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ECE STRATEGY FOR SUSTAINABLE QUALITY OF LIFE IN
HUMAN SETTLEMENTS IN THE 21st CENTURY

Prepared by the secretariat in cooperation with the Committee-s Bureau

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Introduction

1. The year 2000 constitutes a unique and symbolically compelling moment for member States of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) to articulate and affirm a vision of the role of ECE and the scope of its activities in the new era. This Strategy reflects the views of ECE Governments that living conditions and urban problems are multidimensional and should be considered in a broader context of economic and social development. They cannot be separated from the general national and international frameworks for economic and social development, environmental protection, peace and security.

2. The Strategy has the following aims:

(a) Recognize the importance of the human settlements sector for a socially, economically and environmentally sound development;

(b) Promote democratic governance throughout the region, by encouraging public participation in the decision-making process, strengthening the capabilities of local authorities and non-governmental organizations, providing a framework for the constructive participation of the private sector, and defining a new role for the central government;

(c) Promote the notion that urban and rural development is an important part of a national economy. It offers investment opportunities and has an important potential for revitalizing national economies;

(d) Ensure security of ownership in land, of investments and of other private and public rights in real estate, and assist spatial planning and environmental management through the establishment and modernization of land administration systems;

(e) Contribute to the overall ECE strategic directions, namely sustainable development, the mainstreaming of the gender perspective, special concern for economies in transition, and the involvement of the business community, as defined in the ECE Plan of Action adopted in 1997.

3. The Strategy is based on the provisions of the Habitat Agenda and Agenda 21, with a particular emphasis on issues of common interest and concern for all countries of the ECE region. The Strategy reflects experiences, needs and approaches shaped by five decades of cooperation within the ECE Committee on Human Settlements.

4. It is envisaged that the Strategy will be a guide for the ECE Committee on Human Settlements to structure and continuously adapt its programme of work for the first 5-10 years of the new millennium. The Strategy could help ECE to define areas of specific competence to address the human settlements challenges of the new millennium through a comprehensive approach combining environment, economy, land administration, citizen participation, investment opportunities and social policy issues on the basis of its expertise. At the same time, the Strategy attempts to ensure synergies within ECE and other international organizations, while avoiding overlapping activities.

5. To implement the Strategy, the Committee and ECE Governments will exert the leadership necessary to unite different actors engaged in human settlements development, on the basis of their positive response and willingness to discuss common issues. To improve the quality of life in the ECE member States, the Committee considers it to be its responsibility to promote cooperation between central governments, local authorities, the business community and NGOs. To that end, the Committee will, among other things, strengthen its cooperation with the Housing and Urban Management Advisory Network.*/

I. ECE ACTIVITIES TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

6. There are certain features in the ECE region which make the ECE Committee on Human Settlements an excellent forum for comparative studies, policy formulation, analysis and sharing ideas on urban and spatial development. The region has a long and varied history, different legal and administrative traditions, languages and cultures. Its population is highly educated and many countries have strong local governments and democratic structures based on multi-party systems and parliamentary representation. Its diversity, resulting not only from the presence of big and small nations, but also from its rich variety of geographically, ethnically and culturally distinct subregions, makes the ECE region an exceptional source of experience and inspiration.

7. The work of the ECE Committee on Human Settlements and its subsidiary bodies has a solid basis. For about 50 years the Committee has devoted a major part of its annual session to a comprehensive review of current trends and policies in housing, building and planning. Since 1958 it has regularly published statistics from almost all European countries in the Annual Bulletin of Housing and Building Statistics for Europe and North America. After the Second World War, its activities first concentrated on the reconstruction of Europe. Then it broadened its housing-related activities to cover the socio-economic aspects of housing, and effective demand and long-term housing requirements. In so doing the Committee contributed to the formulation of housing policy in many member States. Another concern has been housing financing and subsidization, the methods and techniques of which have been studied since 1952.

8. The Committee also investigated the relationship between economically viable settlement structures and urban forms and their social and environmental qualities. Urban renewal was introduced in the work programme in 1961, when the first symposium on this issue was held. Later the scope of planning broadened and further topics were developed such as landuse, urban forms and density, management of natural resources and green structure, transport and urban planning. A long-standing topic that has been studied in different forms and contexts is the relation between central and local government.

*/ The Network was established in 1997. It is independent and includes experts from the private sector, NGOs and local authorities.

