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Held at Headquarters, New York,
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President: Mr. JACOBVITS DE SZEGED (Netherlands)
(Vice-President)

later: Mr. FLORIN (German Democratic Republic)
(President)

- Report of the Economic and Social Council [12] (continued)

Observance of the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

In the absence of the President, Mr. Jacobovits de Szeged (Netherlands) took the Chair.

AGENDA ITEM 12 (continued)

REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL OBSERVANCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF SHELTER FOR THE HOMELESS

The PRESIDENT: I call on the representative of Finland, who will speak on behalf of the Nordic countries.

Mr. KORHONEN (Finland): I make this statement on behalf of the five Nordic countries: Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Finland.

The Nordic countries have from an early stage shared the deep concern regarding the alarming global shelter situation which led to the proclamation of this year as the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless. Despite the efforts of Governments and international organizations, more than 1 billion people today find themselves either completely without shelter or living in dwellings unfit for human habitation. Unless action is taken with concern and determination, that 1 billion will be doubled before the end of the century.

The International Year of Shelter for the Homeless has served the purpose of focusing global attention on, and directing intensified international co-operation to, the solution of the housing problem. It is obvious that the success of the Year will surpass all expectations.

The Year has made Governments better aware of the need to improve shelter conditions and devote more attention to those in the greatest need of assistance. Important steps have been taken to improve their lot. The International Year of Shelter for the Homeless has also entailed a broad and world-wide analysis of alternative solutions to problems of shelter and led to improved exchange of information between countries. In the Nordic countries, the Year has served as a reminder that even in our societies, with declared welfare objectives, problems remain to be solved in order to guarantee decent housing for all.

(Mr. Korhonen, Finland)

The studies undertaken have shown the breadth and depth of the shelter problem. At the same time, it has become increasingly clear that what is being done at present is by no means enough to solve a problem of this magnitude.

The experience of a number of countries shows that the impact of the shelter policies pursued will not be sufficient if governmental activities centre only on the provision of shelter for those in need. Rather, the experience brings out the fact that a more efficient role may be played by the authorities through an enabling strategy for proper utilization of the resources and initiatives of the people concerned and for improved use of local building materials.

A case in point is the squatter areas surrounding the big cities in many developing countries. The squatters tend to be prepared to work for better shelter, but a necessary prerequisite for any major undertaking is that they are guaranteed security of tenure and access to appropriate building materials. Improvement of legislation, extensive land reforms and encouragement of greater participation by the people affected are necessary conditions of successful shelter policies in several countries. Shelter problems are not only economic and technical; they are also institutional and political. Unfortunately, these are also the barriers to policy shifts which are most difficult to overcome.

The changing global and domestic economic environment of the 1980s and its social repercussions tend to make people in many countries lose hope of a better future. An improvement of the shelter situation could make an important contribution to reversing that trend. Such a changed outlook would require an enabling strategy which implies full partnership and solid co-operation between the authorities and all the other parties concerned - such as the formal and informal private sectors, non-governmental organizations, co-operatives and community groups, as well as families and individuals.

(Mr. Korhonen, Finland)

The goal of the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless is to improve not only the shelter situation in a narrow sense, but also the neighbourhood situation of the millions who live in unhealthy environments. Indeed, some of the serious environmental problems are closely linked to the housing situation - for example, to the planning of sanitation.

The shelter problems in the developing world are indeed great; therefore we find it well justified that, even at the early stages, the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless was not seen as one year of activity only, but rather as a beginning of a process extending into the year 2000 and beyond.

An important part in this process is that played by national shelter strategies, which the General Assembly called for in its resolution 41/190.

At the tenth commemorative session of the United Nations Commission on Human Settlements, held in April in Nairobi, in which more than 100 Governments participated, it was decided to recommend to the General Assembly the initiation of a procedure for the development of a global strategy for shelter to the year 2000. This strategy would be the challenge and the call for action expressed through the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless.

The Nordic countries strongly support the adoption of that draft resolution. The elaboration of a global strategy for shelter to the year 2000 will integrate the experience of various countries of ways and means which have proved efficient in coping with the vast problems connected with shelter. A global strategy will also set specific targets for United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) and contribute to a concentration of its efforts. I would like here to refer to the beneficial results of the implementation of the strategy of Health for All by the Year 2000. I believe that in the same way as this strategy has integrated and

(Mr. Korhonen, Finland)

concentrated activities within the World Health Organization, the global strategy for shelter to the year 2000 will give Habitat the kind of goal that the Organization needs. Habitat will need the strong support and commitment of every Government and of the world community in the implementation of this strategy. The national institutions and non-governmental organizations concerned should also be engaged in this process to ensure that the strategy will be effectively implemented.

Mr. RAO (India): I consider it a privilege to address the forty-second session of the General Assembly on behalf of India on agenda item 12. The appropriateness of the decision of the Assembly in 1982 to observe 1987 as the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless is enhanced by two factors: the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the Commission for Human Settlements and the opportunity provided for a critical review of international activities in the field of human settlements since the holding of the United Nations Conference on the subject in Vancouver in 1976.

(Mr. Rao, India)

We in India have deep and genuine sympathy with the people of Sri Lanka of all ethnic groups in their terrible sufferings. At the same time, my delegation regrets some of the unfortunate and unacceptable innuendos in the statement of the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka this morning, particularly at a time when the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord signed by the President of Sri Lanka, Mr. Jayewardene, and the Prime Minister of India, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, is undergoing a difficult period and when the Indian peace-keeping forces that went to Sri Lanka at the specific request of the Government of Sri Lanka are engaged, at considerable cost, in implementing that historic Accord. It is extraordinary that at a time when our soldiers are losing their lives fighting the terrorists any controversy is sought to be raised on this subject. The situation calls for restraint by all concerned.

I should like to take this opportunity to place on record my delegation's appreciation of the quality of work done by the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) in various areas, including documentation, information, technical assistance, research and advisory services. We have also greatly benefited from the Secretary-General's report on human settlements.

Shelter as a basic human need is generally accepted to rank next only to food and clothing in the hierarchy of such basic needs. Decent shelter, including related infrastructure and services, is essential to the attainment of the conditions of well-being envisaged in the provisions of Article 1 and Article 55 of the Charter. It has been increasingly recognized that adequate shelter also constitutes an essential ingredient of an improved quality of life. The provision of adequate shelter and services for all is thus both a basic indicator of the quality of life and a prerequisite for sustainable development.

(Mr. Rao, India)

Evidence exists in abundance of a close relationship between investments in the development of human settlements and overall national economic growth. A concerted effort to meet the problem of shelter requires mobilization of adequate financial resources, building up of technical and institutional capacity and, where necessary, reorientation of basic socio-economic development strategies and goals in a well-conceived framework of macro-economic policy. The shelter strategy can succeed only if it is formulated and implemented as part of an overall national development policy.

It is unfortunate that in the decade since the Habitat Conference of 1976 there has been a sharp and noticeable decline in living and shelter standards of the vast majority of the poor, especially those in the developing countries. The deterioration of human settlements in general and of shelter conditions in the developing countries in particular has already led us to a situation which can be described only as a grave shelter crisis, which is accentuated by the twin factors of high population growth and rapid urbanization, especially in the developing countries.

The figures given in the Secretary-General's report make compelling reading. An estimated 1 billion or more of the world's population are currently living in inadequate, unsanitary and unhealthy shelter conditions, millions with no shelter at all, with thousands being added to this number by the day. In our own Asia-Pacific region, population growth in the next 20 years will contribute about 49 million people per annum, amounting to 58 per cent of the increase in the total world population. By the year 2000 the region is expected to have a population of 3.6 billion and to account for about 59 per cent of the world population of 6.1 billion. The developing countries as a whole are expected to account for 4.8 billion, or 80 per cent, of the total global population at that time.

(Mr. Rao, India)

One can hardly visualize the consequences in terms of the increase in unemployment, deterioration in infrastructure and services, including sanitation, water supply and waste-disposal, and growth in size and number of urban and rural slums and squatter settlements. These are bound to have incalculable consequences for the long-term political and social stability of the affected countries.

That scenario only underlines the need for an integrated and multidisciplinary approach which will enable the international community, and the developing countries in particular, to provide effective and adequate policy responses to the shelter problem.

The earlier notion that investment in human settlements is non-productive has now more or less been universally replaced by the recognition that these activities can be a major stimulant to growth and can be instrumental in the achievement of overall socio-economic development. The multiplier effect of these investments, with their backward and forward linkages to other economically important activities, their employment-generating potential and facilitation of capital formation have now been recognized and acknowledged. The strategy of self-reliance which the developing countries have always worked for demands a strong emphasis on investment in this sector, which requires minimal foreign exchange, selection of locally appropriate production technologies and standards and preferences for labour-intensive rather than capital-intensive forms of production. In fact, in several countries, including mine, we attach tremendous importance to the concept of low-cost housing.

Undoubtedly, action at the national level is critical for formulating and implementing effective and sustainable solutions to the shelter problem. This is especially true of the development support areas, such as legislation, training, information and the institutional framework. Governments can also take actions of

(Mr. Rao, India)

a facilitating or enabling nature, such as measures to reform land tenure systems so as to stimulate private investment in housing, establishment of efficient land registration and information systems, provision of appropriate and affordable infrastructure measures aimed at encouragement of capital movement into the shelter sector and provision of subsidies conforming to a long-term, strategic approach to mass shelter production. A welcome development in recent years has been the reliance on extended participation by the future beneficiaries of the low-income and low-cost shelter programmes.

The crucial role of human settlement activities in the economic life of developing countries in the coming years reinforces the need for a co-ordinated programme at the international level to assist in mobilizing much-needed financial resources for the national effort and to provide research, information-dissemination and technical support for that effort; the United Nations system, and especially the Commission on Human Settlements and the Centre, Habitat, are the most appropriate bodies to provide the framework for such international actions. They continue to provide impetus to international actions and to monitor and assist national efforts in this sphere.

(Mr. Rao, India)

Exchange of experiences in this area is extremely important as between developed and developing countries and among developing countries themselves. Here again, co-ordinated action is provided by the Habitat Foundation.

Another area requiring action at the international level is the study of the close interrelationships and linkages existing between the sector of shelter, on the one hand, and those of others, such as health, environment, population control, industry, and so forth, on the other. These can lead to measures in the spheres of employment-promotion, increased use of indigenous resources and labour in production of building materials, health-promoting improvements in shelters and so forth. The importance of an environmentally sound shelter policy, including the need to plan settlements in relation to their natural resource-base and to plan and manage settlements as part of the ecosystems in which they are located, can hardly be over-emphasized. Similarly, the critical linkage between health and adequate housing hardly needs any reaffirmation. It is essential that the various organs and agencies of the United Nations system continue to study the relevant interrelationships in this regard and enrich the information-base from which developing countries can draw.

The International Year of Shelter for the Homeless was launched to stimulate effective action at both the national and international levels to combat the critical and pervasive problem of homelessness and inadequate shelter. It has served to raise awareness of the entire gamut of issues relating to homelessness and inadequate shelter all over the world. It has also stimulated commitment to the shelter needs of the poor and the disadvantaged. It has helped to review existing policies and programmes and to consider new ways of meeting the challenge of shelter for the disadvantaged, the homeless and the poor, to the year 2000. The Year has also led to the constitution of national focal points by 139 Governments

(Mr. Rao, India)

to oversee shelter programmes, designation of projects by Governments and organizations in the context of the Year and formulation and/or review of national shelter strategies by the Governments designed to achieve the objectives of the Year. The observance of the Year and the experience gained as a result have served to highlight the need for the international community to formulate a global shelter strategy to the year 2000.

Allow me to share with everyone here some of our experiences in this vital area. The basic approach of my Government was stated by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi when he said: "Housing is high on our list of priorities ... We propose to launch a comprehensive programme for housing development and particularly housing for economically weaker sections." A draft national housing policy aimed at a sustained growth in the shelter sector is currently under active discussion. A National Housing Bank is being set up at the apex level. Our national five-year development plans have given great priority to housing. An ambitious project to provide 1 million houses to the economically and socially disadvantaged groups in rural areas over the period 1985 to 1990 has been launched under a scheme "India Awas Yojana", named after our late Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi. Since 1980, 7 million developed house sites in rural areas have been provided to the economically disadvantaged groups. Almost half of them have been provided construction assistance. In urban areas, about 1 million dwelling units have been provided to the economically weaker sections. More than 20 million slum dwellers have been provided with basic services and amenities.

As part of a range of activities aimed at mobilizing community participation, we already have extensive programmes and projects aimed at making the private sector - both formal and informal - and non-governmental organizations and the beneficiaries full partners in the efforts to improve human settlements.

(Mr. Rao, India)

It needs to be reiterated that the biggest problem facing developing countries in the critical area of human settlements is the inadequacy of financial resources. No amount of declarations of support, excellent programmes and very good intentions can bring about any tangible improvement in the living conditions of the poor and the disadvantaged until and unless Governments and intergovernmental organizations match such declarations and intentions with the commitment of the required financial resources. The grant element of shelter-related aid should be increased substantially. Even if a small part of the resources spent in military expenditure could be released and channelized into the area of human settlements, it would go a long way in tackling the problems of homelessness and inadequate shelter. The recently concluded United Nations Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development could pave the way for agreement on such measures.

