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UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE-EXPOSITION ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

Progress report of the Executive Director

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The General Assembly, at its twenty-seventh session, having considered the report of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment 1/ and the report of the Secretary-General thereon 2/ adopted, among other resolutions related to human settlements, resolution 3001 (XXVII) of 15 December 1972, by which it decided to hold a Conference-Exposition on Human Settlements. The consideration underlying this decision was stated in the preamble to the resolution as follows:

"Desiring to maintain the momentum of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in this area through a conference-exposition on human settlements, the preparation for which should generate a review of policies and programmes for human settlements, national and international, and should result in the selection and support of a series of demonstration projects on human settlements sponsored by individual countries and the United Nations".

2. By operative paragraph 2 of resolution 3001 (XXVII), the General Assembly accepted the offer of the Government of Canada to act as host to the Conference-Exposition. By operative paragraph 3, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General:

"to prepare and submit to the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme at its first session a report containing a plan for and anticipated costs of the Conference-Exposition".

3. Accordingly, a report was prepared by the Secretary-General and submitted to the Governing Council at its first session. 3/

4. With a view to advancing the preparations for the Conference-Exposition, the Executive Director, in cooperation with the Government of Canada, convened a meeting of experts to discuss substantive themes for the agenda of the Conference-Exposition and the criteria for the selection of demonstration projects. That meeting was held at Vancouver from 8 to 12 May 1973 and the report on the meeting was also submitted to the Governing Council. 4/

5. After considering these reports, the Governing Council recommended that the General Assembly consider endorsing the recommendations therein concerning the purposes, objectives, and anticipated costs of the Conference-Exposition on Human Settlements.

1/ Report of the Conference held at Stockholm, 16 June 1972, United Nations publication, Sales No. E.73.II.A.14.

2/ A/8783 and Add.1, Add.1/Corr.1 and Add.2

3/ Plan for and anticipated costs of the Conference-Exposition. (UNEP/GC/6, 12 April 1973).

4/ UNEP/GC/L.2 of 29 May 1973.

The Governing Council also made recommendations concerning the main purposes of the Conference-Exposition, the preparatory process for the Conference-Exposition, and the need for an information programme. It further suggested that a small conference secretariat be established in New York to undertake the preparations. 5/

6. As regards the financial implications of the Conference-Exposition, which were set out in the Report of the Secretary-General 6/, the Governing Council recommended:

".... that the basic costs of the Conference-Exposition be met by the regular budget of the United Nations and that a portion of the costs, especially as regards the 'Exposition and Preparatory Process', be met by the Environment Fund;" 7/

In addition, it gave:

"interim approval to that part of the costs to be borne by the Fund which is necessary before the second session of the Council, when a more detailed review of the total of such costs should be undertaken, in order to enable work on the Conference-Exposition to start immediately". 8/

7. After the Governing Council's session, the Executive Director, in co-operation with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, decided to establish a small Preparatory Planning Group as a project financed by the Environment Fund. 9/ This Group began the work of preliminary planning and preparation for the Conference-Exposition before the consideration by the General Assembly of the Governing Council's recommendations and the establishment of a Conference Secretariat.

8. The following progress report summarizes the action taken by the General Assembly at its twenty-eighth session and the work of the Preparatory Planning Group. In all aspects of its work, the Group has maintained close relations with representatives of the Host Government.

II. Objectives of the Conference-Exposition 10/

9. The main objectives of the Conference-Exposition, as recommended by the Governing Council of UNEP, 11/ were stated as follows:

- "(a) To stimulate innovation, serve as a means for the exchange of experience, and ensure the widest possible dissemination of new ideas and technologies in the field of human settlements;

5/ Report of the Governing Council on the work of its first session, General Assembly, Official Records: Twenty-Eighth Session, Supplement No. 25 (A/9025), Decision 4 (I).

6/ UNEP/GC/6/Add.1 of 14 June 1973.

7/ Decision 4 (I), Part B, para. 2.

8/ Ibid., para. 3.

9/ The amount of \$106,000 was authorized for the project, including all costs and expenses for the Group and its related activities.

10/ The Preparatory Planning Group has suggested that the Conference-Exposition on Human Settlements should be referred to as "Habitat '76".

11/ Decision 4 (I), Part A, para. 2 (1).

- (b) To formulate and make recommendations for an international programme in this field which will assist Governments;
- (c) To stimulate interest in developing appropriate financial systems and institutions for human settlements among those making financial resources available and those in a position to use such resources."

10. By its resolution 3128 (XXVIII) of 13 December 1973 on the subject of the Conference-Exposition, the General Assembly decided that the Conference-Exposition should take place at Vancouver, Canada, from 31 May to 11 June 1976, and endorsed in general the recommendations of the Governing Council regarding the purposes, objectives and method of financing of the Conference-Exposition, as well as those concerning its preparatory process. The Assembly established a Preparatory Committee for the Conference-Exposition, to advise the Secretary-General.

11. By its resolution 3132 (XXVIII) of the same date, the Assembly also endorsed the decisions of the Governing Council including that concerning the Council's Action Plan. 12/ In that Action Plan, the Executive Director is requested to perform tasks related to a number of programme areas, among them, "Human Settlements, human health, habitat and well-being" and "Land, water and desertification". "Habitat '76" will be a focus for certain UNEP activities in these areas.

