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**PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR THE  
UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE  
ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS  
(HABITAT II)**

Third session  
New York  
5 - 16 February 1996  
Item 3 of the provisional agenda  
Preparation for the Conference

**REPORT ON THE DUBAI INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON BEST PRACTICES  
IN IMPROVING THE LIVING ENVIRONMENT**

*Note by the Secretariat*

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## I. ATTENDANCE

1. The Dubai International Conference for Habitat II on Best Practices in Improving the Living Environment brought together over 800 delegates from governments, local authorities, United Nations Agencies, international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), professional associations and the private sector, from 19 to 22 November 1995.
2. The following local authority associations were present: G4+ Associations of Local Authorities; International Union of Local Authorities (IULA); United Towns Organization (UTO); Arab Towns Organization (ATO); Union des Villes Africaines (UVA); CityNet; World Association of Metropolises (Metropolis); International Council on Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI); Association of Local Authorities of the Gambia; and Association of Local Authorities of the United Kingdom.
3. In addition to the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) were present. The following specialized agencies were also present: United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO); World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO); and World Meteorological Organization (WMO).
4. Over fifty international, regional and national non-governmental organizations were present.

## II. ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

### A. *Best Practices presented*

5. The following 29 Best Practices documented for the Habitat II Conference were presented:
  - Leicester: Environment City, Leicester, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
  - Integrated Urban Management, Dubai, United Arab Emirates
  - The Government Housing Bank, Thailand
  - Furnished Hostels in the *Ile de France*, France
  - National Association of Colombian "Recicladores", Colombia
  - Community-Based Refuse Collection and Recycling, Municipality of Rufisque, Senegal
  - Revitalizing Metro-Toronto's Mainstreets, Toronto, Canada
  - Leveraging Public and Private Sector Resources for Housing, Hong Kong
  - Providing Security of Tenure for the Poor, Municipality of Belo Horizonte, Brazil
  - Urban Management of Structural Transformation, Duisburg, Germany
  - Urban Renewal in Vienna, Austria
  - The Kampung Improvement Programme, Indonesia
  - City Management in Tilburg, Germany
  - Partnerships for Poverty Alleviation in Cebu City, Philippines
  - Urban Basic Services for the Poor (UBSP), India
  - Build Together: National Housing Programme of Namibia
  - Improving Living Environments Through Comprehensive Local Policy, Gothenburg, Sweden
  - Tehran's Action Plans for Improving the Living Environment, Iran
  - The Sustainable Dar es Salaam Project, United Republic of Tanzania
  - Hamilton-Wentworth's Sustainable Community, Canada
  - Serviced Land Project, Cape Town, South Africa
  - The Small and Micro Enterprises Project, Alexandria Businessmen's Association, Egypt
  - Post-Disaster Reconstruction and Rehabilitation in Anhui, China
  - Sustainable Communities, Chattanooga, Tennessee, United States of America
  - A National NGO: The Swedish Union of Tenants, Sweden
  - Small Format Aerial Photography for Planning, Lao People's Democratic Republic
  - Urban Reconstruction of a War-Torn City Centre, Beirut, Lebanon
  - Housing Settlement Project in Shanghai, China
  - Improving Living Environments for Low-Income Households in Saudi Arabia.

