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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 representatives of the Foundations Forum

1. At its 5th meeting, on 5 June 1996, Committee II held hearings involving representatives of the Foundations Forum.
2. Presentations were made by the following: Mr. Zekai Baloglu, President of the Habitat II Foundations Forum, Third Sector Foundation of Turkey (TÜSEV), and Mr. John Richardson, General Director of the European Foundations Centre (EFC) (Belgium).
3. After the presentations, a dialogue/discussion followed between the partners and representatives of Azerbaijan, Sweden, Nigeria, Mexico, Belgium, Greece, Chile, the Philippines, Rwanda, Germany, Indonesia, Turkey, China, Finland, Canada, the Sudan, Tunisia and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.
4. Representatives of the following non-governmental organizations also took part in the dialogue: Fondation pour le progrès de l'homme and Shelter the World, Inc.

5. A statement was made on behalf of the Secretary-General of the Conference.

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

Contribution of the Foundations Forum

The hearing opened with an introduction by the President of the Habitat II Foundations Forum, who described foundations as independent, autonomous organizations that have their own resources and particular interests and sponsor programmes for the public good. The Istanbul Foundations Forum, held on 31 May and 1 June 1996, was the first global meeting of this kind organized within the framework of the United Nations to attract such a large number of participants. Both the organizers and the delegates expressed their gratitude to the United Nations for facilitating the meeting and providing the opportunity to discuss, in Committee II, the role of foundations and the contribution they could make in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda.

A stimulating discussion followed the presentation of the Istanbul Declaration adopted by the Foundations Forum. The Declaration noted the unique characteristics of the global community of foundations and corporate funders as they seek to promote and facilitate compassionate and broad-based citizen involvement in the environments where those citizens live and work. The organizers welcomed the decision of the United Nations to acknowledge and foster dialogue with foundations and corporate funders as United Nations partnership organizations and called upon the United Nations to encourage the significant and expanding role of foundations and corporate funders as a proactive force in the development of a just, equitable and sustainable civil society. They requested United Nations Member States to recognize and support the critical contributions that foundations and corporate funders make.

In the Declaration, foundations and corporate funders were invited to set up an international task force to design and implement, at national and cross-frontier levels, an action plan that will address issues of concern in the Habitat Agenda. They also announced that the next meeting of interested parties would be held in Paris in November 1996 and requested delegates to publicize the meeting by informing institutions and individuals in their countries.

Commenting on the roles of foundations and corporate funders, many delegations, while appreciating the work that foundations do, expressed their desire to have that work expanded to include such areas as conflict resolution and the creation of a culture of peace in the world, the preservation and restoration of historic and cultural heritage and investing in programmes aimed at assisting the poor and vulnerable, especially in the developing countries.

The exchange of experiences and views by delegates showed that there are various ways through which the number of foundations could be increased or new ones started where they do not exist. There was general agreement that more foundations are needed to address the increasing demand for the type of assistance that foundations provide globally. Tax exemptions could be taken and were recommended. Community foundations that are different from traditional individual endowment foundations are becoming common in Europe. The modalities of incentives to contributors to such foundations differ from country to country. Some delegates did not consider the funding of foundations from national budgets as a legitimate use of public funds.

In conclusion, delegates concurred with organizers that the presentations and discussions on foundation and corporate funders brought a new and important dimension to the concept of partnerships in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda. Delegates welcomed the commitment of foundations to contribute to the implementation of the Habitat Agenda and urged the United Nations to support the future activities of foundations.
