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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

Report of hearings involving representatives of the Habitat Dialogues
for the Twenty-first Century and the Forum on Human Solidarity

1. At its 12th and 13th meetings, on 11 June 1996, Committee II held hearings involving representatives of the Habitat Dialogues for the Twenty-first Century and the Forum on Human Solidarity.
2. At the 12th meeting, on 11 June, presentations were made by the following: Ms. Jacqueline Dacosta, Planner, Senior Adviser to the Prime Minister of Jamaica and President of the Commonwealth Association of Planners; Ms. Patricia Clarke-Annez, Chief, Urban Development Division, Transportation, Water and Urban Development Department, World Bank; Mr. Samir Radwan, Director, Development and Technical Cooperation Department, International Labour Organization; Mr. Asad Mohammed, Coordinator, Graduate Programme, University of the West Indies; Mr. Zulfu Livaneli, composer, film director and writer; and Preminder N. Jain (Bawa), Convenor, Wisdom Keepers II.

3. After the presentations, a discussion took place between the partners and the representatives of Swaziland, India, Slovakia, the Philippines, France, Nigeria, Indonesia, Mexico, Trinidad and Tobago, Burundi, Mauritania, the Netherlands, Canada, Turkey, Senegal, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Sudan and South Africa.

4. The Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference made a statement.

5. The representative of the Protection of Cultural and Natural Values of Istanbul and the representative of the Gray Panthers, on behalf of the Peace Caucus, non-governmental organizations, also took part in the discussion.

6. At the 13th meeting, presentations were made by the following:

Mr. Peter Oberlander, Coordinator of the Forum on Human Solidarity;

Ms. Kenza Kaouakib-Robinson, Technical Adviser, Department for Development Support and Management Services of the United Nations Secretariat;

Mr. Kenneth Gwillian, Principal Transport Economist, World Bank;

Ms. Helene Connor, Technical Adviser, Energy 21; Mr. Eric Cunningham, the WORLDCOM Group, past Chairman, President and Chief Executive Officer, OEB International, Toronto, Canada; and Dr. Greg Goldstein, Coordinator, Healthy Cities Programme, World Health Organization.

7. After the presentations, a discussion took place between the partners and the representatives of Germany, Kazakhstan, Sweden, Norway, the Philippines, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Indonesia, France, the Sudan, Turkey, Slovakia, South Africa, Greece, Saudi Arabia, Barbados and Canada.

8. The observer for Palestine also took part in the discussion.

9. A representative of the local authorities, as well as a number of non-governmental organizations, also took part in the discussion.

10. The Deputy Minister for Environment of Italy and the Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference made statements.

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

Habitat Dialogues for the Twenty-first Century

Dialogues were held on 10 issues - cities, finance, urban employment, land and rural-urban linkages, water, transport, energy, communications, health, and citizenship and democracy.

Having recognized that sustainable human settlements provide the framework for the fulfilment of basic human rights and for the creative mobilization of human potentials, the "Dialogue on how cities will look"

concluded that the evolution of cities in the twenty-first century should be viewed not as an end-product but as a process by which communities and societies will shape and continuously reshape their own environment.

Delegates stressed the need to increase the capacity of the partners in the cities to capture the economic, cultural and technological opportunities offered by cities. Resources for this great task should be mobilized from all partners through strategic investments, mainly focusing on the lowest socio-economic segments of human settlements.

Delegates noted a clear disparity between the problems and visions of the developing countries, where poverty and lack of resources are the main cause of environmental stress, and those of developed countries, where over-consumption compromises sustainable growth. Some delegates found it premature to discuss sophisticated solutions for countries where even basic commodities were not available. While delegates agreed that sustainability will ultimately be measured by how we will improve our quality of life, the issue of monitoring and impact assessment needs to be further developed.

The "Dialogue on finance and cities in the 21st century" considered the question of how the unprecedented scale of investment needs of urban populations could be financed. It was noted that a number of new options have emerged for urban finance, such as public-private partnerships and micro-finance institutions for the poor, which have not reached the full capacity of operations.

The participants recognized that it is unrealistic to expect cities to become fully self-sufficient in their financing. The rules surrounding intergovernmental transfers of resources need to be made more transparent and predictable and provisions made for the efficient use of local government's own resources. It was recommended that cities improve their creditworthiness to enhance access to market capitals.

The participants also recognized that private-public partnerships require mutual trust and respect, as well as transparency, to sustain the relationship. Adequate safeguards against private exploitation, abuse and monopoly must be established through regulation and competitive bidding mechanisms.