*B. Organization of work and discussions*

6. The Conference was organized into an opening session, four plenary sessions, three parallel sessions, several special sessions and an exhibition, and a concluding session.
7. The Opening Session started with a welcome statement by H. H. Sheikh Hamdan Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Deputy Ruler of Dubai and Chairman of Dubai Municipality, on behalf of H. H. Sheikh Maktoum Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President, Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Ruler of Dubai. It was followed by statements by H.E. Ms. Gorel Thurdin, Deputy Speaker of the Swedish Parliament; H.E. Professor Klaus Toepfer, Minister for Housing, Construction and Physical Planning, the Federal Republic of Germany; and a keynote address by Dr. Wally N'Dow, Secretary-General, United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II). Then, H.H. Sheikh Al Maktoum opened the exhibition entitled "Towards Better Development".
8. Plenary Session I, "Improving Effectiveness and Efficiency", was chaired by H.E. Prof. Klaus Toepfer, Minister for Housing, Construction and Physical Planning, Federal Republic of Germany, and discussed the following case studies: Environmental City of Leicester, UK; Integrated Urban Management, Dubai, UAE; and the Government Housing Bank, Thailand.
9. Plenary Session II, "Strengthening Civic Society", was chaired by Mr. Ferry Sonnevile, World President, International Real Estate Federation (FIABCI), and discussed the following cases: Furnished Hostels in the *Ile de France*; National Association of Colombian "Recicladores"; Community-Based Refuse Collection and Recycling, Municipality of Rufisque, Senegal; and, Revitalizing Metro-Toronto's Mainstreets, Toronto, Canada.
10. Plenary Session III, "Towards Sustainable Land-Use Housing and Services", was chaired by Ms. Beate Weber, Lady Mayor of Heidelberg, and discussed the following case studies: Leveraging Public and Private Sector Resources for Housing, Hong Kong; Providing Security of Tenure for the Poor, Municipality of Belo Horizonte, Brazil; Urban Management of Structural Transformation, Duisburg, Germany; Urban Renewal in Vienna, Austria; and, the Kampung Improvement Programme, Indonesia.
11. Parallel Session I, "Partnerships with People", was co-chaired over two days; Mr. Thierno Birahim Ndao, Mayor of Kaffrine, Senegal, chaired the first session; and H.E. Mr. James E. Wapakhabulo, Minister Without Portfolio of Uganda, chaired the repeat session. The Best Practices discussed included: City Management in Tilburg, Germany; Partnerships for Poverty Alleviation in Cebu City, Philippines; Urban Basic Services for the Poor (UBSP), India; and Build Together: the National Housing Programme of Namibia.
12. Parallel Session II, "Partnerships for the Environment", was co-chaired over two days; Mr. Andrew Horgan, Secretary-General of the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA), chaired the first session; and Mr. Paul Bongers, Director, Local Government International Bureau of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, representing the G4+ Steering Committee, chaired the repeat session. The Best Practices discussed included: Improving Living Environments Through Comprehensive Local Policy, Gothenburg, Sweden; Tehran's Action Plans for Improving the Living Environment, Iran; The Sustainable Dar es Salaam Project, United Republic of Tanzania; and Hamilton-Wentworth's Sustainable Community, Canada.
13. Parallel Session III, "Special Presentations", was co-chaired over two days; H.E. Ms. G. Thurdin, Deputy Speaker of the Swedish Parliament, chaired the first session; and H.E. Mrs. Pamela Mboya, Permanent Representative of Kenya to UNCHS (Habitat), chaired the repeat session. The Best Practices discussed included: Serviced Land Project, Cape Town, South Africa; the Small and Micro Enterprises Project, Alexandria Businessmen's Association, Egypt; Post-Disaster Reconstruction and Rehabilitation in Anhui, China; Sustainable Communities, Chattanooga, Tennessee, United States of America; Improving Living Environments for Low-Income Households in Saudi Arabia; and the Swedish Union of Tenants, Sweden.
14. A special presentation on Chinese cities was organized on Day Three. Two presentations were made of the Habitat Global Best Practices Database and electronic catalogue.
15. An exposition was held throughout the Conference including exhibitions from China; the Dubai Municipality; India; Kenya; Lebanon; the Netherlands; the City of Tilburg; the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and UNCHS (Habitat).
16. The Concluding Session, "Transferring Knowledge, Know-How and Expertise Through Best Practices", was

chaired by Mr. Jaime Ravinet, Mayor of Santiago de Chile. Ms. Outi Berghall from the Finnish National Committee for Habitat II made a presentation on the exchange of Best Practices at the national level. A representative of the Group 4+ Associations of Local Authorities made a presentation on decentralized cooperation and the transfer of good practice. A panel discussion followed including representatives from the Group 4+ Associations of Local Authorities, ICLEI, Mega-Cities Inc., the University of Seattle, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UNCHS (Habitat).

### III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

17. The Conference recommended to the Preparatory Committee and the "City Summit" that the following considerations be added to complement the already adopted criteria of tangible impact, partnerships and sustainability for selection of those Best Practices worthy of global dissemination:

- a/ leadership in inspiring action and change, including change in public policy;
- b/ promotion of accountability and transparency;
- c/ empowerment of people, neighbourhoods and communities and incorporation of their contributions;
- d/ acceptance of, and responsiveness to, social and cultural diversity;
- e/ potential for transferability, adaptability and replicability;
- f/ appropriateness to local conditions and levels of development; and
- g/ promotion of social equality and equity.