In conclusion, I can only repeat the timely call given by the United Nations Secretary-General:

"The sight of hundreds of thousands of our fellow human beings huddled into the urban and rural slums and makeshift dwellings, and sizeable numbers, including entire families, literally living on the streets, is one which we as citizens of one world must no longer accept. We must demand, and ourselves initiate, action at every level - local, national and international - to put an end to this human misery. The International Year of Shelter for the Homeless and the period up to the year 2000 afford a unique opportunity to take the necessary steps to improve the lot of the 1 billion or more of our unfortunate brothers and sisters who lack adequate shelter. It is a task which challenges both the imagination and the political will of Member States." Let us all rise to the challenge and resolve to provide a positive response.

Mr. PEÑALOSA (Colombia) (interpretation from Spanish): As the Assembly will recall, the first world-wide attempt to tackle the problems of human settlements took place at the Vancouver Conference more than 11 years ago. I had the great honour of being the Secretary-General of that Conference - the largest held to date under the auspices of the United Nations. Recognizing that solutions to the problems of human settlements had to be found essentially at the national level, the Conference adopted 64 basic recommendations for action by Governments.

On the closing day of the Conference, I stated that its success could be assessed not in terms of what had happened at Vancouver, but in terms of the policies, plans and programmes that would be put into effect in future years. I stated also that the future of Habitat - the translation of a conceptual consensus into physical changes in the environment and living conditions of all our peoples - lay in the hands of Governments, individually and collectively,, and that our task had merely begun on that day.

Although there is still a long road to be travelled - longer in some countries than in others - we can note with satisfaction the changes that have already been brought about and the impact that the Vancouver recommendations have had on the policies, plans and programmes of many countries.

At the Conference a very clear conclusion was reached that there was a need to decide on institutional arrangements at the world-wide level to ensure continuity of the efforts undertaken before the Vancouver Conference. After two years of lengthy debate and negotiation, the Governments approved in the General Assembly the institutional arrangements that now exist: an intergovernmental body devoted to the question of human settlements; and, alongside it, a secretariat - the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) - to act as the focal point for human-settlements activities in the United Nations system.

(Mr. Peñalosa, Colombia)

I am pleased to acknowledge today that both the Commission on Human Settlements and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), in the short time they have been in existence, and given their limited financial resources, have become highly respected institutions, regarded by Governments and agencies as an important source of ideas and technical assistance in the sphere of human settlements. In particular, my Government congratulates the Centre on the excellent work it has done so far, under the skilful leadership of its Executive Director, Mr. Arcot Ramachandran.

What, then, is the human-settlements situation, especially in the developing countries, and what does the future hold? The comprehensive United Nations report on human settlements, submitted by the Secretary-General last Monday, on World Habitat Day, is informative in that regard. The first tragic and alarming truth is that the majority of couples in the world continue to conceive more children than they wish to have, and that this represents an almost intolerable burden for many societies - a burden that is particularly reflected in human-settlements conditions. The report indicates that the population of the world will increase by the end of this century by about 800 million, and that it could increase by almost 3 billion by the year 2025. The message of the report is clear and eloquent.

The conditions of human settlements - housing, drinking-water supply, drainage and sanitation, and so forth - instead of improving in most of the developing countries have worsened over the past 10 years. Quite clearly, it continues to be a world-wide priority that couples should, at the least, not conceive more children than they wish to have. We can expect only social disturbance and political instability if world population-growth rates do not drastically diminish in the next few decades. In the area of human settlements, we must recognize also that the efforts being made by Governments on the national and global levels are not yet commensurate with the scale and complexity of the problem. It is

(Mr. Peñalosa, Colombia)

important to note here not only that the ineffectiveness of the efforts to tackle the problems of human settlements has domestic, social and political consequences, but also that world-wide interdependence is as evident in this area as it is in such problems as finance and external trade.

It was with a view to achieving redoubled political compromise and commitment on the issues of human settlements that the General Assembly, on the initiative of the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, proclaimed 1987 the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless.

As the Secretary-General's report confirms, the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless has been successful in drawing world attention to the needs of the homeless and alerting the international community well in advance to the disturbing, unprecedented crisis faced by all the cities and towns of the developing world. More important still, in many cases it has impelled Governments to take measures to face these challenges.

Since the previous policies have not been successful, we must now commit ourselves to undertaking new ones. As the Secretary-General's report correctly points out, the conclusions that emerged at Vancouver indicated that human settlements are an integral element of development. That fact should be reaffirmed and disseminated. An essential, priority objective for every Government should be to ensure that human-settlements policies are integrated into general development policies.

(Mr. Peñalosa, Colombia)

One very clear lesson that emerged from Vancouver is that the two essential factors in solving the problems of human settlements, which only the Government can resolve, are those of the provision of land and of services. From the beginning of life on earth people have been able to provide houses for themselves on an individual basis, although this does not mean that the State should not provide effective help and support.

Every human being should from birth have the national right to make use of a piece of land to build a house for himself and his family. The truth is that a significant part of mankind is still denied this right.

Colombia's experiences indicate ways of tackling this dilemma. First, it should be mentioned that in the short space of 25 years we have been able to organize one of the most active and successful family planning programmes. The population growth rate has fallen from 3.8 per cent per annum to only 1.5 per cent and we hope that within another two generations it will be stabilized.

Regarding human settlements properly speaking, Colombia is putting into effect a programme based on the noble purposes of the Vancouver Declaration and the recommendations adopted for national action adopted in Vancouver. Bearing in mind that today Colombia is an urban society in which by the end of the century less than 20 per cent of the population will live in rural areas, our human settlements programme identified a number of national policies with respect to land planning, basic needs, the rational utilization of resources and, in particular, efforts to ensure that those resources are used to meet the needs of the poorest sectors of the population.

This programme might be entitled "the battle against absolute poverty through improvements in human settlements". We do not believe, as do some others, that

(Mr. Peñalosa, Colombia)

urbanization is inappropriate or negative. On the contrary, we believe that migration and urbanization are part of a natural process that should not and cannot be halted. Urbanization is a natural and necessary complement to development. Migration is detrimental when it is chaotic and disorganized and focuses exclusively on major cities, but to be able to migrate from an isolated rural area where there is no hope for the future should be the natural and laudable right of all human beings. It is a fact that no society in the developing world will be able to supply health, education, drinking water and other basic sanitary services, let alone recreation facilities or even employment, for an isolated and scattered population.

Colombia, in devising its present human settlements programme, is aware that a short time ago political and economic power was based in the great cities, that economic investment was centred there because the large-scale undertakings and markets were there, and that social investment had followed the same pattern, partly to create a European way of life for the élitist classes and partly to purchase political protection. In any event, the consequence has been the constant relative impoverishment of the rest of the country.

The view has been taken that human settlements should have the highest priority in economic and social development plans; that they should not be a residual aspect of the process of economic development but by definition should be a driving force behind that development.

The delegation of Colombia awaits with interest the report prepared by the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs on shelter and economic adjustment in the decade of the 1980s. We understand that in that report the Secretary-General proposes that economic adjustment and continued growth should be powered fundamentally by measures designed to reactivate the housing sector, and recommends new policies and strategies in that regard.

(Mr. Peñalosa, Colombia)

Similarly, we agree with what was said this morning by the representative of Canada in that we hope that the General Assembly will ask the Commission on Human Settlements to draw up a plan to put into effect the global strategy and present that plan to the Economic and Social Council for subsequent adoption by the Assembly.

In conclusion, I should like to emphasize one point in my statement, namely, the need to strengthen the United Nations institutions working in this crucial area of development. I should like to recall, as did by Mr. Staynov, the representative of Bulgaria, the conclusions of the Commission on Human Settlements when considering this important question at its tenth session, at which I had the honour to be elected Vice-Chairman. The Commission unanimously agreed that: first, there is a great need for participation by the United Nations in the promotion of the cause of the development of human settlements; secondly, only through a major substantive programme specifically directed at human settlements problems can the United Nations have a meaningful impact in the field of development activities; thirdly, bearing in mind that human settlements activities are exceptionally concentrated both at the national and at the local level, international action to assist national activities should be channelled through national ministries and agencies and through the use of technical experts to tackle the vast and complex issues involved in the development of human settlements; and, fourthly, the present institutional arrangements set up by the General Assembly through resolution 32/162 are working efficiently and having the required impact.

We believe that those institutions should, if anything, be strengthened to ensure that they are better able to shoulder the additional responsibilities that will stem from the implementation of the global strategy for shelter and housing.

Mr. BLANC (France) (interpretation from French): As the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka proposed, and as he reminded us very eloquently this morning, the General Assembly of the United Nations designated 1987 International Year of Shelter for the Homeless. The purpose is to make the international community aware of a major problem. It is estimated that 100 million people are now homeless and that the urban population of developing countries is increasing each year by 45 million. The report of the Secretary-General and the statement made this morning by Mr. Staynov, Chairman of the Commission on Human Settlements, have reminded us of the magnitude of the problem.

The representative of Denmark, speaking on behalf of the European Community and its member States, has just expressed views which, of course, we fully share and which I should just like to complement and illustrate now by referring to French experience.

France has long devoted a large part of its resources to solving the problem of the badly-housed in France, and also in developing countries, as was stressed by the competent French Minister during the tenth session of the United Nations Commission on Human Settlements, which was held in April in Nairobi.

Following the Second World War we had to make a considerable effort for ourselves as regards housing. Nevertheless, in France today there are still those who are badly housed, particularly among the unemployed and the immigrant population. The Government is striving to remedy this situation and we hope that the list of the successes and failures of this policy will one day be useful to all.

In the developing countries, there appear to be two essential objectives: first, to help those countries to meet the fundamental social need for housing, which has a direct impact on health and the well-being of peoples; and, secondly,

(Mr. Blanc, France)

to contribute to the economic development of the countries by promoting the development of a local capacity for housing production. The housing sector has for too long been considered solely as a burden, whereas it can be a growth factor and must be integrated in the economic process, as emphasized in the Secretariat report.

France has long experience in the area of bilateral co-operation with developing countries. A programme of research and experimentation in co-operation in the area of housing - called REXCOOP - was started at the beginning of the 1980s. During the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless an assessment of that programme has been undertaken. It has revealed the positive results of many programmes of technical research and experimentation and, despite our relatively modest national resources, we hope to ensure that our intervention and our action measure up better to the needs of the countries that we assist, particularly as regards urban development.

Having said that, whatever countries and institutions providing aid can and wish to do, the main housing effort must be made by the developing countries themselves. No external aid institution can ever subsidize or even finance through loans the large-scale construction of housing. Moreover, no country receiving assistance, would want to burden its external debt with the weight of the financing of housing programmes at the level of its needs. It will be first and chiefly a matter for local professional networks, local collectivities and the peoples concerned. An example of such an orientation and its success, with regard to macro-economic balances, among other things, has been given to us by a friendly country, Colombia, as has just been stated so clearly by its representative.

The International Year of Shelter for the Homeless will have been an opportunity to improve the dissemination of experience and exchange of information

(Mr. Blanc, France)

among Member countries of the United Nations. It will have attained its goal if it results everywhere in greater action for the homeless.

As far as we are concerned, many of the projects carried out by developing countries in all continents in co-operation with France have been the subject of assessments published and distributed through the United Nations Centre on Human Settlements.

We have also helped to organize several international seminars or conferences in the context of the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless. Thus, in December 1986 a conference on building materials and techniques took place in Paris with the participation of the Executive Director of the Habitat Centre, Mr. Ramachandran. Last June a seminar on building regulations and techniques and on land development was held in the context of the Economic Commission for Europe at which more than 30 countries were represented.

Therefore, we believe that the International Year will have been a year of useful effort. It remains to ensure an effective follow-up. This is the proper task of the United Nations Centre on Human Settlements.

Ms. VERANO-YAP (Philippines): Our meeting today during the forty-second session of the General Assembly in observance of 1987 as the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless testifies to the high priority accorded by the international community to the subject of shelter. It is fitting that the General Assembly should highlight this universal problem. Today roughly one quarter of the world's population does not have adequate shelter and lives in extremely unhealthy and miserable conditions. In the year 2000, the global population is expected to exceed 6.2 billion. The problem of shelter for these billions will attain explosive proportions unless we do something about it now in our collective strength.

The gains achieved by some countries and the experience of the various United Nations agencies, such as the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements and the World Health Organization, in dealing with the problem of shelter inspires us to face and resolve it, for the problem affects both developed and developing countries. The Assembly itself has given attention to it. Last year, we adopted resolutions on the realization of the right to adequate housing, on the tenth session of the Commission on Human Settlements, and on the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless.

The Philippines has participated in the world-wide observance of the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless. It has taken steps to raise public consciousness about the problem of shelter. The Philippine Government established in April 1987 a National Committee for the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless, co-ordinated by the Department of Foreign Affairs. The Committee has formulated a series of year-round activities to celebrate the International Year. These activities include government public information programmes, nation-wide school activities, government-sponsored photo exhibits, the issuance of

(Ms. Verano-Yap, Philippines)

publications, and a plan to issue a commemorative stamp. President Aquino established a Presidential Commission for the Urban Poor. Government entities like the National Housing Authority, the Department of Agrarian Reform and the Department of National Defense, as well as the United Architects of the Philippines, a private-sector association, among others, launched shelter projects for the homeless as their contribution to the observance.