9. In response to the urgent needs to promote land administration through security of tenure, the establishment of real estate markets in countries in transition, and the modernization of land registration and cadastre systems in the market economies, the Committee set up the Meeting of Officials on Land Administration in 1996. In 1999, it was given standing character under its new name: the Working Party on Land Administration.

10. Over the past decade the Committee's subjects and methods of work have changed. The overall trend has been to move from narrow sectoral and technical subjects to integrated and multidisciplinary issues and from rigid and formal working methods to smaller expert groups and greater organizational flexibility. The nature of the output has also changed from general reports to an increased use of practical guidelines and country-oriented studies and experts missions. The following list of recent guidelines and ongoing projects gives an idea of the direction that the Committee is taking:

- Housing Policy Guidelines: The experience of the ECE with special reference to countries in transition (ECE/HBP/84, 1993);
- Land Administration Guidelines (ECE/HBP/96, 1996);
- Strategies to implement human settlements policies on urban renewal and housing modernization (ECE/HBP/97, 1996);
- ECE Compendium of model provisions for building regulations (ECE/HBP/81/Rev.1, 1996);
- Guidelines on sustainable human settlements planning and management (ECE/HBP/95, 1996);
- Country profiles on the housing sector: Bulgaria (ECE/HBP/101, 1996); Poland (ECE/HBP/107, 1998); Slovakia (ECE/HBP/111, 1999); Lithuania (ECE/HBP/117, 2000);
- Housing finance, key concepts and terms (ECE/HBP/102, 1998);
- Major trends characterizing human settlements development in the ECE region (ECE/HBP/108, 1998);
- Case studies on the implementation of urban renewal and housing modernization: Vienna (ECE/HBP/106, 1998); Bratislava (ECE/HBP/112, 1999); Budapest (ECE/HBP/115, 2000); Ljubljana (ECE/HBP/116, 2000); and Evaluation (HBP/1999/9);
- Human settlements trends in central and eastern Europe (ECE/HBP/105, 1997);
- Statement on social and economic benefits of good land administration (1998).

11. In conclusion, there are certain elements in the experience of ECE which are valuable for future work: the diversity of its member countries in terms of culture, traditions, lifestyles; the scientific quality of its work; its policy-oriented and practical approach; focus on real needs of member States; its continuity. The ECE Committee on Human Settlements has no equivalent. It is the only forum where the countries of central and eastern Europe cooperate with western countries on an equal footing. This contributes to social and political stability and to economic development in the region and its cities. Cooperation on human settlements in the ECE region should be an instrument to promote economic and social cohesion and bring the peoples of the ECE region closer together socially and economically.

II. TRENDS AND DEVELOPMENTS AFFECTING HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

A. Globalization

12. Over the past fifteen years or so, a number of factors have profoundly changed the outlook for global political, economic and social development: the increasingly widespread acceptance of democratic institutions and market-based economic systems; the liberalization of trade and international capital flows; the growth in the number and influence of transnational corporations; and rapid technological innovations, in particular in information and communication technologies.

13. At the same time a number of challenges have arisen: (a) globalization and new technologies could facilitate more environmentally friendly patterns of economic development, but these technological gains could be offset by pollution and an excessive resource use as a result of increased economic activity; (b) economic integration requires further liberalization of trade, investments and financial flows, but many emerging economies are concerned about further opening up their markets to imports from developed countries. Globalization is sometimes blamed for unemployment and widening income inequalities. Economic subordination and income inequalities could lead to social segregation in cities.

14. Globalization can profoundly affect the structure of communities. This impact of globalization is marked by: (a) an increasing internationalization of metropolitan regions as regards both capital and labour; (b) changes in the distribution of responsibilities between the public and the private sector; (c) a stronger role for a few major cities within a country; (d) social and economic polarization within cities.

15. Globalization, reinforced by European integration, is intensifying competition among cities. Large European cities are attracting labour resources and reorganizing economic and residential activities. Technological change - new information technologies in particular - is favouring these cities as centres of service, education, know-how and capital, and as gateways to international markets.

B. Sustainable development

16. The concept of sustainable development, introduced into the international agenda by the Brundtland Report in 1987 and the Rio Conference in 1992, has become a global policy framework. Sustainable development is based on the principle of fulfilment of present needs without compromising the possibilities for development of future generations. In the planning, building and management of human settlements this strengthens the need for:

- (a) Appropriate building technologies and ecologically sound designs;
- (b) Low energy consumption and promotion of renewable energy;
- (c) Selective and efficient use of resources, recycling;
- (d) Ecological principles to guide settlements development and land use;
- (e) Public participation in the decision-making process.

