchange views in the context of a critical review of the aims and content of the regional campaign from the perspective of NGOs, the role of NGOs in achieving the aims of the regional campaign both nationally and locally, and the participatory mechanisms proposed for establishing the general organizational framework for the national initiative, including implementation, follow-up, evaluation and suggested resources.

The dialogue among NGOs will present a comprehensive strategic vision of the particularities of the Arab region as they pertain to the method of guaranteeing secure housing and land tenure, as well as a critical review of the articles of the NGO dialogue document.

Basic dialogue participants and those attending as commentators will conduct discussions on the basis of the provisions of the dialogue document, which derives its authority from the recommendations issued by the regional expert group meeting on secure housing and land tenure and good urban governance. The dialogue will then be concluded with the issuance of the “declaration of intentions” of participants.

1. *The NGO dialogue document*

Article 1:

Guaranteeing secure housing and land tenure means providing individuals with a life of dignity in a balanced environment which allows them to find stability and to move away from a life of haste and a sense of things being “temporary”. Similarly, it means putting a stop to arbitrary legislative and legal measures which aim to do nothing but lend an appearance of legality and legitimacy to issues of access, yet without offering any realistic means of dealing with the negative conditions which result from violations of the right to housing and legal guarantees thereof.

Article 2:

Respect for the legitimacy of human rights by ensuring the right to housing, which represents a complementary part of good urban governance and good urban management, as well as a package of equal and interrelated rights which guarantee protection against discrimination and equal opportunities to obtain appropriate housing at an affordable price.

Article 3:

Guaranteeing secure housing and land tenure ensures all children, women and men the right to have a place in which to live, in a safe, healthy environment free of violence or the threat of violence.

Article 4:

Providing a legal guarantee of access [to housing and land] includes the provision of equal opportunities to obtain land for all people, since land may be considered one of the most important resources for survival, earning a living, and obtaining a suitable residence.

Article 5:

Raising consciousness among NGOs of the necessity of their undertaking a defensive and motivational role in order to urge governments to adopt transparent, comprehensive, simplified systems in the area of transferring land rights for all societal groups, including women who are living in poverty. This may be done through legislative and administrative reforms which grant everyone equal opportunities to obtain economic resources and credit.

Article 6:

Involvement by NGOs in defensive consciousness-raising campaigns with regard to the importance of the interconnection between the two parts of the regional campaign (namely, secure housing and land tenure, and good urban governance), by activating the procedural mechanisms which will make it possible for those who have suffered injury or harm through loss of safe access to land and housing, as well as their families, to challenge decisions and laws which violate their citizenship rights.

Article 7:

Consolidating efforts of NGOs to combat poverty in urban and rural areas through a new institutional system which concerns itself with supporting the individual and group efforts to provide housing being made by the poor.

Article 8:

Encouraging the creative efforts being made by NGOs and professional unions to achieve equal opportunities for social participation for the poor and those with limited incomes, the aim being to improve the means by which they gain access to housing in areas of informal settlement.

Article 9:

Competent participation by NGOs, alongside governments and concerned authorities, in the process of making decisions relevant to guaranteeing secure housing and land tenure in order to ensure respect for cultural pluralism.

Article 10:

Contributions by NGOs to the definition of criteria for safe tenure guarantees through their partnership with those who have suffered injury or harm due to the loss of housing as a result of wars and conflicts, the Israeli occupation and/or foreign occupation, the purpose being to monitor damages, assess costs, determine responsibility, and carry out the intervention required in a timely fashion.

Article 11:

NGOs are called upon to contribute to the launching of the regional campaign on secure housing and land tenure and good urban governance, and to contribute actively to publicizing the contents of the regional campaign, anchor its foundations and affirm its criteria in a manner consistent with the national and local particularities of each of the Western Asia countries.

2. A word of clarification on the regional campaign as it pertains to secure housing and land tenure

(a) Aims of the regional campaign

The campaign aims to do the following:

- (i) Affirm the principle of the priority of human beings in development;

- (ii) Raise public awareness of the particularities of the Arab region as they pertain to people's right to housing and access to land, citizenship, reinforcement of local government, and combating urban poverty;
 - (iii) Establish developmental criteria to support national and local efforts and initiatives which aim to confront the challenges that threaten the living conditions of residents, including children, youths, women, the elderly, and those with special needs in both urban and rural areas.
- (b) *The particularities of the Arab region as they pertain to the regional campaign on secure housing and land tenure*

Guaranteeing secure housing and land tenure means providing individuals with a life of dignity in a balanced environment which allows them to find stability and to move away from a life of haste and a sense of things being "temporary". Similarly, it means putting a stop to arbitrary legislative and legal measures which aim to do nothing but lend an appearance of legality and legitimacy to issues of access, yet without offering any realistic means of dealing with the negative conditions which result from violations of the right to housing and legal guarantees thereof.