If the next generation should achieve the miracle of providing adequate shelter for all, it would be because there were, in our time, men like the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, Mr. Premadasa, who initiated a movement at the United Nations General Assembly that led to 1987 being declared the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless.

The observance of the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless raises a challenge to us all which is no less than a call for a fundamental change in our attitudes to and perceptions of the problem of shelter. While the world has long been aware of the gravity of this problem, it has been generally considered in isolation and distinct and apart from the context of economic development. Thus, Governments have been preoccupied merely with the physical provisions for housing. The unsurprising consequence has been the instant failure of housing construction to keep up with the rapidly rising need for shelter.

Shelter programmes can be adequately pursued only as part of the overall economic development programme. More than this, shelter programmes themselves promote economic development. Housing as an economic activity contributes to employment generation and can account for a substantial share in capital formation. The energies and potentials of the homeless should be harnessed and their sense of community participation encouraged.

(Ms. Verano-Yap, Philippines)

My Government appreciates the efforts of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements, the World Health Organization and other United Nations bodies for their activities in support of national action in providing shelter for the homeless. The United Nations Centre for Human Settlements has been involved in 167 technical co-operation projects in 83 countries, and in the publication of information activities designed to raise public consciousness about shelter for the homeless. The World Health Organization has convened international consultations on housing - the implications for health - and commissioned a series of case studies to examine national experiences in the fields of health and habitat. We wish to encourage these bodies to step up their constructive programmes and activities.

We are also encouraged by the activities of non-governmental organizations. Their studies and the results of their Global Forum on Shelter for the Homeless, which was held in Nairobi before the tenth session of the Commission on Human Settlements, will be useful to Governments in their efforts to work out new and innovative strategies. The United Nations Centre for Human Settlements should continue promoting the involvement of non-governmental organizations in these activities. We also wish to express our appreciation to the Government of the Netherlands for the financial support it has provided to the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements in its programme for harnessing the potential of non-governmental organizations.

Individual countries on their own have to shoulder the primary responsibility for formulating their policies and for deploying the human, material and financial resources necessary to carry out these policies, taking into account such aspects as community participation, land tenure, financial resources, urban planning and the elimination of slum areas.

(Ms. Verano-Yap, Philippines)

In some countries, housing projects and the construction of support facilities, such as water and sewerage systems, have been successfully undertaken with the involvement of the beneficiaries themselves.

(Ms. Verano-Yap, Philippines)

Invariably such participation ranges from project design to actual construction and has involved organized co-operatives or informal village structures. Experience has shown that shelter projects are executed more efficiently and maintained better if the community takes part in them and thus regards them as a focus of community spirit and a source of community pride.

Unless their tenure is secure, people do not feel a sense of community, are not encouraged to take part in community projects and have neither pride nor a stake in such projects. Government shelter programmes should therefore include security of tenure as a vital component.

The finance policy for housing should aim at increasing the resources for shelter and related services and be utilized in such a manner as to produce maximum benefit for the largest possible number of beneficiaries. Financing can be raised in many ways, including the expansion of financial institutions through domestic saving and the establishment of special funds for land acquisition and infrastructure development.

Many developing countries are in the process of transformation from agrarian to urban economies. Consequently national governments have diminished their attention to the rural areas in terms of housing, employment and community facilities, thus aggravating further the attraction of the population to the city and away from the countryside. By the year 2000 about half of the world's population will be living in cities and towns. The pressure to provide adequate housing for the urban poor will therefore continue unabated. Urban planning becomes increasingly essential if adequate shelter is to be provided for the cities' exploding populations.

The elimination of slum areas should be an important consideration in urban

(Ms. Verano-Yap, Philippines)

planning. The experience gained by Egypt in its slum-upgrading project for Helwan, a large industrial suburb of Cairo, is instructive in this regard.

In the Philippines we are now implementing a national shelter programme which is an integral component of the medium-term national development plan for the period 1987 to 1992. To implement the programme, Executive Order 90, issued in December 1986, identified the agencies dealing with shelter, created the Housing and Urban Development Co-ordinating Council and rationalized the system for home-mortgage financing.

We view as essential in the process of development a programme embracing man's needs, his community and his environment. We regard community participation as essential to planning and implementation, encouraging housing through self-help. We consider housing to be everybody's concern, as it has a significant role in enhancing economic development and in mobilizing the beneficiary community, government agencies and the private sector.

Our shelter programme is the product of a careful assessment of our shelter needs, which we envisage must provide decent and comfortable living. We anticipate that for the period 1987 to 1992 the country will require around 3.4 million housing units, of which 1.8 million or 53 per cent will be needed in the rural areas and 1.6 million or 47 per cent in the urban areas.

While individual countries bear the primary responsibility for building shelter for their peoples, the developing countries cannot shoulder it all by themselves. The problem of shelter for the homeless is a global concern. While we appreciate the efforts of the international community and the support of the developed countries, we feel that the extent of assistance from outside sources remains less than satisfactory. If we are to eradicate the problem of shelter for the homeless by the year 2000, increased and consistent support must come from the

(Ms. Verano-Yap, Philippines)

United Nations bodies and the international community. There is no alternative to this and it can be done in many inexpensive ways.

Nothing is impossible. A peaceful, bloodless revolution took place in my country - the Philippines - in the year 1986 and may I say it may have been the most inexpensive revolution that has ever taken place in the world. A change for the better may not necessarily entail expense.

It would be useful if the United Nations and other international bodies could set up systems for the exchange of information so that countries could learn from the innovative and successful projects of other countries. For instance, the application of low-cost shallow sewerage in a low-cost settlement in Brazil, the upgrading of a squatter settlement in Jordan, the Warathamula project involving community participation in Sri Lanka and a public-private sector venture in low-cost housing in my country may provide useful insights into other countries' projects.

The United Nations and the rest of the international community could also encourage research into the development of ways to help individual countries in managing their shelter needs, including the application of the latest technology. For instance, material to help planners in deciding where best to locate public facilities such as schools, hospitals, or markets could be developed.

Only when the individual countries are able to implement the new strategies in a sustained manner shall we be able to say with candour that the objectives of the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless have been sufficiently met. We all expect that the crucial third phase of the programme for the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless from 1988 to the year 2000 will usher in the implementation of strategies to ensure shelter for the homeless.

(Ms. Verano-Yap, Philippines)

If we, the Member States of the United Nations, are able to tackle the problem of shelter for the homeless in our societies by the year 2000 it will be a triumph for the principle of international co-operation and understanding and we will all have fulfilled in a very real way an important objective of the United Nations Charter: to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.

Mrs. CASTRO de BARISH (Costa Rica) (interpretation from Spanish): My delegation is participating in this commemoration of the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless with all the conviction and interest due to one of the most pressing issues facing the United Nations, which gave 1987 that eloquent title.

With the passage of time this issue has taken on critical importance, for its effects are being felt throughout the international community, including the industrialized countries, particularly in the urban areas. For this reason, my delegation wishes to place on record our gratitude to the delegation of Sri Lanka, which first proposed that the United Nations designate 1987 International Year of Shelter for the Homeless.

We are grateful to the Secretary-General for his excellent report (A/42/378) on this important issue.

The following question has been asked: why is an International Year of Shelter for the Homeless necessary? The response is immediate and clear. There are 1,250 million human beings without suitable housing. There are 100 million people who do not have a roof over their head. Some have never had a decent place to live; others have had to leave their homes as a result of natural disasters. These people sleep in the streets of the cities; they take over a few square yards under bridges or in vacant lots; they sleep in doorways and underground passages or in recesses in public buildings.

We must recognize that shelter is a matter that concerns the whole world. We have already recognized that every individual has the right to decent living conditions, a principle enshrined in article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We must recognize that slums and unemployment are a social evil in society and impede economic development.

(Mrs. Castro de Barish, Costa Rica)

Apart from humanitarian considerations, which evoke a response in the personal feelings of every one of us, this issue calls for specific action based on planning for the future, seeking practical, viable solutions for a situation which is becoming increasingly critical as the world population increases. We must therefore seek ways and means of working in a concerted, practical manner. The United Nations has already sounded the alarm about this deplorable world-wide situation. The Conference held under the auspices of the United Nations in Vancouver, Canada, in 1976 was the first international effort and it aroused interest in the housing crisis at the world level.

The United Nations can and should help countries to exchange information and ideas with a view to tackling this problem. It should mobilize and organize action for the present and the future and provide technical assistance to those requesting it. This has already been done through the Commission on Human Settlements, whose Chairman made a very important statement to the General Assembly this morning, and through the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat).

The International Labour Organisation has told us that \$116,000 million would be required to provide the basic elements to rehabilitate slum housing throughout the world by the year 2000.

Governments have the responsibility for providing services, assistance to individuals to enable them to acquire land, financial aid for the building of more housing and technical assistance in the building of better housing; promoting rural development to halt the migration to urban centres; and planning, in accordance with their own policies, to restrain population increases, which has a critical effect on the situation, as already noted in the Secretary-General's report.

Communities must participate in efforts to improve housing and services, to upgrade existing houses and to build more and better housing units with low-cost,

(Mrs. Castro de Barish, Costa Rica)

preferably home-produced materials. They should assist in keeping the environment clean and help to pave streets and dig ditches and latrines, among other things. Health care will be significant in ensuring the independent action of individual families and community groups in the areas of housing and health.

I think it would be useful to draw attention to the assessments carried out with regard to this situation as far as my country is concerned.

The National Institute for Housing and Urbanization highlights the fact that the housing situation is closely bound up with the levels of poverty and marginalization in the population. Families living in houses in poor physical conditions and lacking basic services are also affected by other social problems, such as low income, a low level of education, a poor state of health, and the problems attendant on unemployment.

Since the 1960s the housing shortfall and the limited finance available to deal with it have become a very serious problem for our State.

Housing needs are constantly increasing and, although there is no exact assessment of the shortfall, we have estimates from the housing Institute on the basis of the 1973 census data and International Labour Organisation data. According to these calculations, there was an estimated housing shortfall of more than 100,000 units in 1983.

As far as housing occupancy is concerned, comparison with the census data reveals a number of important changes. The percentage of housing occupied by owners gradually increased from 56.3 per cent in 1963 to 65.8 per cent in 1985, while the percentage of housing occupied under a rental arrangement fell from 23.9 per cent in 1963 to 20.7 per cent in 1984. On the other hand, the proportion of overcrowded housing fell from 23.9 per cent in 1963 to 6.9 per cent in 1984.

(Mrs. Castro de Barish, Costa Rica)

Nevertheless, overcrowding in one-room dwellings rose from 14.6 per cent to 27.5 per cent in the same period.

The solutions proposed through different programmes have been insufficient. In the face of the financial problems encountered, it has been necessary to resort to external loans, a situation which has tended to concentrate attention on medium- and high-level income sectors.

My Government, through the Housing and Urbanization Ministry and the National Institute for Housing and Urbanization, not only has concerned itself with the building of housing and the rehabilitation of housing in poor condition, but has sought and fostered exchanges of experience and technical expertise among the countries of our region, thus awakening the interest of communities and local councils in our country and in other countries.

(Mrs. Castro de Barish, Costa Rica)

It was only three weeks ago from 21 to 25 September that the Inter-American and Caribbean Forum on Housing for the Homeless took place in San Jose, the capital of Costa Rica, as one of the activities of the International Year. Its results were very positive and demonstrated the importance of exchanges and co-operation among developing countries in tackling problems which, to a greater or lesser degree, are shared by us all. These exchanges lead to effective co-operation and concrete policies that seek solutions to intractable common problems, such as the one with which we are now concerned. They also promote the development of a co-operative approach at the grass-roots level providing participation opportunities to communities and local councils, as well as employment to the members of those communities.

I shall mention a number of the major recommendations adopted at the Inter-American and Caribbean Forum on Housing for the Homeless: first, its Secretariat was established in Costa Rica; secondly, it was decided that the Forum would meet every two years and that Guatemala would be the venue for the next forum, to be held in 1989; thirdly, it was recommended that Habitat should study the setting up of a regional centre with headquarters in Bogota, Colombia, for the exchange of experience with a view to future co-operation in human settlements.

Government action in executing housing programmes as part of our national development plan has a twofold objective, that of providing decent housing and finding solutions which will generate employment and income for families. The institutions dealing with these needs will strive to evaluate, adopt, develop and disseminate technology and building systems most suited to the housing needs of the various social sectors and geographical locations of the country. Processes that make use of national material and human resources to the maximum will be sought.

(Mrs. Castro de Barish, Costa Rica)

To meet the challenge and aims identified in Costa Rica, five key actions are being taken:

First, we have set up a national financial system for housing, including a mortgage bank drawing on State resources which were not previously used to the optimum and which did not entail public expenditure.

Secondly, we shall implement a social policy of subsidizing housing which, among other things, does not distort financial markets and is fair since no family will receive more than it needs in order to have a decent place to live;

Thirdly, an in-depth institutional review of all the activities of the sector will be undertaken;

Fourthly, there is the development of a policy to stimulate private enterprise in the construction sector by providing resources in quantities not available through domestic financing. It was thought that the State should give way to private enterprise, be it traditional or grass-roots organizations of the people.