17. Sustainable consumption covers a number of key issues: improving the quality of life; improving resource efficiency; minimizing wastes; taking a life-cycle perspective; and taking into account the equity dimension. While all ECE countries intend to increase their income and gross national product, it is clear that economic growth in many instances conflicts with sustainable consumption goals. Present trends indicate that the increasing volume of consumption more than outweighs improvements in energy and resource use efficiency. However, there are examples of increased economic output with reduced use of resources. There is also a growing awareness that reforms in national economic policies are required to ensure that the prices of goods and services reflect their environmental costs.

18. To bring the human settlements of the ECE region into a sustainable development pattern will take time. Existing physical infrastructures, housing stocks, patterns of energy use in human settlements, urban transport and waste management, are still insufficiently sustainable in most countries and communities. Many patterns are rooted in cultural habits and are exacerbated by commercial pressures. Action to adapt human settlements structures and infrastructure and develop new attitudes that promote sustainable consumption choices will have to take place gradually with the active participation of all stakeholders.

19. The situation in central and eastern Europe during the transition period presents opportunities for both sustainable urban development and protection of the historic heritage. Most countries in transition have adopted the concept of sustainable development and its challenges and aim to implement Agenda 21. However, sustainable development policies are rarely a prominent part of their urban development programmes and practices.

20. In practice, their success will depend on the extent to which they can improve environmental quality by developing more effective urban services and changing lifestyles, rather than by reducing the volume of goods and services. In some countries, there are many conflicts at the municipal level between commercial development and sustainable development, which is aggravated by incomplete legal frameworks and underdeveloped institutional structures.

C. European integration and market economy reforms in the ECE region

21. In the European Union, the fundamental objectives of human settlements development are: (a) balanced socio-economic development of regions; (b) improving the quality of life; (c) responsible management of natural resources and protection of the environment; and (d) rational use of land.

22. A number of countries are in the process of becoming members of the European Union. This will strengthen their trade relations with the European Union and strengthen subregions that are geographically close to the west. However, integration can be hampered by inadequate urban networks and infrastructure, international migration and discrepancies in living standards between urban and rural areas.

23. The restructuring of agriculture in these countries will in many instances reduce rural employment. Large migration from rural areas further

weakens public and private services in these areas. This trend constitutes a major problem and needs a strong political response in social, economic and spatial planning areas.

24. In many countries in transition, urban networks were well developed during the socialist period through the creation of industrial centres. Now these industrial cities are affected by economic restructuring. The transition to a market economy favours trade and service functions, which tend to develop in major cities, where communication and transport infrastructures are more sophisticated than in the old industrial centres and small towns. When considering the effects of the war in south-eastern Europe, it is important to note that they are falling on countries where the economic and political reform was much more hesitant than in other countries in transition.

25. Despite differences in housing problems, housing policy goals are in the main similar throughout the region: how to satisfy the housing needs of people with little or no money, how to get rid of illegal housing construction and mitigate the problems and risks of such settlements by providing basic infrastructure.

26. Through its activities on urban and spatial development, the ECE Committee on Human Settlements, which constitutes a forum for countries of the European Union, of central and eastern Europe and of the Mediterranean can advance European integration.

D. Demographic trends

27. Immigration from outside Europe, in decline by the mid-1980s, rose very rapidly to a peak in 1992, when the gross inflow was over 2 million persons. Renewed inflows in recent years, especially of asylum seekers and illegal immigrants, have again reached record levels and pushed immigration control and the assimilation of foreign populations to the top of political agendas. More migratory movements are now clandestine and illegal, increasingly in the hands of organized traffickers and part of a multi-billion dollar international migration industry.

28. In the 1990s, the expected mass migration of east European and former Soviet citizens did not materialize, although migration rates have increased. Ethnic migration continues to dominate in eastern Europe, following the opening of frontiers and the break-up of old communities. This is relevant to the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), with return migration to the Russian Federation, and in particular to the Balkan region, with the break-up of the former Yugoslavia, and the ensuing conflicts in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and more recently Kosovo. Eastern Europe has also become the destination of considerable migration, including transit migrants from south-eastern Europe, mostly irregular. Many of these migrants, discouraged by the barriers to entry into western Europe, may become permanent residents, creating new integration problems in eastern Europe.