It was also recommended that Governments facilitate a legal and regulatory framework in support of specific banking institutions focusing on the poor. Quantitative indicators should be developed to measure and monitor performance of the core functions of local governments, newly emerging partnerships and the creditworthiness of cities.

Delegates stressed the need for productive as opposed to speculative investment in cities and called for the establishment of modalities to further tap local sources of finance and for sharing of the modalities among countries and regions.

The "Dialogue on the future of urban employment" reaffirmed that the creation and protection of employment was the most direct and effective means of alleviating the urban crisis. The international community must face the challenge and forge an international development cooperation strategy to commit resources for combating unemployment and poverty. Participants also stressed that combining the strengths of Governments, United Nations organizations, the private sector and civil society was the best way of resolving problems of unemployment.

The participants agreed that the right conditions must be created for employment-oriented growth and productivity. Governments should take action to ensure more equitable distribution of benefits and full participation of all segments of society in economic, political and civil development. Non-conventional approaches to the creation of employment opportunities should be explored to address the high rates of youth unemployment and the increasing amounts of international and rural to urban migration, the breakdown of social security systems and the changing nature of work. The development and contribution of the informal sector in expanding employment opportunities should be given much more serious attention than it has received.

Delegates noted the increasing divergence between the rich and the poor, the employed and the unemployed, and high- and low-paid workers and endorsed the call for non-conventional approaches to employment creation and concerted efforts to engage all partners in employment-oriented growth and productivity, investing in jobs, regulatory and institutional frameworks, enablement and empowerment and the recognition of the

contribution of the informal sector to economic development. Delegates called for more flexible labour standards that could also apply to special groups such as migrant workers.

The "Dialogue on land and rural-urban linkages" recognized the strong linkage and agreed that balanced urban and rural development was required to ensure equitable distribution of economic and social opportunities to rural and urban populations. Management of land is a key issue for the sustainable development of cities and of rural areas. Secure tenure was emphasized as a prerequisite for development of land markets. A large number of responsibilities for land management can be decentralized to local and municipal levels.

The participants recognized the need to further develop and promote partnerships between the public, private, formal and informal sectors, non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations through information networks and inputs to the Human Settlements Best Practices Database. Community participation is vital for achieving shelter for the urban poor and landless, and special attention needs to be paid to women's access to land and land ownership.

The participants concluded that land and rural-urban issues should be given appropriate emphasis in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda, at both the international and the national level. Inter-agency collaboration within the United Nations system should be developed on cross-sectoral issues highlighted in the dialogue. The professional sector represented by the International Federation of Surveyors (FIG) and the private sector represented by the International Federation of Real Estate Agencies (FIABCI) committed themselves to pursue partnership with the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat).

Delegates emphasized the need for an effective land-use system to guide sustainable development and the optimum use of land as a resource. The discussion endorsed the need for different levels of land-use management, combined with a system to control development, a good local government structure and an adequate land value system. Delegates also stressed that the land-use control procedures should recognize the circumstances of populations, and pointed out the need to include informal sector requirements and to respect and protect traditional land-holding patterns.

The "Dialogue on water for thirsty cities" recognized that the formidable challenge of water resources management for the next century, when more than 60 per cent of the rapidly growing world population will be living in urban areas, is a formidable one. Already, there is increased competition for the limited water resources between different users and uses, as well as between urban and rural settlements. Water management problems go beyond the confines of cities, and, if not properly addressed, this competition could become a source of conflict among nations. In addition, many city residents are without basic sanitation services, such as safe water supplies, proper drainage and solid and liquid waste management.

The discussion centred around the following issues:

(a) Water is for all and should be allocated equitably to all users for all of its primary uses;

(b) Water is a scarce and valuable resource, which is becoming more difficult to find and more costly to make available to cities to meet increasing demands, and it must be assured that there is water for future generations;

(c) Water demand should be better managed and wastage minimized to reduce the need for investment in new infrastructure and to release more water for other uses;

(d) New partnerships must be forged between all actors to ensure better management of resources and services.

The participants also endorsed the Beijing Water Declaration and its inclusion as an annex to the Habitat Global Plan of Action, together with the above complementary recommendations.

Several delegates raised the question of conflicts arising from transboundary water bodies. There is clear competition for water resources as regards the supply of water. Also, the issue of pollution by other countries upstream was discussed. The conflicts include surface and underground water sources. Delegates stressed the need to reduce wastage of water. A request was made to explore mechanisms to mediate such conflicts and provide legal frameworks.