Fifthly, we shall promote a frequently overlooked but key element in any housing scheme: organizing the people. This not only reduces costs but also means that every penny invested by the State is doubled, or more than doubled, thanks to the common effort of families benefiting from such housing projects.

Furthermore, we seek through the housing programme to strengthen the organizational ability of our own people to the point where housing becomes a subproduct and the organizational ability itself becomes the principal result.

We have set ourselves the goal of building 80,000 housing units in four years. In the first year of the administration of President Oscar Arias, who came to office on 8 May 1986, 22,000 housing units were built. We are now working with 29,500 low-income families. We have two major priorities: the eradication of slums, and here we are working with 14,500 families; and the rural housing

(Mrs. Castro de Barish, Costa Rica)

programme, where we are working fundamentally in conjunction with groups organized on the basis of communal development associations and co-operatives.

On 1 October an aggressive programme of individual loans was begun in the rural areas of Costa Rica. In implementing the rural programmes we have received resolute support from the Canadian Government, whose contributions are helping us build 2,300 housing units this year, and we hope to build 3,500 next year.

Furthermore, we are receiving significant support from the International Development Association for the seed capital of the housing mortgage bank we recently established.

But, fundamentally, we have decided, as a society, that the greatest effort needs to come from ourselves, both in terms of financial resources and the efforts of our own people. Therefore, 80 per cent of the resources with which we are now working are domestic.

My Government hopes that, given these elements, we shall be able during this administrative period successfully to effect a solution to the housing problem in Costa Rica and provide Costa Ricans with the kind of housing worthy of all human beings. We also hope to be able to co-operate with international agencies in decisively promoting the objectives of the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless.

Mrs. MBOYA (Kenya): The Kenyan delegation is happy to note that the Assembly is devoting specific time to discuss matters relating to the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless. We take this opportunity to congratulate the Executive Director of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), Mr. Ramachandran, and the Commission of Habitat for the successful outcome of the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless.

The programme for the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless covers

(Mrs. Mboya, Kenya)

pthe period before, during and after 1987. The period before and during 1987 has offered the international community and individual Member States an opportunity to assess the magnitude of the problem of homelessness and inadequate shelter and to search for possible solutions and to initiate programmes to solve these problems. However, the problem of inadequate shelter is still far from being solved, and it is hoped that a definite global strategy can be devised as a follow up to the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless.

At the core of human settlement problems is shelter, infrastructure and related services, such as water supply, sanitation, garbage collection, transportation and community facilities. All of these when adequately provided at affordable cost provide dignity, security and privacy for the individual, the family and the community as a whole. Besides meeting these basic needs, investment in shelter contributes directly and indirectly to the generation of employment and income. It also enhances the health and productivity of the labour force and supports the growth of the building materials and construction industry.

(Mrs. Mboya, Kenya)

Despite this recognition of the importance of shelter and related services in social-economic development as a whole, it is estimated that over 1 billion people all over the world are homeless or have to make do with the most deplorable shelter conditions. As a result of urbanization and rural-urban migration, the situation in urban centres is expected to deteriorate if adequate measures are not implemented to reverse the situation.

In Kenya, as in many other developing countries, the provision of adequate shelter for all has also been an elusive goal. As a result of high population growth and rural-urban migration, the supply of adequate shelter has tended to lag behind demand. This has resulted in overcrowding in a number of towns and the emergence of unplanned settlements lacking the necessary services.

The Kenya Government is committed to the objectives of the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless, and has accordingly designated the Housing Department of the Ministry of Works, Housing and Physical Planning as a focal point to co-ordinate the activities of the Year, supported by an interministerial committee, with inputs from private institutions.

Our Government has been very much concerned about the present and future shelter situation, and has therefore prepared the national housing strategy, covering the period 1987 to 2000. This is in tune with the objectives of the programme of the International Year, as proclaimed by the General Assembly in 1982.

A rural housing survey is in progress. In accordance with the Kenya Government policy of decentralizing development to the rural areas, a programme for rural housing upgrading, based on the utilization of locally available building materials and construction techniques, has already been initiated. The results of this survey will assist in the formulation and implementation of future rural

(Mrs. Mboya, Kenya)

housing programmes. Furthermore, a comprehensive housing finance study has been completed. It contains recommendations on how to increase the flow of funds to support future housing programmes and projects and improve lending mechanisms that cater for low-income earners, both in urban and rural areas, including the informal sector. It also makes recommendations on the establishment of a secondary mortgage market.

A comprehensive projection of population growth, household formation and the required investments up to the year 2000 has been completed. This, together with the Kenya urban housing survey and the Kenya rural housing survey, besides being useful in updating the existing national housing policy, will assist in the planning of affordable housing both in rural and urban areas.

On the basis of information from those surveys, the Kenya national housing strategy 1987-2000 has been formulated, and it was submitted to the tenth commemorative session of the United Nations Commission on Human Settlements, held in Nairobi early this year.

In the area of building legislation and regulations, the low-cost housing by-laws have been revised and approved, and are now being implemented. Under the Sectional Properties Act, the processing of legislation to facilitate and encourage the development and sale of flats and condominiums is at an advanced stage. It is expected that when enacted, this law will promote economic land use and at the same time facilitate mortgage lending for flat development.*

Finally, a research programme on local building materials and construction techniques has been going on for some years now. Knowledge from already concluded

* The President took the Chair.

(Mrs. Mboya, Kenya)

research findings is being disseminated and demonstrated in various housing projects built in both urban and rural areas through the Housing Research and Development Unit of the University of Nairobi.

The main implementing agency for the public housing programme is the National Housing Corporation. Low-income housing development has mainly been carried out by the National Housing Corporation, especially site and service work and mortgage, rental and tenant-purchase housing all over the country. Other programmes related to the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless include rural water supply, rural access road programmes, improved sanitation projects and a private sector housing programme, following a study of the performance of the private sector in housing development.

The revision of the Kenya housing by-laws and standards has facilitated the preparation of the low-cost housing report, which gives guide-lines to the public on how future housing projects intended for low-income families should be designed and implemented in order to make them affordable, while attaining the requirements of health, privacy and safety.

A United Nations Children's Fund-assisted urban basic service programme has its origins in the nutrition family planning component of the second urban project, and is geared towards building, planning and institutional capacities of local authorities. The programme is comprehensive in nature and covers such areas as neighbourhood improvement, sanitation, provision of clean water and sanitation to squatter and poor areas, primary health care, nutrition and family planning.

As I mentioned earlier, the activities of the International Year will not cease in 1987. The Year has rightly served as an impetus for mobilizing governmental, non-governmental and international support for shelter problems and

(Mrs. Mboya, Kenya)

related issues. A number of activities, programmes and projects which have been launched will continue well beyond 1987. New activities and projects will be launched all over the country by newly-created local committees on the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless. The programme for the International Year will therefore be an important input in Kenya's national shelter strategy covering the period 1987 to 2000.

The proposed global strategy for shelter to the year 2000 contained in draft resolution 10/1 of the tenth commemorative session of the Commission on Human Settlements, which will be placed before the Assembly, is therefore a logical follow-up of the activities related to the International Year programmes. My delegation strongly supports the recommendation of the tenth session of the Habitat Commission that a global strategy for shelter to the year 2000 be established, including a plan of action for its implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and further requests that all United Nations bodies and agencies and the international community at large support the formulation of the global shelter strategy to the year 2000 and beyond.

The Nairobi-based United Nations Centre for Human Settlements has indeed been playing its rightful role in working towards the improvement of shelter conditions all over the world, especially for the poorer and disadvantaged segments of society. Habitat has, within the mandate of resolution 32/162, continued to work closely with Governments and other relevant institutions in coping with the pressing challenges of shelter and homelessness. We all share the view that Habitat needs to be strengthened and to be given the necessary financial support. It is within this context that, while we support the ongoing review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations,

(Mrs. Mboya, Kenya)

Kenya strongly believes that such a review should in no way be allowed to tamper with the efficient programme delivery of international organizations such as Habitat. Instead, we urge further strengthening and financial support in real terms for the Centre to enable it to continue as an entity in sustaining programme delivery in its areas of competence on shelter and homelessness in accordance with General Assembly resolution 32/162.

(Mrs. Mboya, Kenya)

In conclusion, it is worth noting here that Habitat is indeed one of the youngest of the United Nations organs and has only celebrated its tenth anniversary this year. I wish to put on record my delegation's satisfaction with the exemplary work of both the United Nation Centre for Human Settlements and its governing body, the Commission on Human Settlements. We wish further to reaffirm our support for the Centre in its search for solutions to the serious and increasing problems in the field of human settlements. It is our sincere hope that the General Assembly will take the necessary measures to strengthen the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements and that, besides implementing and monitoring world-wide human settlement projects, Habitat will retain sole responsibility for formulating global policies and strategies in the field of human settlements.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Russian): I should like to inform representatives that I have received a cable from His Eminence Agostino Cardinal Casaroli, Secretary of State of the Holy See, conveying a message of support from His Holiness Pope John Paul II on the occasion of the observance of the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless. On behalf of the General Assembly, I express our deep appreciation of the support of His Holiness.

Mr. KIKUCHI (Japan): On behalf of my delegation, I should like to express my appreciation of this opportunity to address the General Assembly on the subject of the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless. Since the adoption of resolution 37/221, which designated 1987 the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless, Japan has actively supported this endeavour. We believe that that proclamation will certainly contribute to promoting awareness on the part of the international community of the problems of homeless people in urban and rural areas of the developing countries, as well as to stepping up the international co-operation in this field.

In the view of my delegation, the housing problem caused by the rapid

(Mr. Kikuchi, Japan)

population growth and resultant concentration of such population, if left unabated and unresolved, would give rise to political, economic and social instability not only in the countries concerned, but also for the international community as a whole. In order to alleviate such consequences, we believe that the United Nations system, particularly Habitat, has a significant role to play in promoting and co-ordinating international co-operation in this field.

For these reasons, Japan has been undertaking various activities, at both the domestic and the international level, in supporting the great cause of the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless.

In April 1986 the Japanese Government established the Special Office for the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless, which is placed under the direct guidance of the Prime Minister. Its main task is to promote and co-ordinate various activities to be carried out in connection with the International Year. On the local level, many local governments in Japan have set up a variety of organizations to undertake their own local activities. Furthermore, in the private sector, the 'IYSH Council of Japan' was established in March of this year to work together with the central Government in carrying out various activities.

Our activities in connection with the International Year include, among others, the convening of international conferences and seminars related to human settlements, international exchange programmes, the training of personnel from developing countries, and public relations activities to promote awareness of the housing and living environment. We have invited Asian youths who are tackling housing problems in their own countries to exchange views on this problem. A special mission of experts and Government officials will be sent to Asian countries to discuss international co-operation in the field of human settlements. All these activities were planned and carried out especially in commemoration and support for the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless.

(Mr. Kikuchi, Japan)

It goes without saying that Japan has been actively involved on a continuous basis in the international activities to assist developing countries in their efforts to solve problems of human settlements. Since 1984 Japan has been contributing \$500,000 annually to the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation. This year, Japan will increase the amount by 50 per cent to \$750,000 as an expression of our support for the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless. Japan has also extended technical assistance of various kinds to developing countries in the relevant fields. We shall continue and even step up these activities in the future.

In conclusion, I should like to reiterate Japan's strong pledge of support for the cause of the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless. We sincerely hope that it will serve the purpose of making this year a stepping stone for our long and continued endeavour in the future to improve the living conditions of humankind.

Mr. MOHSIN (Nepal): The socio-economic agenda of every developing nation gives priority to the need to provide shelter for the homeless in their respective countries. We are grateful to Mr. Ranasinghe Premadasa, Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, for his valuable contribution in having this important issue included in the agenda of the United Nations with a view to generating greater international awareness and co-ordinated action. We feel it to be entirely befitting, therefore, that he should also have initiated our deliberations in the plenary Assembly on the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless with his important and thought-provoking address.

Though the problems associated with shelter and human settlements differ from country to country, Nepal, like other third-world countries, is fully committed to the urgent goal of providing adequate shelter for all in the shortest possible time-frame.

(Mr. Mohsin, Nepal)

Before I proceed, allow me to give some relevant statistics in this regard. It has been estimated that in Nepal 93.1 per cent of the rural population have their own homes. However, 72 per cent of rural homes cover a plinth area of less than 400 square feet, while in the case of 25 per cent of such dwellings the corresponding figure is a mere 200 square feet. Another aspect of the problem of housing and shelter in Nepal is underscored by the fact that almost half such houses have only one floor; in almost 80 per cent mud has been used as the basic construction material and the roofs are of thatch or timber. None the less, most of these houses lack a supply of piped water, electricity and other facilities.

Even from that brief set of statistics it is more than apparent that while the actual number of people who are homeless in Nepal is very small, the problem of providing low-cost housing, with adequate facilities, is acute and urgent. Indeed, it is precisely this reality that motivated His Majesty King Birendra to identify shelter as one of the six urgent national priorities that needed to be fully addressed by the end of this century under our Basic Needs Programme. In this context, I should like to record that while there are an estimated 2.5 million and 196,000 dwelling units in, respectively, the rural and urban areas in Nepal today, we plan under the Basic Needs Programme to construct 940,000 additional dwelling units for households currently below the poverty line in the rural sector and another 380,000 dwelling units in the urban areas by the year 2000 A.D.