18. Additional consideration was also given to strengthening the unified reporting format to enhance dissemination of Best Practices by:

- a/ ready and user-friendly access in all the major languages to concise summary information outlining the essential elements and giving contact details for follow-up inquiries;
- b/ formation of international networks to assess innovation, creativity and transferability of practices at various levels of development;
- c/ establishment, with the international associations of local authorities and other stakeholders, of national and regional focal points to advise on the usefulness and on-going refinement of the system;
- d/ formation of international networks to assess the extent to which participatory processes are used, and diverse interests and needs, particularly those related to gender differences, are assessed; and
- e/ development and use of indicators for participatory planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, disaggregated by gender and age.

19. The steps taken by UNCHS regarding the establishment of a global electronic catalogue on Best Practices were welcomed. Its formats include the Internet, CD-ROM, diskette and the print medium.

20. All governments, local authorities and their associations, United Nations agencies, NGOs, CBOs, professional associations and the private sector were encouraged to work towards a common reporting format to greatly enhance and facilitate the transfer of information, experience and expertise to their respective end-users. These same organizations were also encouraged to explore mechanisms for compilation, systemic analysis and assessment of Best Practices as an integral part of the follow-up process beyond the Habitat II Conference.

### IV. OTHER ACTIONS TAKEN

21. The Dubai Municipality announced the establishment of the Dubai Award for Best Practices which will be administered in collaboration with UNCHS (Habitat) for an annual amount of US\$ 150,000.

22. The Dubai Declaration (see Annex) was adopted and UNCHS (Habitat) was requested to present it as a part of the official events of the Habitat II Conference at Istanbul.

*Annex***DUBAI DECLARATION**

The Dubai International Conference for Habitat II on Best Practices in Improving the Living Environment, having brought together over 800 delegates from governments, United Nations agencies, international organizations, local authorities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), professional associations and the private sector from 19 to 22 November 1995, and having reviewed a selection of 28 Best Practices documented for the Habitat II Conference:

*Background and Guiding Principles*

- (i) *Recalling* Agenda 21 adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, 1992) and particularly its Chapters 7 and 28 which highlight the essential linkages between human settlements and sustainable development;
- (ii) *Also recalling* the United Nations Conferences on the Rights of the Child (New York, 1991), Human Rights (Vienna, 1993), Small Islands Developing States (Barbados, 1994), Natural Disaster Reduction (Yokohama, 1994), Population and Development (Cairo, 1994), Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995) and Women and Development (Beijing, 1995) which highlighted major human development issues: unsafe and unhealthy environment for children, population growth, poverty, war and violence and the differentiated effects each has on men and women;
- (iii) *Desirous* to explore the full implications of the recommendations of the conferences for sustainable urban development;
- (iv) *Recognizing* the importance of the call of the General Assembly to forge a positive vision of an urbanizing world and the goals of Habitat II - "the City Summit"; adequate shelter for all and sustainable human settlements development in an urbanizing world;
- (v) *Recognizing* that human settlements are where sectoral issues addressed at previous conferences intersect in daily life and that Habitat II represents the convergence of on-going local and global concerns as well as an opportunity for the confirmation and consolidation of earlier plans of action;
- (vi) *Recognizing* the recommendations and decisions of the Preparatory Committee for Habitat II calling upon all national committees and the secretariat to identify and disseminate best practices as an integral part of the preparatory process and establishing guidelines and criteria for this purpose;
- (vii) *Concerned* with finding practical and sustainable solutions to the social, economic and environmental challenges facing an urbanizing world, including management of development; employment creation and poverty elimination; access to land and security of tenure; management, protection and rehabilitation of the environment; efficient use of resources; prevention of crime and all forms of violence; rehabilitation of refugees and displaced persons; equality of rights for all men and women; social integration and equality for children, the elderly and the disabled; empowerment of local communities; and, access to shelter, basic services and finance;
- (viii) *Equally concerned* with the need for the Habitat Agenda resulting from the "City Summit" to guide and inspire concrete actions in solving shelter and human settlements problems in an integrated and sustainable way for the first two decades of the 21st century;
- (ix) *Recognizing* that special attention has to be given to the situation of poor countries in assuring balance between urban and rural development and the continuing need for international cooperation for shelter and basic infrastructure;
- (x) *Believing* that the worldwide promotion of effective mechanisms for extending the exchange of best practices will significantly contribute towards empowering local communities to shape their futures;
- (xi) *Acknowledging that* various institutional, financial and human resource constraints may limit local capacity to take full advantage of and contribute to such best practice exchanges and that these constraints, particularly the need for human resources development and adaptation, must also be addressed in this context;