The factors which influence the definition of the particularities of the Arab region as they pertain to the approach to guaranteeing tenure include the following:

- (i) Housing and land are political demands with national, affiliative, social and economic dimensions which result from the fact that the Arab region is witnessing numerous upheavals, conflicts, wars, and repeated Israeli assaults which threaten thousands of residents with the possibility of having to migrate from their homes and land;
- (ii) The campaign on safe tenure rests on two integrated parts, namely, housing and land, in view of the particularities which distinguish the mechanisms by which informal settlement is spreading in the Arab region, and which include the following:
 - a. The agricultural origins of most of the areas which have been subject to assaults, occupations and violations of public property, and on which the areas of informal settlement are located;
 - b. The variety of means by which access [to housing and land] is gained in the Arab region, means which verge on legality, and which therefore open up practical options for organizing the channels through which such access is acquired by resorting to the settlement of claims to such access in those areas or situations which are most amenable to this mechanism.
- (iii) The violation of [the right to] secure housing and land tenure constitutes an environmental threat to the sustainability of cities in the Arab region as a result of several factors, namely:
 - a. The spread of urban poverty and the increasing size of areas of informal settlement and irregular occupancy, as well as areas in which there are collective housing violations and illegal, collective takeovers of housing or land, all of which serve to exhaust the systems which regulate the use of land, its potentials and its resources;
 - b. The nature of the environmental threat which turn areas in which emigrants and refugees reside in Arab cities—where there is a lack of understanding of concepts relating to the regulation of the various types of tenure—into areas in which there is a gradual decline in health and security conditions in general, and in nutritional security in particular;
 - c. The innovation of developmental strategies in the Arab region which include the environmental element in housing plans, and the relative inadequacy of these strategies to lay out comprehensive national developmental plans which are based from the start on the

guided use of basic environmental resources to achieve the sustainability and success of housing plans which meet the growing needs of city residents, and in particular, those with limited incomes;

- d. Guaranteeing secure housing and land tenure provides a comprehensive framework for a sustainable developmental environmental outlook which paves the way for balanced economic and social growth and the just distribution of the benefits of urban life, which in turn serves to reduce the disparities which violate human dignity.

(c) *The foundations of the right to secure housing and land tenure*

Such foundations include respect for the legitimacy of human rights and combating the violations to which families and individuals are subject in the event of:

- (i) Forced evictions and the various forms of homelessness;
- (ii) Loss of one's housing and/or the right to occupy it;
- (iii) Living under illegal conditions and in informal settlements;
- (iv) All forms of discrimination which target marginalized and poor groups;
- (v) A lack of justice, security, equality and equity in rights and duties;
- (vi) The absence of basic and environmental services, including water and infrastructure, under the influence of poverty.

D. THE PARTNERSHIP DIALOGUE AND THE DIALOGUE DOCUMENT

The meeting in the context of which the partnership dialogue will take place will include a selected group of representatives of member state governments, representatives of local authorities and NGOs, as well as academicians and media personnel.

The aim of the partnership dialogue meeting is to exchange views, consult, and present a strategic vision concerning the importance of partnership in development and the role expected to be performed by each of the partners in launching the regional campaign. In addition, the partnership dialogue will aim at a discussion of components of a climate that would be the most suitable and supportive of ESCWA member States' adoption of national initiatives under the umbrella of launching the regional campaign, initiatives which would ensure:

- (i) An advisory and supervisory role for central governments;
- (ii) An effective, empowering role for local authorities;
- (iii) Broad societal participation for civil society;
- (iv) Partnership and commitment on the part of the private sector in the developmental process.

Participants in the dialogue aspire to define the general framework for the "declaration of intentions" of each of the partners in the campaign in accordance with the particularities of the position and situation of each, and the degree of commitment to the national initiative and its foundations, which consist of the following:

- (i) Partnership as a fundamental mechanism for respect for human rights and the achievement of development;
- (ii) Legislative modernization in order to bridge the gap between concepts and practices;
- (iii) The new institutional order;
- (iv) Sustainable development and the normative aims of improving the living standards of residents.

Basic dialogue participants and those attending as commentators will conduct discussions on the basis of the provisions of the dialogue document, which derives its authority from the recommendations issued by the regional expert group meeting on secure housing and land tenure and good urban governance.