As we see it, our national endeavours in the area of providing the basic needs for human shelter must focus on four broad fronts: first, improving or enhancing rural income; secondly, disseminating know-how on low-cost housing construction methods with locally available material; thirdly, spreading awareness of the need for adequate sanitation in housing; and fourthly and finally, tackling the problem of rapid movement of rural population into the already-crowded urban centres.

(Mr. Mohsin, Nepal)

While the enormity of the challenge to meet the minimum shelter needs of the Nepalese people by the turn of the century is obvious enough, it is equally clear that failure to do so not only would be a set-back to the hopes of millions, but also could, among other things, exacerbate the problems of environmental degradation, if not properly managed. Also clear is the fact that the problem of shelter and homelessness must be faced as part of a broad national effort at socio-economic development, not as an isolated programme.

In any case, Nepal would certainly welcome appropriate assistance from the international community - and from relevant agencies of the United Nations system - to complement its own resolute efforts in this regard. I must also confess that I tend to concur whole-heartedly with the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka when he says that the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless should be viewed not merely as a construction or reconstruction effort but as part of a "crusade - a crusade to change the way in which we think and the way in which we act". After all, since housing policy involves not merely physical structures but people - our most precious resource - we maintain that it is essential to give due cognizance to the social aspects of such endeavours as well.

My delegation shares the view that shelter, like food, is a basic necessity of life and that issues of human settlements will continue to test the ingenuity and resourcefulness of man in regard to important questions relating to organization and management. This test has perhaps never been more urgent than now, when the global population has overtaken the staggering 5 billion level, of which more than 100 million persons are actually estimated to be homeless, eating and sleeping in the streets of metropolitan centres, mainly - but not exclusively - in the cities of the developing world.

(Mr. Mohsin, Nepal)

Nepal hopes that the observance of 1987 as the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless will help focus greater attention on one of the more important tasks of our times and thereby also galvanize appropriate and needed remedial measures. In this context, we believe that while the international community and United Nations agencies have an important responsibility to discharge, no less a role can be played by the developing countries themselves through the medium of South-South co-operation, especially by exchanges of information on low-cost building technologies.

In conclusion, I believe it would be fitting if the momentum generated by observance of the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless, 1987, were not allowed to slacken. Granting an appropriately enhanced mandate to the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements could perhaps be a means to consolidate various gains recorded in this area in a year dedicated to providing shelter for the homeless.

Mr. ALPTUNA (Turkey): The scope of the human-settlements problem, with a quarter of the world's population lacking adequate or any shelter at all, and over 31 billion living in poverty-stricken conditions, made it a timely decision to designate 1987 as the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless and to focus international attention on this pressing issue.

While the problem is global in nature, it is significantly more acute in the developing world. The Secretary-General's report (A/42/378) enumerates the adverse impact that factors such as rapid population growth, high levels of urbanization and urban growth and the severe economic and financial strains faced by the developing countries has had and will continue to have in aggravating the problem of poor living conditions and inadequate human settlements in the developing world.

(Mr. Alptuna, Turkey)

The widespread problem of shelter in the developing countries is on the whole the outcome of serious difficulties arising from low economic-development levels. The scarcity of affordable dwellings for the vast majority of households comprised of low-income groups has resulted in an increase in slums and squatter settlements. It is estimated that in a number of cities of some developing countries 40 per cent to 50 per cent of the inhabitants are living in slums and informal settlements.

Let us dwell briefly on some forecasts which will exert an even more negative impact on the present situation.

The world's population is expected to increase by nearly 1.3 billion between 1985 and the year 2000, and more than 90 per cent of this growth will occur in the developing countries. As for urban growth in the developing world, it is projected that the urban population, which was 1.1 billion in 1985, will grow by more than 50 million every year. Given these prospects, one can hardly expect to see an amelioration of the present human-settlements problem; on the contrary, unless concerted action is taken immediately, the problem of homelessness and inadequate shelter could reach an unmanageable magnitude.

Within that context there is an urgent need to address the problem, and it is important that the international community give the necessary priority to measures for improving the shelter and neighbourhoods of the poor and disadvantaged.

We note with satisfaction the increasing efforts to date at the national and international level to fulfil the objectives of the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless, and hope to see concrete results during and in the follow-up of the Year.

As a developing country, Turkey also faces its own problems in the area of the growing need for adequate housing. Turkey's population, which is now 50.4 million,

(Mr. Alptuna, Turkey)

is expected to reach 54 million by 1989. In view of the socio-economic developments and population increase, it is anticipated that the urbanization process and the shift from the rural to the urban structure will thus continue. My Government therefore attaches great importance to the issue of adequate housing in the face of growing needs and has thus formulated a number of new policies within a framework of administrative reforms.

(Mr. Alptuna, Turkey)

We have broken the age-old tradition of strict centralization by transferring power to local authorities and providing them with new financial means.

In this context, I should also like briefly to mention some of the measures undertaken at the national level within the framework of the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless. Foremost among these measures are a number of projects that were initiated in Turkey during the period 1984 to 1987. To give an idea of the scope of the shelter demonstration projects, I should like to cite the following: first, the low-cost urban housing project; secondly, the project to ameliorate the living standards of low-income groups in metropolitan areas, which aims to upgrade and improve the belts of squatter housing around three of our major cities and to construct 8,000 housing units to replace them; thirdly, the Cukurova metropolitan area urban development project; fourthly, the Erzurum-Kars rural development project, which also includes 3,000 disaster housing units; and, lastly, the campus project, which aims at creating a 60,000-bed capacity for boarding students.

The initiation of these projects, along with a series of seminars and symposiums organized in Turkey within the framework of the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless, has contributed to raising awareness of the housing and shelter issue at the national level.

Turning at this point to an initiative taken by Turkey and started in 1984 to create new resources for the housing sector and increase the availability of housing loans for the poorer, low and medium income groups, I should like to share with representatives our national experience in the establishment of the Mass Housing Fund.

The funds accumulated to date from various non-budgetary sources have reached 676 billion Turkish lira. The Fund, since its inception, has been instrumental in

(Mr. Alptuna, Turkey)

providing 90 per cent of its loans to poor and low-income groups for more than 400,000 housing units.

Within this framework other measures taken by the Housing and Public Ownership Management have included the public acquisition of building plots to accommodate new housing projects in the major cities such as Ankara and Istanbul where the need for additional housing has reached significant proportions. Furthermore, in view of the important role mass-housing projects play in enhancing healthy urban development and the production of low-cost housing, incentives are provided to municipalities in their work for the preparation of areas for mass housing.

Lastly, I should like to indicate that research in the field of small and low-cost housing, as well as in new technologies, such as prefabricated housing units, versus the more traditional housing construction technologies, are being vigorously pursued. Likewise, studies, publications and theses by universities within the framework of the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless are being highly encouraged. The housing co-operatives movement and its expansion are also receiving support and encouragement in Turkey. One of our first co-operatives in this field, Kent-Koop, will begin the implementation of various projects, such as urban management, labour co-operatives, public recreation centres and rental housing, in the near future.

In conclusion, I should like to state that the initiative of designating 1987 as International Year of Shelter for the Homeless has already begun to bear fruit. We have observed in many countries that improvements in shelter strategies benefiting the poor and disadvantaged groups have begun to take shape. Furthermore, an awareness of the issue has been stimulated at both the national and the international level.

It is therefore important to sustain these efforts. In this context, my delegation supports the recommendation of the tenth session of the Commission on

(Mr. Alptuna, Turkey)

Human Settlements for the formulation of a global strategy for shelter to the year 2000, which would facilitate action to ensure adequate shelter for all by the target date of the year 2000.

Mr. PAOLILLO (Uruguay) (interpretation from Spanish): The delegation of Uruguay decided to participate in this meeting commemorating the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless because it sees in this act not a mere formality but a way of calling the world's attention to a problem, whose magnitude and implications have not been fully understood. In particular, we see in this act an opportunity to think about the way in which the international community can pool its efforts to find effective solutions to a problem that afflicts no less than one quarter of the population of the world, causes extremely critical economic and social problems, and appears in various forms and degrees in all parts of the world, affecting all countries, whatever their level of development or political persuasion.

As noted by the Secretary-General in his report, the designation of the International Year has served not only to strengthen international awareness of the gravity of the problem, but also to persuade Governments to give a greater impetus to the adoption of housing programmes and their implementation. This was reflected in the optimism expressed by the Executive Director of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements in his statement this morning. We are confident that the Centre will continue its praiseworthy and effective work, to which Uruguay gives its full support.

We believe it to be essential that work continues on the basis of the idea put forward by the Commission on Human Settlements and endorsed by the Secretary-General in his report; that is, the adoption of a global strategy for shelter to the year 2000. In this context the proposals of the Secretary-General in his

(Mr. Paolillo, Uruguay)

report are very interesting. Nevertheless, it is necessary to strengthen international co-operation in this field both in the financial area and in technical co-operation in support of the national plans which each country will draw up in accordance with its own development plans and programmes.

In Uruguay the right of every inhabitant of the Republic to decent housing is one of the individual freedoms enshrined in the Constitution, which also stipulates that the law should provide for hygienic, economical housing for all, facilitate its acquisition and encourage the investment of private funds for this purpose. Of course, the State has a fundamental role in drawing up and carrying out a housing policy through many social and financial institutions.

The housing policy of the present Government of Uruguay responds to the recommendations and guidelines formulated in the various United Nations forums. Immediately after the Nairobi meeting in April President Sanguinetti launched a programme to tackle the housing problem in Uruguay under the slogan "Decent housing for all by the year 2000". In the context of this programme, public agencies and various private institutions associated with housing drew up a plan of action to achieve the objectives proposed. In this respect, a sectoral construction committee was set up which was directly responsible to the President of the Republic and was charged with identifying the problems in the sector and making recommendations.

(Mr. Paolillo, Uruguay)

After carrying out a diagnosis of the problems of the sector, this committee will also redefine and estimate the present housing deficit and its growth as forecast, identify ways of increasing housing supply and reducing costs without affecting the quality of the housing provided, and ensure a stable and regular level of housing construction with the use of readily available local technology and resources.

In so doing, Uruguay seeks to involve all sectors of society in a position to contribute to this undertaking: financial institutions, both public and private, political parties, trade unions, professional associations and groups which themselves suffer from the lack of decent housing. At the moment the mortgage bank, which is the State agency entrusted with carrying out the Government's housing policies, is implementing the 1985-1990 five-year plan aimed at building 65,300 housing units at a cost of \$400 million. In the first two years of the plan, more than 12,000 housing units were built; more than 15,000 are now under construction; and 23,000 are at the planning stage. In the meantime, the work of State and para-State agencies aimed at rehabilitating unsanitary housing - which causes grave social problems both in the country and in the cities - is continuing.

Here I should like to hail the work of the Movement for the Eradication of Unsanitary Rural Housing, which in the last few years achieved the elimination of more than 140 unsanitary villages. By the year 2000 there will be no unsanitary housing units left in rural Uruguay. This Movement, sponsored by the State but para-State in nature, is the focus of co-operation between many sectors of the Uruguayan population. Its financing arises from levies drawn from agricultural and livestock activities, and in this way the local population cease to be mere beneficiaries and become active participants in social improvement.

(Mr. Paolillo, Uruguay)

It should be noted that a further initiative is now in process of adoption aimed at setting up a similar mechanism to be applied in urban centres.

Uruguay is aware that housing policy is an essential component in economic development. An overall approach to the problem that highlights all its social, economic and political implications is the only way of arriving at its solution. The progress which has been made in this area will undoubtedly be reflected in and contribute significantly to the establishment of a social framework favourable to economic development.

While continuing intense activities at the national level towards decent housing for all, Uruguay remains ready to contribute actively to international co-operative efforts designed to put an end once and for all to this grave problem.

Mr. MAKSIMOV (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) (interpretation from Russian): Our delegation would like to speak briefly on the important item being discussed, since Byelorussia has become a new member of the Commission on Human Settlements. Byelorussia supported the General Assembly resolution on the observance of the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless, since the solution to the housing problem, which is really acute at this time, is one of the most important conditions for the exercise of a fundamental human right. People who do not have a roof over their head cannot lead a life of dignity, whether in developing or developed countries.

My delegation considers the holding of the Year as an important means of mobilizing efforts, first at the national level, in order to ensure housing for the homeless populations in those countries where this problem exists. The detailed report of the Secretary-General on the results of the International Year

(Mr. Maksimov, Byelorussian SSR)

convincingly shows the constant need to continue work by the international community to achieve the noble goals of the Year.

The representative of Hungary has already spoken today on behalf of the socialist countries, including Byelorussia, and we are grateful to him for this. In addition, we should like once again to stress that the most important area of the strong social policy formulated in our country as a whole, including in Byelorussia, in accordance with the decisions of the 27th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the 30th Congress of the Communist Party of Byelorussia, is a radical expansion of the volume of housing construction.

In the Republic, in an historically short period, large-scale actions to solve housing problems have been undertaken twice: after the great October Socialist Revolution, when it was necessary to eliminate the slums inherited from the Tsarist régime, and also after the liberation from the Fascist occupiers in 1944, when 3 million inhabitants were made homeless as a result of the barbarous destruction of cities and villages.