29. The demographic trends in Europe have important consequences:
- The number of households increases and their average size falls. This means that demand for housing grows at a faster rate than the population;
 - The number of one-parent families and 'reconstituted' families increases, thereby raising the number of children who experience unconventional parenting (about 25 per cent or more in some countries);
 - Increases in life expectation also contribute to the growth in the number of households.

30. The ageing population and the related dependency burden will be accelerated by the decline in fertility. The trends in dependency can be forecast since most of the actors have already been born. Some south European countries, with relatively youthful population age-structures in the past, are undergoing exceptionally rapid ageing. These countries are acquiring heavier age-dependency burdens than countries in northern Europe. Immigration is not a solution to population ageing because it does not affect the structure of indigenous families.

31. Population ageing undermines the solvency of pay-as-you-earn State pension and other welfare schemes, and its implications for medical costs are serious. All countries will incur costs from population ageing. How manageable the process will be, depends on the national birth rate, and on national political and economic factors. Countries with relatively high birth rates, mostly in north-west Europe, will have relatively manageable ageing processes. If birth rates continue to decrease in southern and eastern Europe, the consequent problems in these countries will be much less tractable.

III. THE GOALS AND CHALLENGES

32. The goal of the ECE Committee on Human Settlements is to promote the sustainable development of human settlements in the ECE region, fostering economic and social prosperity and supporting democratic governance. Improving the quality of life is at the heart of the strategy.

Challenge 1: **Promoting a system of meaningful and democratic governance that responds to the needs of local communities**

33. Governance could be defined as the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at and between all levels, comprising the mechanisms, processes and institutions by which the authority is realized. The reorientation towards market economies, with its political and social change in the human settlements sector of some countries, has led to widespread administrative and economic reforms aimed at adapting the role of governments in housing and urban development. The State is no longer regarded as the main provider of housing and urban development, but rather as a partner, catalyst and facilitator within the governance system. Democratization is impeded by a lack of local links and the inefficiency of public control; the small role of grassroots organizations; and the weakness of local governments and budgets. One of the key issues facing many municipalities is how to reduce and subsequently

eradicate corruption, which negatively affects the provision and maintenance of urban services, leads to inefficiency, and injustice, and discourages investments in the local economy. In disaster-prone areas, local authorities need risk management strategies to prepare for major disasters (industrial explosions, earthquakes, landslides, fires, avalanches, etc).

34. Meaningful governance is, among other things, participatory, transparent, accountable and efficient. The focus on governance is an indication of a change in the overall strategies of the past, when the main focus was on economic and financial issues.

35. Good governance implies an important role for the government and private owners in the planning and programming at national, regional and local levels. Public participation is instrumental to ensuring that the political, social and economic priorities are based on a broad societal consensus. Good governance also implies a strong role for the private sector as a source of opportunities, employment and income. Attention must also be given to the synergies among and between actors.

36. The Committee will advocate:

- Identification of a more coherent governance framework for human settlements in pursuing sustainable development;
- Assistance to ECE countries to develop national programmes for good governance of the human settlements sector. They should be based on analyses of experiences and best practices across the region and at the national and local levels;
- Policy focus on:
 - (i) Key political institutions of the State related to urban and regional development, including legal and judicial systems;
 - (ii) Distribution of the financial and administrative decision-making among central, regional, and local levels;
 - (iii) Integration of major groups and individuals into the policy-making process;
 - (iv) Management of public and private sector institutions responsible for economic development and social issues;
 - (v) Reform of the civil service engaged in urban development issues and training of managers and professionals.

Challenge 2: Improving urban environmental performance

37. Developing a concept for sustainable and liveable cities is a major challenge for the Committee. It requires an integrated decision-making framework and a fundamental shift in traditional perspectives. There is a need to change the focus from curative measures to measures based on anticipation and prevention, and from managing the environment to managing demands on the environment from individuals, transport and business at the local level.

38. Urban regeneration is essential for promoting and enriching the quality of the urban environment for the benefit of those who live and work in towns and cities. Through it, new development opportunities are created with increased and integrated economic, social and cultural dimensions.

Regeneration plays a key role in delivering against the agenda of sustainable development, since the outward expansion of cities needs to be stemmed, and priority focused on finding innovative solutions to unlock former industrial sites that are now left derelict and that blight the urban setting of many cities. Urban regeneration is a dynamic process, which illustrates how cities are continuously renewing, reshaping and recreating as they adapt to new challenges. But regeneration does not happen automatically, it requires concerted and persistent efforts.