The need for a national authority to coordinate water policy was highlighted, especially in relation to the supply and demand for water and competing needs, in particular between different sectors and rural

and urban areas. It was suggested that the report should mention the promotion of the use of cheap and affordable technologies available for the purification of water.

The "Dialogue on transport in the city of tomorrow" recognized that cities differ substantially and have different transport systems and transport-related problems. What they have in common is that as they grow richer and bigger their transport problems get worse because the number of motorized vehicles and their level of use grows faster than the population and income, while the amount of road space to accommodate this demand grows little if at all. This imbalance leads to increasing congestion and air pollution, more accidents and negative social income as the poor and women suffer disproportionately from deteriorating public transport.

Several strategic instruments can be used to address the problems concerning transport. Land-use densification, less rigorous separation of local land uses and multinuclear urban forms can all reduce the demand for private transport. In addition, a number of cleaner technologies and fuels are available or are in prospect. These are capable of substantially reducing both local and global air pollution impacts. The role of public transport as a space efficient and potentially less environmentally polluting mode should be encouraged. Fuel taxation policies should reflect the full costs of use on road space, including the environmental and infrastructure costs associated with road use.

These instruments all require the appropriate policy context. Vision is an important basis for improving the urban transport situation, but vision requires effective implementation. First, the economics must be right. If systems are not economically and financially viable, they will collapse. Second, the institutions must be right. The provision of transport services must be organized to encourage efficiency of supply. Third, priorities must be established, with immediate action concentrated on the most damaging impacts of transport and the most manageable and cost-effective instruments of alleviation.

Direct charging for congestion and environmental impacts should be introduced. The role of non-motorized transport and the informal sector to transport supply should be explicitly considered in the determination of public transport strategies.

Delegates stressed the importance of non-motorized and public transport and walking in a bid to reduce urban pollution and improve urban quality of life. Concerning public transport, the delegates felt that emphasis should be placed on vulnerable groups, such as the elderly and disabled. Delegates introduced the concept of mobility and suggested moving from ego-mobility to eco-mobility.

Delegates cited, as an example, the concept of corridors for transport in the Alpine region of Europe, which has fragile ecosystems in the valleys foreseen for transport axis. It was felt that countries should strive to integrate urban policy and transport policy. In this context, it was suggested that buffer zones be maintained between urban areas and major travel routes. Delegates felt that mechanisms should be developed to reduce the ownership of private vehicles.

A delegate noted that the transport of goods and freight is a major transport issue. In addition, delegates felt the need for a future vision of settlements related to transport.

The "Dialogue on sustainable energy in human settlements" recognized that there is a need for different energy management and development strategies for different regions. Industrialized countries need to develop and deploy cleaner, more efficient technologies and appliances urgently. Developing countries, which have much lower per capita energy use, need to harness new and more efficient energy sources to meet growing energy demands.

As the twenty-first century approaches, access to sustainable energy services is a basic right for everyone. Energy solutions should be affordable to the poor and take into account gender concerns and the rights of children. The shift to clean, less polluting energy sources must be accelerated drastically. Energy use must be streamlined and minimized.

Integrated energy planning should not be an afterthought but a priority for local authorities when initiating any form of development. Successful implementation of clean, energy-efficient systems depends on the involvement of citizens and businesses, with all parties treated as valuable contributing partners. Sustainable energy is the cornerstone of sustainable communities.

All levels of authorities must be held accountable for providing an appropriate framework for sustainable energy. There must be education of children, training of professionals, full-cost pricing, deregulation, where appropriate, the creation of information clearing-houses and agencies, and research funding for innovative projects.

Delegates stressed the importance of energy development at the local level. They suggested that energy services are necessary to fulfil the basic needs of every human being. Delegates also noted that in those countries that include basic rights in their constitution, they usually consider the services provided by energy and not the energy itself.

Delegates inquired how energy could reach remote areas and suggested regional cooperatives as a viable solution. It was stressed that energy needs should be assessed and that energy should not just be viewed as a technological or political topic. The issue of safe and renewable energy resources was raised as a point of concern.

The "Dialogue on cities, communication and the media in the informational society" recognized that the exponential growth and development in the telecommunications industry is leading to the liberalization and deregulation of communications policy around the globe. This growth is being managed by developed countries and business, and consequently the developing countries fear that they will be left out of the process of setting communications policy as well as negatively affected by the changes that it brings to societies. There is also a great deal of interest in how people and city governments will be affected by the abundance of information, concern about the plethora of communications media and questions about the accessibility of information to all citizens.

