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Agenda item 10

ROLE AND CONTRIBUTION OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES, THE PRIVATE SECTOR,
PARLIAMENTARIANS, NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS, AND OTHER
PARTNERS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HABITAT AGENDA

Report of Committee II

Addendum

Hearings involving mayors and representatives of international
associations of local authorities representing the World Assembly
of Cities and Local Authorities

1. At its 2nd and 3rd meetings, on 4 June 1996, Committee II held hearings involving mayors and representatives of international associations of local authorities representing the World Assembly of Cities and Local Authorities.
2. At the 2nd meeting, on 4 June 1996, presentations were made by the following: Mr. Jaime Ravinet, Mayor of Santiago de Chile and President of the International Union of the Local Authorities; Mr. Daby Diagne, Mayor of Louga, Senegal and Vice-President of the United Towns Organization; Ms. Hortense Aka-Anghui, Mayor of Port-Bouet (Abidjan), Côte d'Ivoire and Vice-President for Africa of the World Association of Major Metropolises; Mr. Yukio Aoshima, Governor of Tokyo and President of the Summit Conference of the World's Major Cities; Mr. Erdem Saker, Mayor of Metropolitan Municipality of Bursa, Turkey and Mr. John Harman, Leader Kirklees Metropolitan Council, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

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3. After the presentations, a dialogue/discussion followed between the partners and representatives of Costa Rica, Mexico, Azerbaijan, Cyprus, Austria, Malta, Zambia, Ireland, India, Senegal, France, Cameroon, Germany, the Philippines, Sweden and Italy (on behalf of the European Union).

4. The representative of the Council of Europe and a representative of the local authorities also took part in the dialogue.

5. At the 3rd meeting, on 4 June, presentations were made by the following: Mr. Johnny Araya, Mayor of San José, Costa Rica; Mr. Bernard Stasi, Mayor of Epernay, France; Ms. Sharada Kolli, Mayor of Guntur, India; Mr. Gary McCaleb, Mayor of Abeline, Texas, United States of America; Mr. Alan Tonks, Chairman of Metropolitan Toronto, Canada; Mr. Max N'gandwe, President of the Local Government Association of Zambia; and Mr. Pasqual Maragall, Mayor of Barcelona and President of the Committee of the Regions (European Union).

6. After the presentations, a dialogue/discussion followed between the partners and representatives of Paraguay, Chile, the Netherlands, Benin, Kenya, Canada, Greece, Italy (on behalf of the European Union), Germany, Nepal, Ireland, the Philippines, Namibia, Slovakia, China, Belgium and Uruguay.

7. The representative of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization also took part in the dialogue, as did a representative of the local authorities.

8. The Chairman's summary of the hearings is set out below:

Role and contribution of local authorities

The meeting benefited from presentations by heads of cities and local government associations, which provided a stimulus for a lively and constructive discussion. The basis of the presentation was the final Declaration of the World Assembly of Cities and Local Authorities, adopted in Istanbul on 31 May 1996.

The participants highlighted the organic link of the issues dealt with at Habitat II and in the Habitat Agenda with the outcomes of other recent major United Nations conferences. It was stressed that in a rapidly urbanizing world, Habitat II had the crucial task of applying the commitments and recommendations adopted in those forums to the specific needs, concerns and conditions of human settlements and of strengthening commitments at the global, regional, national and local levels to finding effective solutions to the economic, social and environmental aspirations

of people living in all types of human settlements, ranging from the major metropolises to small village communities. All communities should have the opportunity and the capacity to articulate their needs and aspirations through the active participation of all sectors of society.

Local authorities, in partnership with central Governments and the international community, have a key role to play in resolving pressing human settlements problems, in particular through mobilizing and supporting community and citizen action at the local level. In this context, it was suggested that local authorities should be given a more prominent and permanent role in national and international deliberations on those issues, including a role in United Nations bodies and organizations, so that a strategic alliance could be formed. The inclusion of representatives of local authorities in national delegations to Habitat II, the involvement of local authorities in the preparatory activities and the inclusion of special provisions in the rules of procedure of Habitat II allowing local authorities to have a more focused input into the deliberations of the Conference were recognized and welcomed as encouraging steps in that direction. It was also suggested that after Habitat II the representatives of local authorities should be given a standing status in the Commission on Human Settlements and, perhaps in other relevant United Nations bodies, so as to institutionalize their contribution to and participation in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda. Such action would offer a key means of assuring sustainable development.