39. Urban regeneration could be seen as an instrument to develop a liveable city. It could be achieved through a comprehensive integration of economic, social, housing and planning policies. Intra-urban disparities in unemployment used to be regarded as a local policy concern of little relevance to national economic policy. However, cities are instrumental in wealth creation. Social justice and equality remain predominant concerns, but in many countries they remain mere concerns. Urban regeneration cannot be separated from developments in rural areas. Regional and local coordination, within participatory processes, is essential for the regeneration of human settlements.

40. In the regeneration context, one response has been the emergence of horizontal cross-sectoral working arrangements between public and other sectors, or statutory services, which has served to strengthen relationships between the various actors and interests involved, for example, in research, policy formulation, project implementation and management. Closer cooperation can lead to better targeting of services to urban communities.

41. Numerous initiatives have been launched in many cities and towns in the ECE region to encourage sustainable consumption patterns. Many locally initiated projects and programmes aim at raising public awareness about the environmental impact of individual consumption, trying to steer consumers' choices towards environmentally sound goods and services, and promoting the sustainable use of energy, water, raw materials and land by individuals and communities. There is a need to dismantle barriers (e.g. regulations, economic and fiscal disincentives) to the promotion of sustainable consumption initiatives at the local level. It is also necessary to introduce incentives, and to encourage close cooperation and partnerships between central, local and regional authorities and major groups such as consumer associations and non-governmental environmental organizations.

42. Effective land-use planning is indispensable to avoid unsustainable outward expansion of towns and cities. Proper planning instruments are required at the local level to prevent powerful business actors from damaging the city's cultural heritage. Restoration of urban heritage, archaeology and architecture help to link cities with their past, providing a sense of identity and cultural richness. Urban design should improve social communication and interaction and facilitate the integration of commercial, institutional and residential facilities. The idea should be to create a more balanced community, as opposed to the dormitory type, with a wide range of job opportunities in local businesses, community services, schools, health care and industry. Changes in the shape of settlements should aim at

improving the attractiveness and quality of residential and business areas, inter alia, by:

- Achieving an optimal mixture of living and working areas applying a spatial proximity principle;
- Strengthening social cohesion;
- Maintaining, renewing and safeguarding the cultural and architectural heritage;
- Improving infrastructures, like schools, shops for daily provisions, recreational and sports facilities;
- Improving traffic management (e.g. speed limitations and traffic restrictions for vehicles, expanding public transport, cycle tracks and footpaths, reducing air pollution and noise); reconstruction of the transport infrastructure;
- Creating a network of green corridors, maintaining natural landscapes, protecting forests.

43. Sustainable development and consumption patterns require a process of awareness raising leading to a gradual change in attitudes at all levels of the administration, and on the part of individuals and the business community. Interactive policy-making is an opportunity to bring together the expertise of governmental and non-governmental bodies in developing sustainable alternatives. In this regard, open and credible two-way communication and feedback should be encouraged among all stakeholders.

44. The Committee will advocate:

- Developing policy recommendations, methodologies and guidelines on sustainable patterns in human settlements development, in particular for urban transport;
- Preparing studies and organizing workshops on urban renewal and sustainable urban development;
- Facilitating the dissemination of best practices in sustainable human settlements development, in particular local experience.

Challenge 3: Facilitating social cohesion and security

45. Cities have always represented socially and culturally heterogeneous arenas with a mix of ethnic and cultural heritage. Failure to strike a balance between long- and short-term needs and failure to establish a political, economic and social environment that provides a stable and adequate standard of living, and equal opportunities for all nationalities and ethnic groups in a country would contribute significantly to political instability, ethnic conflict and problems related to refugees and asylum seekers.

46. Social cohesion can be described as both a process and an outcome. It is the ongoing process of developing a community of shared values, shared challenges and equal opportunities within a country. It should be based on a sense of trust, hope and reciprocity among different groups of the population. Social cohesion can also be interpreted as an absence of social exclusion. Social exclusion not only offends against human dignity, it denies people their fundamental human rights. It also leads to marginalization,

withdrawal or violence, thereby undermining the democratic foundations of societies.

47. In countries of central and eastern Europe, transition to a market economy has gone hand in hand with the disintegration of the social services of the communist period. In many ECE countries, social protection has declined considerably, resulting in poor health care, educational and social infrastructure, a degradation of housing and living conditions and increased poverty. Certain groups of the population, such as the unemployed, refugees and ethnic minorities, are particularly vulnerable to social exclusion and in some countries live almost in squatter settlements.