1. *The partnership dialogue document toward implementation of the guarantee of secure housing and land tenure*

The document includes the following articles:

Article 1:

Affirmation of the right to housing as a priority right within the theoretical and ideological points of reference of the processes of housing planning and urban development with the aim of combating violations and forced evictions.

Article 2:

Urging governments to adopt the content of the regional campaign and implement an approach through which to guarantee secure housing and land tenure in accordance with the national particularities which are consistent with their development priorities.

Article 3:

Urging governments to form national committees characterized by accountability and transparency, and whose members include members and representatives of a variety of civil society organizations, including NGOs and other national bodies, as well as specialists, with the understanding that such committees are to be a means of exerting pressure and of exercising surveillance and supervision of the application of laws and legislation concerned with the protection of housing rights.

Article 4:

Urging governments to support and implement programmes and plans to combat poverty and limit its spread in cities and rural areas.

Article 5:

Calling upon governments to recognize informal settlements as a *fait accompli* and, on this basis, to work toward improving conditions in such settlements and ensure that the basic needs of their inhabitants are met by approving the premises of the regional campaign to guarantee secure housing and land tenure and good urban governance.

Article 6:

Encouraging NGOs to work toward regularizing the legal status of the ways in which housing is obtained in informal settlements.

Article 7:

Urging the government to gather statistics in a comprehensive survey for the purpose of monitoring actual housing and land acquisitions among women; encouraging the media to raise women's awareness concerning guarantees of secure housing on their behalf; and ensuring suitable dwellings for women and families at an affordable cost.

Article 8:

Urging governments to reinforce the woman's role in the family, lend her both material and moral support, and enable her to obtain secure housing and land tenure.

Article 9:

Calling upon governments to support incomes of families and buttress their financial resources; provide the funding mechanisms needed in order for families to be able to obtain guarantees to secure housing and land tenure as is their right; enable families to achieve full integration of their members; and introduce whatever amendments are needed to improve the quality of housing.

Article 10:

Urging governments to evaluate national housing experiments and assess the benefits which have been derived from such experiments as weighed against the size of investments made, and to search for ways in which to halt the waste resulting from the implementation of unsuccessful housing programmes.

Article 11:

Demanding that governments improve the conditions under which housing and land are acquired by passing the legislation needed to restore balance to the housing market and regulate the market's operation and mechanisms.

Article 12:

Demanding that governments launch an individual initiative and emerge gradually from the practice of freezing rents, which would make it possible to broaden opportunities for tenure through renting.

Article 13:

Calling upon governments to reformulate the legal relationship between proprietors and renters, and to improve conditions for housing loans in order to support the mechanisms for funding low-income groups.

Article 14:

Demanding that governments define their development options and discontinue the practice of suppressing supply in order to maintain demand and reinforce the role of municipalities in ensuring housing for the poor and those with limited income.

Article 15:

Calling upon governments to construct databases and gather information on the types of forced emigration, displacement, and the loss of eligibility for secure access to housing and land as a result of occupation and armed conflicts in Palestine, Iraq, south Lebanon, and the Golan Heights, in order to provide complete financial and in-kind support to those who have suffered injury or harm due to such conditions.

*2. Partnership dialogue document toward implementing an approach
to good urban governance, or good urban management*

The document contains the following articles:

Article 1:

Urging governments to adopt the content of the regional campaign and implement an approach to good urban governance in accordance with the national particularities which are consistent with their developmental priorities.

Article 2:

Calling upon states to work toward creating coordinational frameworks for dialogue and mutual participation in connection with public policies, the offering of services, and involvement in local development projects between the state and local bodies, civil society organizations and the private sector.

Article 3:

Urging governments to issue the legislation needed to move toward administrative decentralization, to reinforce the role of nascent local authorities, to empower them with self-generated financial resources, and to activate the role of existing local authorities by granting them the necessary powers.

Article 4:

Urging governments to facilitate the work of NGOs operating in the area of urban development.

Article 5:

Calling upon governments to reinforce the role of local authorities and to grant them the powers necessary to serve cities through the passing of legislation and laws which serve this end.

Article 6:

Calling upon governments to improve the performance of local authorities by spreading leadership and managerial awareness, by enhancing potentials and [positive] orientations, and nurturing the public's desire to serve society.

Article 7:

Setting priorities in order to reduce poverty and to adopt comprehensive social, economic and cultural planning with respect to residents of cities and rural areas, the aim being to ensure balanced development and to limit the disparities among city and rural residents.

