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Agenda item 16

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT

Draft proceedings of the Commission on Human Settlements  
at its sixteenth session

Rapporteur: Mr. Pavel Suian (Romania)

Addendum

CHAPTER .. THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE PRIVATE AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL SECTORS  
TO SHELTER DELIVERY TO LOW-INCOME GROUPS (Agenda item 7 (a))

A. Introduction

1. Committee II considered agenda item 7 (a) at its 1st meeting, on 28 April 1997. It had before it the report of the Executive Director on the contributions of the private and non-governmental sectors to shelter delivery to low-income groups (HS/C/16/7).
2. In introducing the item, the representative of the Assistant Secretary-General welcomed the opportunity the Centre had been given to review such an important aspect of shelter delivery. He emphasized that, whereas there were no panaceas that would achieve successful urban development and shelter delivery for low-income groups, it was of the utmost importance to broaden and deepen the role of the private sector, non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations in all aspects of the shelter process, for that approach showed great promise.
3. The representative further pointed out that the report analysed the concept and practice of "partnerships" in the shelter delivery process, aiming to arrive at the right mix between governmental, business and voluntary associations, so as to maximize the benefits for human settlements development as a whole. The partnership approach to shelter delivery recognized that different actors had distinctive, but complementary, comparative advantages.

4. The representative also underscored that the core issue was how to strike a pragmatic balance among the private sector, non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations and to free them from unnecessary regulation, while also addressing the problems which tended to arise from unregulated, uncoordinated activities, such as exclusion of the poorest, discrimination against women, and degradation of the urban environment. Finally, the representative, referring to the final section of the report, pointed out that it contained a set of issues for discussion on further research and action, which focused on the need to build capacities for learning and negotiation among private, public and community organizations.

#### B. Discussion

5. All delegations complimented the secretariat on the quality of the report, which they found very useful in advancing the international debate on the role of different players in civil society regarding the pursuit of one of the principal topics of the Habitat Agenda. The discussion mainly focused on the key issues of partnership and participation, as being central to the enabling approach in shelter delivery strategies. Most delegations referred to the experience in their own countries concerning the emerging roles of the private sector, and non-governmental and community-based organizations in the shelter process, and offered examples to illustrate such experience.

6. Several delegations cautioned on generalizing certain findings in the report, since they might not be applicable on a global scale or in all countries. In many countries, cooperatives were playing a significant role in housing production and making home ownership possible. They felt that the report should have better highlighted the contribution of the cooperative sector to the housing delivery process. Similarly, some delegations informed the Committee that self-help housing accounted for half of the dwellings built in their countries. The enabling strategy was assisting the process by focusing on providing access to land, finance and technology. Delegations were of the view that the aided self-help process offered more potential in addressing the shelter needs of low-income groups.

7. Several delegations stated that the private sector was being challenged to respond to the enabling shelter strategy. Although some good initiatives were to be found where the private sector had improved the delivery of low-income housing, there was a particular challenge to meet the needs of the homeless groups. Support and incentives were needed for both the formal and informal components of the private sector.

8. Delegations considered that the role of non-governmental organizations was to make specific contributions to the shelter delivery process. Some delegations felt that the contributions should be made mainly in facilitating the housing process at the local and community levels, whereas others presented examples where non-governmental organizations had introduced innovative mechanisms in housing delivery for low-income groups.

9. Several delegations referred to the evolution of effective housing policies in their own countries and to the question of whether the public or the private sector should take the leading role in initiating such policies. Partnerships between the different players in the housing process were generally seen as a key mechanism for effective enabling strategies. As pointed out by a number of delegations, in several countries the Government had taken the lead in establishing partnerships with and between private enterprises and local authorities. Some delegations saw a vital role for Governments in establishing standards that would be applicable to local needs, ensure access to services, land and affordable finance for low-income groups, uphold the competitiveness of the housing market and provide support to the community sector. Those delegations raised the question of the role of the government in circumstances where the great majority of the population lived

in owner-occupied housing. Several delegates highlighted the situation of countries with economies in transition in which local authorities and building companies were engaged in formulating strategies for housing construction by the private sector; a lack of control by local authorities had led to undue and unplanned construction activities. The need to focus more on the housing requirements of young families was also pointed to as a specific issue for countries with economies in transition.

10. In conclusion, there was general agreement that the specific observations made by delegations during the discussion should be included in an amended version of the report, which should then be published as a policy framework on the role of civil society in the shelter delivery process and as a contribution towards implementing the Habitat Agenda.

C. Action taken by the Commission

11. At its ... meeting on 7 May 1997, the Commission adopted the following resolution, which is reproduced in annex ... of the present report.

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