These serious consequences have long been eliminated. In the 40 post-war years, new towns and villages have grown up in the Republic and millions of new apartments and homes have been built. However, the work being done does not satisfy us. That is why the Government considers the solution of the housing problem as a priority and urgent task. It is planned that by the end of the century every family will be assured of a well-built apartment or individual house. In the Republic measures are being undertaken to carry out this task as soon as possible. To this end, a special integrated programme has been drafted for the speedy introduction of housing. During the current five-year plan, construction of housing in rural areas will be doubled. The bulk of expenditure

(Mr. Maksimov, Byelorussian SSR)

for construction and maintenance of housing as before will be covered by the State budget. Apartment rent for housing, which is provided on a broad democratic basis, taking account of the views of workers' collectives, from the State housing fund, make up 3 to 5 per cent of family budgets.

In addition, at this time the construction of housing on a wider scale involves funds from enterprises, units, state collective farms and also savings of the population and easy term credits. Those processes are an integral part of the restructuring being carried out now and of the renewal of all aspects of our life in society and as a part of expediting the accomplishment of all social tasks.

(Mr. Maksimov, Byelorussian SSR)

As I have already said, recently, at the resumed session of ECOSOC, Byelorussia was elected to the Commission on Human Settlements. We intend to co-operate actively in that organ to strengthen international co-operation so that, as the Secretary-General said on the occasion of World Habitat Day, we can put an end to a situation in which nearly a quarter of the world's population can only dream of proper housing.

Mrs. ASHTON (Bolivia) (interpretation from Spanish): As we commemorate the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless, there comes to mind the contrast between technological advances and the sights we see every day in our cities, in rich and poor countries alike, which demonstrate the differences in the living conditions of millions of people and families who live in disturbing conditions and whose hopes and prospects are darkened by the evident fact that the critical situation is getting worse.

If we turn to statistics to gauge the difficulties and tragedy that the lack of such basic requirements as a home, shelter and security represents for the dignity of the individual, we find that a chilling 80 per cent of the inhabitants of our planet live in such conditions. While scientists and philosophers are dealing with knowledge and looking to the future, the strict implementation of insensitive social and economic policies confronts us with a reality on which humanity should be focusing all its energy, generosity and wisdom so as to enable all persons to enjoy a fundamental right: the right to adequate housing.

Bolivia is a country whose population is not showing marked growth because, regrettably, we have a very high infant-mortality rate, which is affected by the housing problem. Immediate forecasts would be more encouraging if our efforts and revenue were invested in specific programmes designed actively to tackle all the social problems that afflict us and thus permit global and harmonious development.

(Mrs. Ashton, Bolivia)

The growth in the population of Bolivia, the country's low level of development and the frequent economic crises we have suffered in recent years have had an impact on us and caused a scarcity of financial resources, a low per capita income level and, as a result, an extremely low capacity on the part of both State and financial agencies to promote plans for housing construction. This, along with the adverse effects on the incomes of families, which makes it impossible for them to purchase homes, has led to a situation in which there is a severe housing shortage.

This deficit is concentrated in the cities. The urban shortage of approximately 249,000 housing units and the rural shortage of some 18,000 break down into socio-economic sectors as follows: medium- and high-level income, 20 per cent; low-level income, 39 per cent; very low-level and subsistence income, 41 per cent.

At the same time the greatest proportion of the housing deficit of 80 per cent affects sectors which are unable to accumulate sufficient savings to meet their needs. Thanks to the great readiness of communities to take action at the local level and to participate in the building of their own habitat by providing labour, it has been possible to establish financing systems which meet the needs of all sectors on a basis of machinery involving building by the local population itself, guided by teams of professionals responsible for the design, guidance, administration and social promotion of projects until they have been completed.

From the interrelationship of the housing deficit by income level with monthly family expenditures and debt capacity according to social stratum, it has been deduced that with only 23 per cent of the investment required for housing construction we might well meet 41 per cent of the demand - namely that of the low and subsistence level income sector.

(Mrs. Ashton, Bolivia)

As a result the Bolivian State is resolved to tackle the problem systematically, devoting the greatest possible volume of economic and technical resources to the implementation of the national housing plan whose mainstays are the National Housing Fund and the National Housing Institute, but as recently set up under the Economic Revitalization Decree.

As a result of gradual growth and investments in local construction, and thanks to financing provided by the Emergency Social Fund of the Government of Bolivia, so far 29 housing projects have been completed, representing a total of 1,076 housing units throughout the national territory.

In this context, the Ministry of Urbanization and Housing in Bolivia, whose basic task it is to promote, regulate, control and supervise work on housing problems, is decentralizing its work by having projects carried out by private groups. In this way it is increasing its capacity to produce socially useful housing units and a greater number and wider spread of housing complexes.

To this end, with the technical and financial support of the United Nations, it has drawn up a local construction housing programme whose projects will serve as models for the future. In the initial phase, three pilot housing projects have been started in three characteristic regions of the country.

On the basis of the first experiences gained from these three projects, adequate financing has been obtained to launch other housing rehabilitation projects and meet the needs arising from certain critical situations - in particular a project to relocate a population made homeless by landslides.

The Bolivian population, particularly in the rural areas, has demonstrated a readiness to work together to cope with its problems. This has led to the pooling of efforts to obtain collective and individual benefits. Through organized local construction it has been possible to utilize the potential inherent in traditional

(Mrs. Ashton, Bolivia)

skills, which has achieved positive results not only in terms of solidarity but also because participating families have gained experience in organization and administration.

I would note here that it has been possible to obtain a relatively low total cost per square meter in the construction projects; the final costs will not be known until the programme has been completed. But it is anticipated that they will be the lowest costs thus far achieved in this field, and despite the cost restraint, target levels are being met and are being accepted by the population for whom these houses are intended.

The architectural design, which at the first stage was known as the basic unit, is generally some 40 to 45 square meters, which can subsequently be added to by the occupiers themselves. Thus it is a housing unit with a possibility of progressive growth.

The technology selected is generally based on the use mainly of locally obtained materials; in all cases, the soil of the area where such complexes are built has been the major raw material. At the same time, technology is being used to permit the local manufacture of components, and that has had a favourable impact on cost reduction, meaning, as it does, near self-sufficiency in the technology required for such construction. All these elements have helped to control and simplify the situation, since they have made organized local construction viable, thanks to the future occupiers' familiarity with the forms and methods used, which puts them in a position to add to their houses in the future.

(Mrs. Ashton, Bolivia)

Another interesting aspect worthy of mention at this point is that the institutional model selected has been truly successful both in terms of formulation and in terms of the execution of housing projects. It has been managed by the private sector through those directly concerned, that is to say professional and technical teams and the communities made up by the families for whom the houses are intended.

All this enables us to affirm that the successful initial experiences of the housing programme at the level of local construction in Bolivia have adequately prepared the ground for a systematic solution to the housing problem affecting the Bolivian population, especially the low-income sector, thanks to its remarkable tradition of local construction either through its own efforts or with community assistance.

On behalf of the Government of Bolivia, I wish to express gratitude to the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements for their contribution to the project BOL/84/001, which, as I described earlier, is yielding positive and promising results.

At the same time we would like to thank the Prime Minister and Government of Sri Lanka for their initiative in bringing this very vital issue to the attention of the United Nations. The home is the centre from which human life radiates, where every individual character is moulded and defined, ready to take its place in the collective persona. Therefore the State has the inescapable task of protecting, sheltering and promoting family and home life.

Life without a home, or without a roof, as the representative of Colombia has said, is an outrageous mutilation of the human individual. The home is the human individual's natural habitat. The right to a home is inherent in the human

(Mrs. Ashton, Bolivia)

condition. That is why the modern State, whatever its ideological orientation, has an undeniable responsibility to ensure that all its citizens have homes which meet as adequately as possible the needs of hygiene, health and comfort.

Life without a home is life without illusions and without hope. Thus the international community must commit itself to making systematic, sustained and co-ordinated efforts to put an end to the social tragedy of people without homes.

Mr. DING Yuanhong (China) (interpretation from Chinese): In 1982 the United Nations General Assembly decided, by its resolution 37/221, that 1987 should be designated International Year of Shelter for the Homeless. This reflects the great importance that all countries have attached to the question of human settlements and their resolve to seek a solution. It is the first time in history that the international community has tried to solve this problem by such international action as the designation of the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless.

I listened most attentively this morning to the statements by Prime Minister Premadasa of Sri Lanka, you, Sir, as President of the current General Assembly session, the Secretary-General and Mr. Stefan Staynov, Chairman of the tenth session of the Commission on Human Settlements. Those statements are sources of enlightenment for us. Here I should like to take the opportunity to pay my tribute to the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), which has done a great amount of work in calling international attention to housing questions and in preparing for the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless.

Housing is a basic need for human survival to which everyone is entitled. It is of great importance for the economic development and social stability of every country to find a solution to this problem. Among the 5 billion people in the world today, approximately 1 billion are homeless or live in extremely poor

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conditions. The housing problem is especially serious in the developing countries, although in some developed countries there also exist in varying degrees many urgent problems. The improvement of living conditions has become an arduous long-term task facing the Governments of various countries, especially the developing countries. Therefore, like population and the environment, human settlements is a major issue of universal concern.

The Chinese Government has always appreciated and supported the activities of the United Nations in connection with the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless. The Chinese Premier Zhao Ziyang wrote a letter to Prime Minister Premadasa of Sri Lanka in 1982 to support his initiative. My Government has made a financial contribution to the International Year in support of its activities at the international level. Furthermore, the Chinese National Committee for the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless has been established and is charged with co-ordinating the activities of the International Year in our country. The activities carried out include an issue of commemorative stamps, photographic exhibitions and international symposiums on the question of housing, in co-operation with the United Nations Centre on Human Settlements.

China is a developing country with a population of 1 billion. It is indeed an enormous task to solve the housing problem for 1 billion people. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China my Government has made great efforts to improve the living conditions of citizens in both urban and rural areas. In the past few years in particular my Government has substantially increased its investment in housing construction. For example, in 1985 housing investment by the State was nearly seven times that of 1978, and accounted for 8.3 per cent of the 1985 gross national product. During the eight years from 1978 to 1986 housing space in towns and cities increased by 974 million square metres, while that in

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rural areas increased by 4.8 billion square metres. The per capita housing space for city dwellers increased from 3.6 square metres to 6.3 square metres - up by 76.6 per cent. In order to solve the housing problem in a planned way, we conducted in 1985 the first nation-wide survey on housing conditions in our cities and towns and set the goal of basically achieving by the year 2000 an inexpensive and practical apartment for every household.

Our approach in seeking a solution to the housing problem is the following.

First, the Government treats housing as a priority in formulating national development strategy and provides various kinds of support for housing construction, such as providing land, building infrastructure facilities, rendering financial support, developing low-cost construction materials and so on.

(Mr. Ding Yuanhong, China)

Secondly, organizing people to solve their housing problem by their own efforts is one of the important activities in solving the housing problem of the country as a whole. Government investment alone is not enough; people, too, should be encouraged to invest in housing. At present, we in China, in addition to Government efforts to improve living conditions, also pay close attention to bringing various forces into play. In the past eight years or so urban residents in our country have constructed 123 million square metres of housing, and nearly 2 million households have solved their housing problem basically by relying on their own efforts. In recent years our 800 million rural inhabitants have built about 600 million square metres of housing yearly, mostly by their own investment.

Thirdly, housing policies need to be complemented by other policies. The practice of family planning and strict control of population growth, especially in urban areas, are conducive to alleviating housing shortages in cities and bear crucially on the solution of the housing problem itself. Our position in this respect is strictly to control the size of big cities, rationally develop middle-sized cities, and vigorously develop small cities and towns so as to avoid such problems as housing shortages caused by the excessive expansion of big cities.

Although China has achieved great success in housing construction, owing to a weak base the housing problem is far from being resolved and the average housing conditions of our people in cities and the countryside remain unsatisfactory. One quarter of the urban households are without adequate housing; many apartments and houses are rather poorly furnished and the environment of residential areas needs further improvement. To change all this, long and persistent efforts are required.

In order to attain our goal for the year 2000, we in China are learning from our past experiences and actively exploring effective ways and means of solving the

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housing problem by readjusting our housing policies and reforming our housing régime. In China, the key to the solution of the urban housing problem lies in the reform of the existing public housing régime, which is characterized by low rent and high subsidy, since the State assumes almost all the responsibility for providing housing to workers and Government employees. The principal objective of this reform is to commercialize housing, thus gradually moving from allocation of housing to purchase of housing. Public housing will enter the commercial market as a commodity, that people can purchase or rent. This will further encourage urban inhabitants to solve their housing problem. This reform will be introduced across the country in a phased manner, taking into consideration local conditions and adopting schemes suitable to them. With a view to improving our efforts to solve the housing problem, we are ready to learn from the experiences of other countries and establish co-operation and exchanges of views with them.

As the housing problem is a global one, its solution requires that the members of the international community show their concern and join their forces. True, the developing countries should seek ways and means to make fuller use of the indigenous resources and seek answers suitable to their own realities. The developed countries, on the other hand, have a responsibility to render financial and technological assistance to the developing countries and contribute to their efforts in solving the housing problem.

The United Nations Centre for Human Settlements has played a positive role in promoting international co-operation, training personnel, organizing exchanges of technology, experience and information in the field of human settlements, and helping to focus the attention of Governments and the international community on the housing problem. It is our hope that the work of the Centre will be further strengthened and enjoy increased support and assistance from all quarters.