48. The Committee will advocate:

- Promoting activities and the exchange of experience on the supply of low-rent housing and programmes to build and modernize the social housing stock;
- Encouraging town planning policies that prevent the emergence of ghettos, promote security particularly for children, women and ethnic minorities;
- Supporting the preservation of ethnic minority cultures in the planning of human settlements development and reconstruction;
- Policies and recommendations to address the legal protection of tenants and sub-tenants of ethnic and low-income population groups;
- Establishing a system of recording landownership, land use and value, equal protection before the law for all ethnic groups.

Challenge 4: Promoting market reform in the housing and urban sector

49. Since the early 1990s, the countries of central and eastern Europe and CIS have made remarkable progress in the transition from a centrally planned economy to a market-oriented system. Those profound changes set new directions in urban and regional planning, housing development and modernization. They also identified opportunities and constraints within which central, regional and local governments work together.

50. The housing sector is an integral part of a market economy. Thus, improving the performance of this sector is, for several reasons, an important factor for the success of the ongoing transition process in central and eastern Europe. There is also a definite need for the countries in transition to provide decent housing and social protection for needy households. Besides this social objective, the housing sector can be used as a vehicle for economic growth and as an important factor in job creation. To this end, there is a need for adequate government actions on the basis of a coherent and comprehensive housing reform concept. At the same time, governments should provide an adequate framework for the private sector's activities. There is also a need to deal with the consequences of mass privatization, a result of which is a complex mixture of public and private ownership, owner-occupied and rental dwellings under one roof. Managing such residential estates can be problematic.

51. Following the collapse of the centrally planned system of economic and territorial development, urban and spatial planning was initially neglected.

In recent years, however, most countries in transition have made progress in developing new urban and spatial planning legislation and institutional structures. Nevertheless, the legal framework and institutional set-up are still incomplete. Three major problems are evident at the local level: (a) fragmentation of the planning process; (b) political decisions are taken on an ad hoc basis without adequate administrative preparation and strategic planning; and (c) lack of professional staff and financing in municipalities.

52. The Committee will advocate:

- Assistance to governments, relevant national agencies and institutions to evaluate and redirect, if needed, their housing policies so as to eliminate bottlenecks in the housing sector and establish long-term strategies;
- Facilitation of the establishment of legal, economic and institutional conditions for public and private investments in the housing sector; setting public/private sector priorities for immediate actions;
- Building up staff skills, particularly management and planning capabilities in municipalities, within the context of overall assistance to public administration reform;
- Advisory assistance to national authorities of countries in transition on spatial planning; institutional structure; developing practical instruments for spatial planning, local transport, cadastre and taxation systems;
- Support in designing national housing policies and programmes (including self-help activities) that, in practice, aim at providing socially deprived population groups and refugees with adequate housing;
- Assistance in reforming spatial and urban planning legislation;
- Preparation of practical guidelines and recommendations on legislation, organization, financing and management of housing condominiums;
- Exchange of experience and recommendations on developing the banking sector so that it provides lending for housing, construction loans to developers, advances to builders and mortgages to households.

Challenge 5: Improving land and real estate markets and securing private rights in land

53. The societies which have created internal stability and a functioning market economy recognize that to a great degree this was achieved thanks to an effective system for registering private land rights and an inexpensive system of real estate transfers. Appropriate land administration and land information systems are vital for land management, urban and regional planning, housing, the banking sector, taxation, agriculture and environmental protection.

54. In view of the current progress in information technology and globalization, all market economies of the ECE region are engaged in modernizing their traditional cadastre and land registration systems. The reforms are needed to improve customer services, to better involve the private sector and to have accurate data available at the right time.

55. To support transition to a market economy, countries of central and eastern Europe are engaged in establishing land registration systems, which

will guarantee title to land and real property. The backlog in registration of property rights is a major constrain in the development of real estate and housing markets, particularly in the urban areas of these countries.

56. The Committee will advocate:

- Preparation of guidelines and model provisions in basic land management legislation (legal rights in real property; registration of real property; mortgages; transfer of ownership; land-use restrictions, etc.);
- Exchange of information on land administration issues (real property formation and valuation);
- Policy advice on strengthening institutional, organizational and management (institutional and management capacity building; cost recovery; development of professional skills; citizen participation; etc);
- Support to land administration activities of and cooperation with donor and lending organizations (World Bank, EU assistance programmes, USAID, etc.);
- Provision of technical and expert assistance to countries in need.