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**UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON HUMAN
SETTLEMENTS (HABITAT II)**

(Commission decision I (49))

Report by the Executive Secretary

1. This report has been prepared pursuant to paragraph 3 of decision I (49) related to the ECE preparations for the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) to be held in Istanbul (Turkey) from 3-14 June 1996.

Regional Preparatory Meeting

2. The ECE Regional Preparatory Meeting for the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) was held in Geneva on 12 September 1994. Discussion was based on the document prepared by the Committee on Human Settlements "Towards sustainable human settlements development in the ECE region" (HBP/AC.10/R.1), which contained an overview of the human settlements development in the ECE region since the first United Nations Conference on Human Settlements in 1976. Information was also received concerning:

- The Conference of Ministers Responsible for Human Settlements in European Countries in Transition held in June 1994 in Moscow (Russian Federation);
- The Meeting of Ministers Responsible for Housing of the European Union held in July 1994 in Dresden (Germany);
- The European Conference of the Ministers Responsible for Regional Planning organized by the Council of Europe in September 1994 in Oslo (Norway);

- Cooperation between Canada, Mexico and the United States; between ECE, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and other organizations.

3. The Meeting observed that transparency and evaluation were important tools to determine why no significant improvements in the human settlements situation had been achieved since the Vancouver Conference in 1976. A proposal was made to use harmonized shelter indicators to guide political decisions and to evaluate the policies of the past. The commitments that countries made in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) and the challenges of sustainable development and assistance to countries in transition require action but also a clear vision of what is wanted. The discussions concluded that human settlements are related not only to housing, building and planning but also require new thinking and new action by those involved in related sectors such as environment, energy, transport, demography, economy and rural development.

4. The Meeting considered the document "Towards sustainable human settlements development in the ECE region" a starting-point for a substantial regional contribution to the Habitat II Conference. A proposal was made that a cross-sectoral review of the paper should be carried out by the secretariat and that the ECE contribution to Habitat II should make full use of the work and capacity of its different subsidiary bodies, among which the Committee on Human Settlements has a key role to play. The Meeting further recommended that ECE affirm its role in the regional Habitat II preparatory process by defining its contribution to Habitat II as a distinct element of its programme of work.

5. The Meeting noted that a number of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations in the ECE region were involved in human settlements issues of concern to Habitat II. The work already under way should be coordinated to avoid duplication of work. The meeting recommended that full use should be made of work already undertaken or envisaged in the European Union, Council of Europe, OECD and other governmental and non-governmental organizations in the preparatory process. It was suggested that a task force be set up within the Commission to monitor the regional contributions. The organization of a second ECE regional meeting before the third Habitat II Preparatory Meeting was considered as an option to finalize the contribution from the ECE region.

Follow-up to the Regional Preparatory Meeting

6. The Committee on Human Settlements at its fifty-fifth session in September 1994 agreed to include the preparations for the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements as a programme element (ECE/HBP/91, para. 9(a)).

7. The Committee further decided to establish a task force to assist it in carrying out the preparatory work within existing resources (ECE/HBP/91, para. 9 (b)). The mandate of the Task Force was established by the Committee's Bureau in December 1994 (see annex).

8. An interdivisional coordination group has been established within the secretariat to provide a cross-sectoral review of the ECE contribution to the Habitat II Conference.

ANNEXTERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE TASK FORCE ON THE
PREPARATIONS FOR THE HABITAT II CONFERENCE

Under the guidance of the Committee on Human Settlements, the Task Force:

- Assists the Committee in the preparation of its contributions to Habitat II, in cooperation with its subsidiary bodies; and executes all the preparatory work as specified by the Committee at its fifty-fourth and fifty-fifth sessions;
- Ensures cooperation in the preparatory process with all interested member countries and relevant bodies in the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements, the Council of Europe, the European Union, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, other governmental and non-governmental organizations as well as local and city authorities, private organizations and other actors in the human settlements sector;
- Gives guidance to the Committee on the preparation of a possible regional preparatory meeting for Habitat II to be held prior to PrepCom III;
- Submits a report on its work to the Committee at its fifty-sixth session.

Participation in the task force is open to all countries of the ECE region.