(Mr. Armstrong, New Zealand)

Mr. ARMSTRONG (New Zealand): New Zealand joins with other Members of the United Nations community of nations in acknowledging the importance and the contribution of the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless. Perhaps the most relevant milestone of this year was 11 July, the day on which the world's population was calculated to have topped the 5 billion mark. Never before has the need for shelter been so great. We are all only too well aware of the growing numbers of people throughout the world who do not have adequate shelter. Together with food, health care and education, shelter, or housing, is one of the most fundamental requirements for mankind's survival. It is therefore fitting that this Organization has focused the attention of its Members and the international community on the issue of shelter for the homeless.

For each of us here the situation confronting our own people differs. Some of us come from countries with rapidly expanding populations and a major drift from rural to urban areas. The consequent pressure for city housing is immense. Others face stagnant, even declining, population levels, with the increasing age of many citizens placing different pressures on housing requirements. The diversity of housing needs has been recognized within the programmes of the International Year. Those responsible for its co-ordination are to be congratulated.

From the outset, when the idea of an International Year of Shelter for the Homeless was mooted at the 1984 Gabon Conference of the Commission on Human Settlements, New Zealand has been a strong supporter. During the year we have given particular emphasis and assistance to developments in the neighbouring developing countries of the South Pacific region as well as in New Zealand itself. In the months preceding the proclamation of the International Year, New Zealand co-sponsored the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless South Pacific

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(Mr. Armstrong, New Zealand)

Regional Workshop on Housing, held at Lae, in Papua New Guinea, and we have followed up on its conclusions.

Subsequently, our activities have focused also on implementing the principles of the International Year within New Zealand.

(Mr. Armstrong, New Zealand)

Our formal participation in the Year started on World Habitat Day 1986 with the designation by the Prime Minister of the New Zealand Housing Corporation as the national focal point for the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless. Through the efforts of this government agency and the New Zealand community as a whole, the past year has seen significant movement in New Zealand towards the objectives embodied in the International Year. Particular emphasis has been given to the needs of low-income and non-house-owner categories.

New Zealand has long demonstrated a firm commitment to the provision of adequate housing for all its people through both private and government-sector programmes. This year, for example, marks the fiftieth anniversary of the State housing programme, which has provided low-cost rental housing for lower income and other specific groups in the community. Apart from this and other continuing government-funded programmes, the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless programme of activities in New Zealand has helped to focus attention on other equally significant but diverse methods of providing shelter for the homeless.

In this respect I wish to refer briefly to one International Year of Shelter for the Homeless demonstration project undertaken in New Zealand. Much of the land of the indigenous people of New Zealand, the Maori, is held on a communal rather than an individual basis, making it a complex matter for individual title of land to be proved as the basis for raising home building finance. In the remote Maori rural community of Hiruharama in the North Island of New Zealand, a special International Year of Shelter for the Homeless project is now under way. A number of families originally from the area indicated a strong wish to return to their ancestral land. Most of these families met the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements definition of homelessness. The others all had strong traditional ties

(Mr. Armstrong, New Zealand)

to this land. Working with the Housing Corporation and other local people, these families have assisted in the construction of service facilities for Hiruharama and are fully involved in the assembly of their individual homes. Plans for the project are to be completed two weeks from today, on 26 October.

The concept of shelter for the homeless means different things in different places. But the homeless, unfortunately, exist everywhere in developed and developing countries. It is important that the whole community be involved in dealing with this daily reality. In New Zealand and in our region the International Year has successfully helped us to focus afresh on this special area of need.

Mr. WIRYONO (Indonesia): As we gather here in observance of the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless, it is not only timely but also imperative that the international community seriously address the growing spectre of the homeless and the critical issues of human settlement. It is also time that action at both the national and international levels be intensified. The worsening situation demands this if an irreversible global crisis is to be averted. Notwithstanding the 64 recommendations of the Vancouver Declaration in 1976, the problems of sheltering the poor, homeless and disadvantaged have mushroomed by 1987.

Over 1 billion people, that is one fifth of the world's population, now live and die in substandard shelter or in no shelter at all. Many also die each year of malnutrition and other shelter-related causes. Currently an estimated 50 to 80 per cent of the inhabitants of cities in the developing world live in slums, shanty towns, squatter settlements and on the streets, devoid of safe drinking water and sanitary conditions, exposed to malnutrition, disease and high crime

(Mr. Wiryono, Indonesia)

rates and deprived of education and employment opportunities. More ominously, most of them are children - the future of our respective nations - growing up outcasts on the fringes of our societies, and particularly vulnerable. Moreover, such urban slums are multiplying at double the rate of the cities they surround. The problem, which is not confined to urban centres or even to the developing countries, is global and threatens to overwhelm the positive effects of urbanization and development. Obviously, as succinctly pointed out by the Secretary-General on World Habitat Day this year, it is ironic and intolerable that such conditions persist in an age which has brought great improvement in living standards and witnessed unprecedented advances in science, technology and culture.

In meeting this challenge the United Nations role has steadily grown since its inception in 1945. With the Vancouver Declaration at the 1976 Conference on Human Settlement and the subsequent plans of action, including that for the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless 1986-1987, the United Nations has successfully placed the issue on the international agenda. But such measures have yet to contain the deteriorating problem as of this date. Indeed, the laudable plan of action for the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless, which encourages States to adopt innovative approaches towards ameliorating the homeless problem for some of the poor by 1987, is not necessarily assured. And the formulation and implementation of the proposed new policy measures with effective international support as integral parts of their development plans up to the year 2000 could fall far short of success if the requisite commitment for success is wanting. It is thus encouraging that at the Commission's tenth session in Nairobi last April a new agenda was launched to foster greater implementation and action. It provides an "enabling strategy" to mobilize a country's human, material and financial resources

(Mr. Wiryono, Indonesia)

to meet its development goals. A most visible, and indeed already successful, initiative has been that of the pilot projects in housing at the country level.

Indonesia, as one of the most densely populated areas in the world, has always given the solution of human settlements problems its utmost attention. Together with food and clothing, housing comes at the very top of our national development priorities. With the appointment of the Minister of State for Human Settlements in 1978, a more comprehensive approach has been launched. One of the most prominent components of this undertaking has been that of the Kampung - or community - Improvement Programme. It is a national programme for upgrading unplanned and unserviced settlements throughout the country. Other projects, such as low-cost housing, urban renewal, rural development and financing facilities for the low-income level segment, also demonstrate Indonesia's commitment to the objectives of the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless. More directly, within the framework of the International Year, Indonesia has initiated a number of important activities. At the national level, various workshops, exhibitions and competitions with human settlements themes have been held. And at the international level, Indonesia is to organize, inter alia, the following international seminars to discuss the themes of housing and human settlements in the national economy, women's role in human settlements management, and the formulation of a shelter strategy.

(Mr. Wiryono, Indonesia)

In conclusion, let me reaffirm Indonesia's long-standing attachment to human settlement development and its commitment to the objectives of the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless by sharing with the Assembly its following national experiences.

First, it is our considered view that the advancement of human settlement would best be served by making it an integral part of national development strategies. Secondly, human settlements strategies should reflect their essentially multidimensional character and give primary attention to the conditions and needs of the lowest-income segments of society. Thirdly, supportive policies are essential for facilitating the possession of land, the provision of building materials, the utilization of appropriate technology and adequate arrangements for financing. Fourthly, the active employment and participation of the various potentials available in the society should be mobilized in support of human settlement development. Fifthly, national efforts should be matched by commensurate international support, and in this regard the role of the United Nations, particularly the Habitat Centre, should be strengthened.

Finally, a home is more than just a shelter. It is the smallest unit of the human environment, a place to raise a family and to help develop people to become dignified and productive members of the human society. Indeed, access to adequate shelter is a fundamental human right.

Mr. TSHIPINARE (Botswana): It gives me great pleasure to have been accorded the opportunity to make a brief statement to the Assembly on Botswana's efforts in the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless. My delegation warmly welcomes this golden opportunity and extends hearty congratulations to the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, Mr. Premadasa, on whose initiative 1987 was designated International Year of Shelter for the Homeless.

(Mr. Tshipinare, Botswana)

Prime Minister Premadasa's presence here today is an authoritative and practical demonstration of his personal commitment and, indeed, that of his Government to the provision of proper and adequate shelter, especially for the poor and the disadvantaged.

Now that we are approaching the dusk of the Year, this meeting could not have been held at a better time. The Year has no doubt served the purpose for which it was intended. As Prime Minister Premadasa put it to the Assembly in September 1980, a year devoted to the problem of the homeless would contribute in no small measure to focusing attention on the need to provide better shelter for the poor and would be "an investment in mankind" (A/35/PV.14, p. 18-20).

In Botswana, and I believe in many other countries as well, the International Year has generated a great deal of momentum and led to an increased awareness of the shelter needs of the poor and the disadvantaged. It has also successfully highlighted the problems and the pressing need for the Government, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and individuals to join hands in addressing them.

Botswana fully recognizes the importance of and the need to integrate human settlements planning and development with the general social and economic development process. For the very first time in our country's development history, the current National Development Plan 1985-1991, plan 6, has a chapter which is solely devoted to housing. This alone reflects the increasing importance which the Government of Botswana attaches to the shelter and human settlements sector as a crucial component of the social and economic development process.

Consistent with our support for the objectives and principles of the International Year, we have formulated and adopted a national housing policy which gives priority to addressing the housing needs of low-income households. Within

(Mr. Tshipinare, Botswana)

the framework of this policy, some legislative, organizational and financial measures aimed at assisting low-income households in their efforts to construct or improve their housing are being vigorously pursued. Some of the measures being taken include the following: improvement of the institutional framework for housing delivery; the stepping-up of the housing construction programmes of the Botswana Housing Corporation; the stepping-up of extension staff housing construction programmes; encouragement of the use of and research into local building materials; amendment of the Building Societies Act to enable the societies to lend for site and service and rural households; investigation of ways and means of extending a modified version of the current urban site and service scheme to the rural areas; the introduction of a 99-year lease on tribal land to enable rural households to mortgage their properties; investigation of new forms of affordable housing finance; revision of development control codes and building regulations; and intensification of training programmes for officials involved in the planning and implementation of shelter and human settlements programmes.

Among the International Year projects is the Francistown phase IV infrastructure and housing project, comprising over 6,000 plots, which is funded jointly by the Botswana Government and the United States Agency for International Development. There is also the Woodhall II site and service and community facilities project, which is jointly funded by the Botswana Government and the British Government.

We are also implementing site and service schemes in each of our main urban centres, in conformity with the International Year objectives. Through these schemes, low-income households are able to build housing for themselves.

Taking advantage of the opportunity offered by the International Year, we also convened a National Conference on Housing during the week of 6-10 July this year.

(Mr. Tshipinare, Botswana)

The Conference, which was intended to provide a forum for an exchange of views and ideas on the future improvement of our shelter policies and programmes, was attended by representatives from both the public and the private sector, including non-governmental organizations.

In addition to these efforts, the Government has recently authorized the launching of an accelerated land-servicing and housing construction programme over the next five years, at an estimated cost of p500 million pula - approximately \$US 300 million.

The programme is planned to tackle aggressively the acute shortage of serviced land and housing nationally, but taking into account particularly the seriousness of this problem in the urban areas, especially our capital city, Gaborone. The primary objective of the special programme is to adopt suitable innovations, strategies, technologies and implementation methods to deal effectively with the critical shortage of serviced land required by prospective investors and the different types of houses required by all income groups.

This ambitious programme is the result of extensive consultations, which have been carried out by the Government both locally and abroad over the past two years as part of the International Year drive. The programme also complements the accelerated rural housing construction programme launched towards the end of last year and now in course of implementation. The construction of some 927 housing units for extension workers in various districts throughout the country is being undertaken as part of this programme.

We have also come to the realization that public-sector financial resources are really too limited to make a dent in the problem of shortage of shelter. As a

(Mr. Tshipinare, Botswana)

result of this realization, we are, as part of the International Year effort, initiating moves aimed at encouraging more private-sector involvement in shelter provision.

One significant innovation in this respect is that, although public-sector agencies will continue to play a leading role in the accelerated land-servicing and housing construction programme, provision will also be made for more active participation by private-sector organizations and households. This will be done to mobilize the private-sector resources and to promote income-generation and employment-creation in both rural and urban areas.

Allow me to reiterate that the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless is not intended to be an end in itself. It is, instead, intended to mark a crucial transition period for countries to review their shelter and settlement policies, priorities and prospects, both during and after 1987, and to develop new policies and strategies for the improvement of the housing and living conditions of the poor and the disadvantaged.

(Mr. Tshipinare, Botswana)

It is therefore important for all of us to ensure that the momentum gained from the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless is not allowed to peter out.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to place on record its appreciation of the technical assistance and support which Botswana continues to receive from the United Nations through Habitat in the field of human settlements, particularly with respect to training, information and documentation, and also more recently with respect to activities relating to the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless.

We should like to assure the Executive Director of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements, Mr. Ramachandran, and his staff of our confidence and continued support in their endeavours. We are hopeful that the commendable work already accomplished by the Centre will be maintained and intensified for the benefit of the Member States and the international community as a whole. As a gesture of Botswana's confidence in and appreciation of the good work of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements, we contributed \$3,600 to the Habitat Foundation this 1987-1988 fiscal year, specifically for activities related to the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless.