Article 8:

Calling upon governments to review and improve plans for the development of financial and human resources in local communities in a manner which is consistent with housing requirements and which provides material support for funds established to finance the poor, in order to enable them to obtain housing, basic services, training, orientation and employment with a focus on women and marginalized and deprived groups.

Article 9:

Calling upon governments to intensify programmes for consumption and income guidance both locally and nationally through partnership with civil society organizations and the private sector, and by establishing women's ability to gain access [to housing and land] and [awareness concerning] the legitimacy of disposing of their money and salaries, and by encouraging professional equality and equal rights.

Article 10:

Calling upon governments to facilitate the introduction of the private sector into urban projects in view of the experience, funding and knowledge which the private sector has to offer, and in view of the fact that partnership between the state, local authorities and the private sector can help to ensure the success of public policies.

Article 11:

Urging governments to reinforce the work of NGOs and to support their participation—through supervision, monitoring and implementation—in urban and local development projects, and to reinforce their autonomy and the freedom with which they operate in order to raise the level of individual participation in improving living conditions.

Article 12:

Calling upon governments to reinforce the use of data management technologies and geographical data systems as aids in the process of good urban management, and to register lands and transfer ownership in an efficient, transparent manner as a means of constructing the database needed to produce developmental criteria and urban indices.

II. BASIC INFORMATION ON THE MEETING

A. AUTHORITATIVE FOUNDATIONS

The partnership dialogue meeting is based on the specialized research foundation provided by the regional expert group meeting on guaranteeing secure housing and land tenure and good urban governance, which dealt with the content and work plans of the regional campaign in states located in the ESCWA region in light of the following dimensions:

- (a) Analysis of the conceptual foundations of the dual approaches of guaranteeing secure [housing and land tenure] and good urban governance, and the components of housing and real estate acquisition and good urban management, with a special focus on the right to housing and land, and local governance;
- (b) Deduction of practical methodologies, standards and technical measures relevant to issues of housing and land access and good urban management, the aim being to use these as a scientific tool with which to confront the major challenges being faced by ESCWA member States and other Arab countries;
- (c) Review and presentation of the national, regional and international expertise and experience relevant to guaranteeing secure housing and land tenure and good urban management, giving special attention to the role of local expertise in this context;
- (d) Arriving at systematic mechanisms for publicizing and spreading expertise and the most preferable practices in the area of housing policies and good urban management, and means by which to improve standards of living in cities.

B. AIMS AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

The partnership dialogues take on special significance in light of the fact that they aim to define the regional campaign to guarantee secure housing and land tenure and good urban governance as a set of approaches and techniques for renewal which aim to raise the performance level of governments, local authorities and civil society in the hope of mitigating the effects of urban poverty and setting policies which ensure equality, social justice, participation, and sustainable development.

In addition, the partnership dialogues aim to lay the foundations of a national and local consultative base through which ESCWA seeks to urge Arab governments to adopt national initiatives under the umbrella of the regional campaign.

C. MEETING ORGANIZATION

The Partnership Dialogues Meeting: The Regional Campaign on Secure Housing and Land Tenure and Good Urban Governance, will be held at the United Nations House in Beirut, on 12-13 July 2004. The dialogues will be divided into four consultative meetings in each of which there will be a discussion of a “dialogue document” which bears the same name as the meeting in which it is discussed. At the conclusion of the partnership dialogues, each participant will be granted a certificate as a partner in launching the regional campaign to guarantee secure housing and land tenure and good urban management. The partnership dialogues will also result in the issuance of a “declaration of intentions” for each of the thinkers, media personnel, local authorities, and NGOs in preparation for the adoption of national initiatives in the countries of the Western Asia region.

D. THE PARTICIPANTS

The partnership dialogues meeting will include representatives of the governments of countries of the Western Asia region, a selected number of representatives of local authorities in the Arab region, and a choice group of NGO representatives, in addition to thinkers, media personnel, academicians and activists with field experience in relation to issues of access [to housing and land] and good urban management. The meeting will provide participants with a distinctive platform for regional dialogue. Representatives from the United Nations, international bodies, and donor nations will take part in leading the dialogues.

E. LANGUAGE

The Arabic language will be used in the meeting, in addition to English. Proceedings of the partnership dialogues will be documented later in four booklets, to be issued in both Arabic and English.

F. ORGANIZERS

The partnership dialogues meeting is being organized by ESCWA in cooperation with the United Nations Human Settlements Program (Habitat) and the Arab Towns Organization (ATO), with contributions from a number of local authorities from states in the Western Asia region.

G. CORRESPONDENCE

For further information about the meeting, please contact:

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