The following conclusions and recommendations were presented:

(a) The power of technology and the information revolution have the potential of increasing democracy and equality around the world. This power should be used to promote peace and civility;

(b) The United Nations should foster the development of information standards and formats to enhance global access to information;

(c) The benefits of information technology should be leveraged to rebuild neighbourhoods, improve living conditions, foster urban renewal, enhance access to education and health care, eliminate poverty and minimize urban sprawl;

(d) Information technology should be a vehicle to promote public interest objectives as well as those of commercial interests.

The "Dialogue on creating healthy cities in the 21st century" recognized that health is essential for every city. There is no sustainable development without health. The desire to promote health and prevent disease and injury must become part of the culture of everyone, not just health professionals and institutions but employers, municipal agencies, NGOs and community organizations. This understanding is at the core of the healthy cities movement.

Creating healthy cities requires actions on all fronts and within all sectors. For instance, it should include developing local health plans and programmes to prevent diseases and promote health with the participation of all local partners. It should ensure universal access to health services whose coverage and quality is sustained. It should stimulate capacity-building in local government, build coalitions to address health issues and identify specific priority programmes targeted on problem-solving.

Achieving healthy cities for all would be realized much more quickly if Governments and international agencies reallocated resources to health. This is especially true for countries and cities with the weakest economies. But in an increasingly urban world, the goal of healthy cities is an essential part of our commitment to health for all - whether people live in large cities, small towns or rural areas.

Delegates pointed out that health can also be promoted through trade unions, especially where occupational health is linked to the communities where workers live.

The "Dialogue on citizenship and democracy" stressed the need for three key commitments: to consolidate democracy; to exercise citizenship; and to shape a new social contract. The dialogue report stated that it was time to advance from representative democracy to participatory democracy. Democracy presupposes the respect of political rights but also the effective exercise of civic, social, cultural and

economic rights. Regarding the exercise of citizenship, the participants proposed to humanize the city and guarantee the right to organized public space, which would facilitate realization of the values of public life.

During the discussions it was pointed out that capacity-building will be needed for developing participatory democracy. Delegates stressed that, in areas where divisions and struggles prevailed, reconciliation should be actively promoted. Delegates further stressed that the essence of citizenship lies in the relation between individualism and solidarity, with mutual respect in a multicultural society.

In the afternoon session, the meeting benefited from presentations concerning the dialogues on water, transport, energy, communication and health in cities, as well as on the Forum on Human Solidarity and the Wisdom Keepers Forum.

Forum on Human Solidarity

The presentation on the Forum on Human Solidarity stressed that progress towards more livable and humane cities requires going beyond a "bricks and mortar" response to housing problems. The Forum members agreed that human solidarity must address social, economic and political inequality within countries, between countries, and between the North and South. The goal of building tolerant communities and making cities more humane cannot be achieved unless people are empowered to improve their own environment and life. Cities must respect diversity and strive for social and economic harmony.

Forum participants proposed guidelines for a sustainable urban planet through human solidarity, including children's special needs, local governments, education at all levels, special attention to vulnerable groups, priorities in public transportation, basic services for the poor, health-related environmental issues, social equity and effective public consultations.

Wisdom Keepers Forum

The Wisdom Keepers Forum attended by spiritual leaders of different traditions, indigenous people, scientists, young people and activists, was convened to consider the moral, ethical and spiritual aspects of human settlements. Proposed actions for Habitat II and beyond included support by the United Nations to conflict resolution centres and

promotion of educational curricula on non-violent conflict resolution, the use of global communications technology to bring about social harmony and sustainable development, and support to programmes guided by the principles of providing improved living conditions for all with the support of local and national authorities and volunteer organizations.

General comments

Delegates commended the proposals of the forums and stressed the importance of conflict resolution as an important issue in periods of crisis as well as a factor of stability in defence of human rights in periods of relative harmony. Delegates supported the proposal keeping the spirit of the forums alive and continuing this discussion after Habitat II.

It was suggested that the conclusions of Committee I and Committee II should be combined and that a mechanism should be found to ensure that the deliberations were included in a final communiqué of the Conference. Delegations underscored the importance of the dialogues and expressed their wish to see them continued under the guidance of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat). The representative of the European Union added that, in order to carry out this additional responsibility, the Centre should be strengthened and additional resources found.