- (xii) *Expressing appreciation* for the invaluable contribution of Dubai Municipality, United Arab Emirates in sponsoring and hosting the International Conference on Best Practices in Improving the Living Environment, and providing assistance to partners in developing countries to facilitate the documentation of their case studies;
- (xiii) *Commending* the leadership of UNCHS (Habitat) in providing technical assistance and dissemination guidelines, nomination criteria and an unified format to facilitate the compilation and exchange of best practices, including the innovative methodology adopted to analyse and document their gender impact, as a major component of the Habitat II process;
- (xiv) *Taking note* of the efforts underway by UNCHS (Habitat) and its partners to disseminate the best practices through electronic, printed and audio-visual media to the largest possible audience, including the establishment of a regularly updated electronic catalogue of best practices;
- (xv) *Believing* that ready access in all parts of the world to such information will contribute to more effective and meaningful partnerships between and among governments, local authorities, NGOs/CBOs, and the professional academic and private sectors in addressing the challenges of sustainable human settlements development;

*Recommendations and Follow-up Actions*

1. *Call for* a coordinated strategy to be implemented by UNCHS (Habitat) in collaboration with other United Nations agencies and all appropriate stakeholders, designed to empower action, influence policy at the local level, and promote real synergy between local, national and international development initiatives, and, to strengthen communication between national and local authorities and their constituencies;
2. *Stress* that any international effort for collecting and exchanging best practice information on human settlements development must be transparently designed and implemented with the organizations representing local authorities and other stakeholders, building upon their extensive international and national networks and expertise;
3. *Recommend* to the Preparatory Committee and the "City Summit" that the following considerations be added to complement the already adopted criteria of tangible impact, partnerships and sustainability for selecting those best practices worthy of global dissemination:
  - a/ leadership in inspiring action and change, including change in public policy;
  - b/ promotion of accountability and transparency;
  - c/ empowerment of people, neighbourhoods and communities and incorporation of their contributions;
  - d/ acceptance of and responsiveness to social and cultural diversity;
  - e/ potential for transferability, adaptability and replicability;
  - f/ appropriateness to local conditions and levels of development;
  - g/ promotion of social equality and equity;
4. *Further suggest* that the following be incorporated to strengthen the unified reporting process to enhance best-practice dissemination;
  - a/ ready and user-friendly access in all the major languages to concise summary information outlining the essential elements and giving contact details for follow-up inquiries;
  - b/ formation of international networks to assess innovation, creativity and transferability of practices at various levels of development;
  - c/ establishment, with the international associations of local authorities and other stakeholders of national and regional focal points to advise on the usefulness and ongoing refinement of the system;
  - d/ formation of international networks to assess the extent to which participatory processes are used and diverse interests and needs, particularly those related to gender differences, are assessed;
  - e/ development and use of indicators for participatory planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, disaggregated by gender and age;
5. *Welcome* the steps being taken by UNCHS (Habitat) in developing a global electronic catalogue on best practices, in its various forms including the Internet, CD-ROM, diskette and printed form, as well as other practical means of facilitating access by policy-makers and practitioners to the experience of their counterparts in addressing

common problems;

6. *Encourage* all governments, United Nations agencies, local authorities and their associations, NGOs/CBOs and professional associations to work toward common reporting formats and processes and to establish direct and cross-referencing links with each other systems and with the UNCHS (Habitat) electronic catalogue of best practices in order to greatly enhance and facilitate the transmission of information, experience and expertise to their respective end-users;

7. *Call upon* UNCHS (Habitat), in partnership with governments, other United Nations agencies, associations representing local authorities, the private, public, non-governmental, professional and voluntary sectors to explore mechanisms for compilation, systematic analysis and assessment of best practices as an integral part of the follow-up process beyond Habitat II, for the purpose of:

- a/ developing best practice initiatives as sites of learning for sharing their experiences and knowledge base with the global community;
- b/ using and disseminating best practice case studies as training, management and organizational development materials;
- c/ further developing the best practices catalogue as a means of matching supply and demand for technical cooperation at all levels;
- d/ compiling and disseminating an international roster of experience, expertise and knowledge based on those persons, institutions and organizations directly responsible for implementing the best practices;
- e/ promoting the transfer and adaptation of environmentally-sound, socially-responsive, economically-viable technologies, products and services;
- f/ furthering the transfer and adaptation of practical solutions for capacity-building, including staff exchange programmes at the international, regional, national and local levels;

8. *Welcome* with appreciation the establishment by Dubai Municipality of the Dubai Award for Best Practices which will be administered in collaboration with UNCHS (Habitat);

9. *Call upon* UNCHS (Habitat) to make the presentation of the Dubai Declaration a part of the official events of the Istanbul Conference.

22 November 1995