The need for, and value of, direct cooperation among the local authorities of various countries and regions was also underscored. The role of existing international associations and organizations of local authorities and cities was highlighted as a promising mechanism for further coordination of their collective inputs to relevant international discussions. It was stressed that such an approach could help to ensure that the voice of "united cities" was better heard in the United Nations.

The participants stressed that human settlements development should be seen as an essential component of achieving sustainable human development in general. It was therefore essential to promote, in an integrated way, economic development, equity, social progress, environmental awareness and gender sensitivity in all human settlements

development. Local authorities have a crucial role to play in this process; and in many sectors, such as public health, employment, environment, education and community services, the local authorities are closest to the problems and are the best placed for finding the most effective solutions through the mobilization of local energies, imagination and resources.

It was also emphasized that policy approaches aimed at effective decentralization were needed to provide a framework and a new model for addressing human settlements development issues. It was felt that such decentralization should strengthen democracy and provide local authorities - the institutional structures closest to the people and communities - with the legitimacy to voice the specific concerns and aspirations of their citizens.

The decentralization process should include measures aimed at strengthening the capacity of local authorities and communities in addressing human settlements development issues, including continuity and predictability of funding. Local authorities should be able to exercise greater authority in local economic policy and to develop a capacity to generate local resources.

The participants emphasized the role that local authorities play in linking human settlements development with industry, business, academia and community groups. The participants also underscored the need for strengthening the dialogue and interaction between the local authorities and community and citizens groups with a view to addressing effectively the needs and concerns of local residents. The need for better exchange of information and sharing of experiences was underscored as an important tool for promoting best practices and identifying the most promising approaches.

The need for development of national laws and regulations that clearly specify the role and responsibilities of local authorities vis-à-vis national Governments and provide for effective decentralization and local democracy, taking into account the principles of autonomy, subsidiarity and proximity, was also highlighted. In this context, it was suggested that the experience gained in the implementation of the European Charter on Local Self-Government could be used as a basis for

developing a global charter that would set out the key principles underlying a sound constitutional or legal framework for a democratic local government system.

Furthermore, it was suggested that the development of relevant national legislation should provide for an enhanced role for local authorities in the elaboration and implementation of nationwide strategies and projects that could have an impact on specific urban areas and their residents. The participants recalled that the Habitat Agenda deals with human settlements in both urban and rural areas and that the outcome of the Conference should fully take into account the specific needs and conditions of people living outside municipal boundaries.

Furthermore, the participants stressed the need to promote gender balance and considerations at the local level, including through enhancing the role of women in municipal and communal decision-making. It was also felt that the aspirations of and potential contribution from youth should be taken fully into account.

Specific concerns were raised in connection with the situation of the poor, the unemployed and the marginalized, including the inhabitants of urban areas who are not legal residents or citizens of the country and/or city in question. It was felt that a concerted effort in cooperation with local authorities could be effective in addressing the specific needs of such people.

Participants welcomed the elaboration and adoption of more than 1,500 local versions of Agenda 21 in many developed and developing countries since the 1992 Earth Summit at Rio de Janeiro, as reported in Making Cities Work, a publication prepared specifically for Habitat II. The participatory approach that has characterized the elaboration and implementation of local Agenda 21 activities, which involve local governments, parliamentarians, the business and scientific communities, trade unions and non-governmental organizations, was found particularly promising. It was stressed that the implementation of local Agenda 21 could provide an effective format for achieving the goals of human settlements development and for the implementation of the Habitat Agenda. More specifically, it was suggested that capacities developed in a large number of countries through the local Agenda 21 process could be usefully employed in the implementation of the outcome of Habitat II.

The importance of cooperation in the application of technology as a new way of empowering local democracy was also underscored. This includes the exchange of experiences and best practices in the application of innovative approaches to human settlements planning, management and administration on both a North-South and South-South basis. Linkage between technology development and local empowerment as well as the need for full realization of the potential of new technological approaches for preserving the cultural heritage and the environment of cities were also underscored.

The participants also referred to the need for additional and more effective technical cooperation and assistance to be assured through new partnerships with international organizations and financial institutions in support of strategies and activities for human settlements development. Several practical measures were also proposed to ensure a follow-up to the discussion. Among them were the establishment of a database on cooperative activities; Internet linkages for the horizontal exchange of local expertise and experience; the formulation on the part of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements of local programmes with the direct involvement of local authorities; the encouragement on the part of the United Nations of North-South cooperation between cities and local authorities, including inter-local cooperation; and the strengthening of those agencies and programmes of the United Nations system that focus on human settlements.

The participants expressed their appreciation of the emergence of a new relationship, a partnership of "united cities" and the United Nations.