Mr. SUMAIDA (Iraq) (interpretation from Arabic): On behalf of the Iraqi delegation it gives me pleasure to declare our support and solidarity in celebrating this solemn occasion and state that the Iraqi Government and people support the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless. We hope that this Year will augur well for the provision of adequate shelter for millions of human beings who are in need of housing, especially at such a short remove from the end of this century of opulence, progress and technological achievement.

The Government of Iraq has made it its priority to promote the well-being of

(Mr. Sumaida, Iraq)

the Iraqi citizen and improve the social and economic environment of the populace. Focus has shifted from the mere building of housing units for the family to the building of such units with the purpose of raising better generations.

The Government of Iraq, in line with the directives and principles of the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party, under the leadership of President Saddam Hussein, has considered housing one of its top priorities, formulated housing policies capable of dealing effectively with problems in that area and allocated the necessary financial resources for implementing such policies through careful planning and programming. We have carried out comprehensive studies which would enable the Housing and Reconstruction Ministry to address the problem of housing in Iraq, identify our needs from the present to the year 2000, and develop plans and programmes to cope with rural and urban housing problems in line with the Iraqi overall housing plan, which was formulated on the basis of housing trends in Iraqi society. We have also made urban and rural surveys and studies covering construction materials, contracts, housing patterns, and the required housing legislation. All of those studies and surveys have been revised and amended where necessary, and have formed the basis of our housing policy.

The Government has undertaken integrated housing projects covering the entire area of Iraq. Even under the circumstance arising from the war waged against Iraq by the Iranian régime, the total number of projects implemented by the Housing and Reconstruction Ministry, from 1980 to 1986, is six times the number of projects carried out before the war. The Government has sought to help solve the housing problem by encouraging private sector participation through land distribution at token prices, financing of the private sector by the real estate bank, and model designs for providing adequate housing to all citizens. Integrated housing standards have been developed and housing complexes have been modernized to meet

(Mr. Sumaida, Iraq)

adequate housing standards. Iraq's needs for construction materials have been studied along with ways and means to develop factories and the promotion of co-operative housing ultimately to provide decent shelter for all citizens.

Finally, I should like to seize this opportunity to express, on behalf of the Iraqi delegation, our deep appreciation of the efforts made in the preparation of this occasion, with the hope that this International Year will provide yet another opportunity for all nations to co-operate among themselves and with the United Nations system in a joint effort to achieve the desired goals.

Mr. MORAGA (Chile) (interpretation from Spanish): The problem of shelter, seen from an overall perspective, is a fundamental right which the whole world is striving to achieve. The fact that we are speaking today in this Assembly is additional evidence of the enormous importance the international community attaches to providing a roof over the head of each human being who, by nature weak and unprotected, has a right to demand as much from his fellow beings.

Shelter is something both material and immaterial. It is material because it is made up of scarce costly physical components within which groups of individuals and essentially families have to withdraw from the fury of the elements. It is immaterial because it forms a psychological context that makes it possible for that basic unit of human society to develop, operating as a primary centre of thought and the transmission of culture.

For this very reason, when we speak of proper shelter, we affirm our respect for the family, for the healthy and sound upbringing of children and for guaranteeing rest and protection for the elderly. When we speak of shelter we mean allowing each worker to erect a symbol and to espouse a noble cause for which he can struggle. Since the dawn of man's existence, the instinctive quest for refuge has come to be the highest expression of the preservation of the species.

(Mr. Moraga, Chile)

It was in that primitive but safe environment that man was first able to develop his intelligence among his peers, to govern his instincts and reactions, to carry on his activities and to hand down his knowledge.

Shelter is an indication of culture, a better one than any ideology that might give a partial interpretation of the human situation. But, of course, we are not saying anything new if we state here that the ideal objective that mankind has set itself is still far from having been entirely fulfilled. First of all, even a superficial survey of the human condition shows us the terrible deficiency, particularly in housing, that still afflicts the human race.

From the basic concept of shelter, on the other hand, to the most elaborate type of housing, including the environmental and psychological components that make it truly habitable, there are various stages, and some of them have not even been entered. There are many millions of our fellow humans who are suffering the rigours of nature; they are an easy prey to sickness, the victims of neglect that is a source of social tension and undermines peace and understanding.

Of course, action aimed at finding a solution to this overwhelming problem cannot be brought to a halt, nor can we absolved from persisting in it, because it is nature itself which, with implacable rigour and frequency, makes all our efforts to build decent housing such a terrible struggle. Earthquakes and floods have certainly brought the image of my country before the public very often as the subject of world news. But the upheavals of the young and unstable land on which our nation has made its home have not led to paralysis. On the contrary, the tragic cycle of seismic events that have from time to time afflicted us during the period even before Chile became a country and up to the present time have served as a stimulus to us to organize ourselves and take as our permanent goal the constant

(Mr. Moraga, Chile)

rehabilitation of those whom we have, with such effort, managed to raise from the ground.

Nature itself, which so often causes upheavals and punishes us, has created in the mind of the average Chilean a basic anxiety over the question of housing. The Government of Chile, convinced of the overwhelming importance of this right, devotes a large part of its social activities to solving the problem of the homeless.

Our Ministry of Housing and Urbanism has as its essential task the monitoring of housing and urban-development policies that it formulates at the national, regional and local levels. Incentives are given for active participation by the various national sectors in the quest for solutions to the problem of housing, in the context of State subsidies which are granted equally to the various regions of our country.

The housing policy put into practice in Chile defines housing as a commodity that is traded on the open market, that requires full efforts and savings by families and that promotes access to private property as a form of exercising freedom and as a reward for the responsibility that that exercise entails.

However, the State recognizes that not all families are in a position to acquire their own homes through their own efforts and sacrifices. Hence, as an extension of the principle of granting subsidies, we have set ourselves the task of solving the problem of the homeless by making it possible for families to acquire their own homes.

Our social action in this area of Chilean national life covers a whole policy of housing that includes systems of applications for housing, subsidies for housing, savings, financing and rural subsidies. In that context, during the present year housing subsidy entitlements were ended. They had been granted on

(Mr. Moraga, Chile)

more than 100,000 occasions. This shows that, through the joint efforts of families, the State and the private sector - which takes an active part in this field - that many families have been able to solve their housing problems and have become the owners of new homes.

As an extension of our housing activities, we have supervised the building this year of more than 30,469 homes, and more than 17,000 housing subsidy entitlements have been paid out. That is how Chile has celebrated the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless.

Chile's Ministry of National Resources has supported population plans in significant areas. A system of housing subsidies has been put into operation, aimed at settlements in regions that deserve particular attention from our authorities.

The housing policy of the Government of Chile seeks to improve the standard of living of the people, to solve the whole problem of the homeless by giving preferential treatment to the neediest sectors and building the greatest number of homes with the resources that the country can devote to that purpose. Impartiality and non-discrimination are thus the hallmarks of Chile's housing policy.

Chile supports the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless by seeking to create in our own case a country of respectable homeowners and by having the State intervene to subsidize the poorest families. That is supported by the various systems which I have mentioned briefly and which are components of the sustained social action that we plan to continue in the future.

Mr. AGATHOCLEOUS (Cyprus): On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus, I should like to express our deep appreciation to the Government of Sri Lanka for its initiative in bringing the problem of the homeless before the thirty-fifth session of the General Assembly, in 1980. As a result of that

(Mr. Agathocleous, Cyprus)

praiseworthy effort, the Assembly designated 1987 as the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless. Subsequently, through Habitat's efforts and the informative reports before the tenth session of the Commission on Human Settlements, a global awareness has arisen of the current alarming situation in housing and the problem of the homeless, the severely underhoused and the millions of persons who lack access to basic amenities and services. It is, however, evident that, despite the efforts of Governments at the national and local levels and of international organizations, more than 1 billion people find themselves either completely without shelter or living in appalling housing conditions.

(Mr. Agathocleous, Cyprus)

We are fully aware of the gravity and complexity of the shelter problem. In most countries the housing shortage has its main roots in poverty, which is further aggravated by the scarcity of resources and structures both now and for the foreseeable future. This problem is more severe in the developing countries where the homeless constitute one third of the population.

The challenge facing developing countries is to secure a substantial increase in the capacity and productivity of the public and private sectors to produce decent shelter and services on a scale commensurate with the basic needs of, and at costs affordable by, the poor and to increase the affordability levels of the poor through income-generating activities and innovative finance schemes. The human element must also be taken into consideration. The preparation of an overall development strategy and a wisely planned shelter programme, as well as an effective co-ordination of all the sectoral inputs in shelter and services is an essential prerequisite to meet successfully the challenge of housing the homeless. We therefore welcome the proposal for a global strategy for shelter to the year 2000.

While poverty is the main root of the problem of the homeless there are also other causes that are responsible for the creation of the homeless, such as natural disasters and man-made disasters and destruction. In my country, for example, as everybody is aware, the problem of the homeless has been generated by the Turkish invasion of 37 per cent of our territory in 1974. That resulted in one third of our population being made homeless refugees in their own country, a situation that has been denounced repeatedly by the United Nations General Assembly.

Our experience in tackling this serious problem might be incisive. To alleviate the suffering of 200,000 displaced persons the Cyprus Government took prompt action in order to provide relief on a co-ordinated basis. As a first step

(Mr. Agathocleous, Cyprus)

a Special Relief Fund was established with the aim of studying the basic needs of displaced persons, providing them with the essential means and services and activating idle manpower.

Soon after the invasion the Government's immediate target was both to cater for the subsistence of the displaced persons and to provide as quickly as possible temporary accommodation for the entire expelled population. The rapid and unprecedented upsurge in the number of homeless families necessitated the development of new concepts regarding the participation of the public sector in the housing market. In essence the nature of the Cyprus Government's philosophy underlying the public sector's involvement in housing was to provide low-cost houses for the homeless. In this respect it embarked on two main categories of low-cost housing programmes: first, low-cost, comprehensively designed housing estates suitable both for the temporary accommodation of the displaced families and for future use as housing estates for low-income families; secondly, self-help housing for the benefit of people who have been rendered homeless and who desire to build - and are able to provide labour for building - standardized units according to plans provided by the Government. Under this scheme the Government provides serviced building plots in approved areas and grants-in-aid. The self-help scheme has been expanded to cover the category of displaced persons who own a site and want to build their own house.

The policy objective of my Government is that every family should have the opportunity to live in decent housing under adequate social and human conditions. For us, the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless is neither the beginning nor the end of our efforts in coming to grips with this all-important problem. It is rather a year of reconfirmation of our commitment to continue our efforts concerning the further improvement in the quality of life for all people,

(Mr. Agathocleous, Cyprus)

particularly the most deprived. All concerted international efforts in this regard deserve and will meet with our support.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Russian): Before calling on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply, may I remind members that, in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and 5 minutes for the second and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. ALPTUNA (Turkey): We are here today in the plenary meeting of the General Assembly to observe the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless. We are however dismayed to see that the Greek Cypriot delegation exploited this occasion once more to direct their incorrect accusations towards my country. As the authorities of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus will provide delegations with the necessary information on Greek Cypriot allegations I shall refrain from getting into the details. However, I should like to conclude my statement by briefly referring to two reports, namely, the Ortega report dated 1964, and the United Press International (UPI) report dated 24 February 1976 in order to shed some light on the sincerity of Greek Cypriot allegations.

A survey of damaged Turkish Cypriot property was carried out by the United Nations Peace-keeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) in 1964 and it is embodied in a report known after the name of its author, Mr. Ortega, as the Ortega report. Mr. Ortega states in his report that his survey deals only with housing destruction in 101 Turkish villages caused by the Greek Cypriot side. Each village was photographed from the air. Nearly 30,000 Turkish Cypriots fled from these villages and lived in tragic circumstances. All in all 465 Turkish Cypriot village houses were found to be totally destroyed and 2,000 Turkish Cypriot houses looted. For 11 years Turkish Cypriots were unable to return to their houses in all these

(Mr. Alptuna, Turkey)

villages which had become uninhabitable through the passage of time. All Turkish Cypriot houses in 103 villages became a total loss. In the rest of the Turkish Cypriot villages, which were vacated in 1974, Greek Cypriots took over the houses, shops and so on. I turn to the UPI report dated 1974. In its description of the visit of President Carter's Special Envoy, Mr. Clifford, to the so-called refugee camp in southern Cyprus, UPI described the behaviour of the Greek Cypriot participants who staged "sobbing and wailing" acts and concluded as follows:

"She and the others waited as Mr. Clifford walked past and climbed into a limousine to leave. Then, her tears drying instantly, she smiled and waved at President Carter's envoy before rejoining the other women on a government bus that took them home."

If there are today any Greek Cypriots without adequate housing, the responsibility for this rests solely on the Greek Cypriot leadership.

Mr. AGATHOCLEOUS (Cyprus): Unlike the representative of Turkey, I shall respect this solemn day. I shall therefore not speak about the allegations made by the Turkish representative, but simply ask this question: does he mean that there are no displaced persons in Cyprus? That is exactly what I mentioned. The General Assembly resolutions speak for themselves.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Russian): I declare closed the observance of the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless.

The meeting rose at 7 p.m.