III. Budget for the Conference-Exposition

12. A detailed budget for the Conference-Exposition was submitted by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly at its twenty-eighth session. 13/ This budget was prepared by the Preparatory Planning Group, in consultation with the Secretariat Departments concerned.

13. After considering the Secretary-General's proposals, the General Assembly approved an allocation of \$2,614,900 from the regular United Nations budget to meet the costs of the Conference.

14. The Secretary-General's note indicated that, in addition, the cost of the Exposition component, to be financed outside the regular budget, would amount to \$3,072,300.

IV. Definition of the agenda for the Conference-Exposition

15. While the themes proposed for the Conference-Exposition by the Vancouver Meeting of Experts 14/ received general endorsement at the first session of the Governing Council, it was suggested that they be further studied and defined more closely. 15/

12/ Governing Council decision 1 (I).

13/ Note by the Secretary-General of 30 October 1973 (A/9238).

14/ UNEP/GC/L.2

15/ Report of the Governing Council (A/9025), para. 101 and decision 4 (I).

16. Accordingly, the Preparatory Planning Group convened at United Nations Headquarters, in October and November 1973, a series of six consultations on the proposed themes. Representatives of United Nations bodies, specialized agencies, inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations, universities and research institutes were invited to participate in a full discussion of the themes and the mode of their presentation.

17. Taking into consideration the valuable contributions thus obtained from many sources, the Group has proposed that the central topics of the agenda for the Conference-Exposition on Human Settlements should be:

I. Human needs in human settlements: the quality of life

II. Settlements and national development planning

III. Planning and managing human settlements

IV. International resources for human settlements

V. Global situation of housing and human settlements

VI. Community technology and eco-systems.

18. The proposed documentation for these themes, as well as work plans and specific tasks for consultants, have been further elaborated by the Preparatory Planning Group, for submission to the Preparatory Committee for the Conference-Exposition. Bibliographical and other materials have also been assembled.

V. Planning of the Exposition

19. The Exposition is designed to be an action programme in itself, intended to gather and disseminate information about innovative technologies for human settlements and to encourage work on questions within the scope of the Environment Programme, such as developing low-cost building techniques, waste disposal and sewage treatment facilities and improved water technologies, improving the quality of air, reducing noise and increasing fire protection technology, among others. In fact, the plans for "Habitat '76" are designed to relate it to major elements of the UNEP programme of work in human settlements, so that "Habitat '76" itself will be a component of that programme and an important means for carrying it out.

20. The Preparatory Planning Group has begun work on linking the objectives and actions of the Environment Programme to potential exhibit components, by concentrating on solutions, on existing technology and on projects already "on-site", which would illustrate technological advances, planning techniques, applications of low-cost housing techniques, self-help and mutual aid methods, and other human settlements problems, as well as techniques for avoiding waste in general, for conserving energy and natural resources and for re-cycling of materials.

21. The Exposition also constitutes an innovative approach to a solution-oriented Conference and is intended to help the Conference achieve its objectives. The films and exhibits will help focus attention on real problems and real solutions; at the Conference itself, they will provide easy access to information and communication.

22. As far as possible, the Exposition components will be movable, so that they can be sent to interested countries after the close of "Habitat '76", thus supporting action to deal with settlements problems by sharing new technologies and disseminating the information amassed for the Conference-Exposition.
23. The Preparatory Planning Group envisages that there will be two aspects of the Exposition: United Nations exhibits, and contributions by Governments (termed variously the Experience-Exchange or the data bank). Plans for the United Nations exhibit will depend on the budget authorized for the Exposition as a whole, which is to be considered by the Governing Council at its second session.
24. The Preparatory Planning Group has begun planning for the components of the Exposition, in cooperation with the Host Government and specialized consultants. The proposed exhibition sites in Vancouver have been visited and meetings held with the Host Committee in Vancouver.
25. A consultant has been engaged to prepare the first keynote exhibit, which will be portable, and intended to illustrate the theme "Global situation of housing and human settlements". It is expected that this first exhibit can be completed and shown by the time of the twenty-ninth session of the General Assembly in 1975, in advance of the Conference-Exposition. Considerable progress has been made in planning for another exhibit which will demonstrate the theme "Community technology and eco-systems".
26. Governments are invited to participate in the Exposition. Preferably, the form which their participation should take is that of film or audio-visual presentations of human settlements problems and solutions. Technical specifications and format suggestions for such presentations will be provided in due course.
27. At the Conference, facilities will be provided for viewing films of the demonstration projects, thus allowing rapid visual communication. These films, like the United Nations exhibits, will be available after the close of the Conference for use in interested countries, thus increasing their information value and ensuring that money spent on participation in the Exposition will have multiple value.
28. Governments may submit a number of projects for presentation at "Habitat '76". The Preparatory Planning Group has drawn up a list of suggestions for evaluating submissions.
29. The actual process of selecting demonstration projects has been examined only briefly. Decisions on the inclusion of films must be made ultimately by the Preparatory Committee, yet there are several ways of making this selection, involving, inter alia, the use of the regional economic commissions. Tentative dates for the selection process have been set as follows:
- (a) Proposals from Governments to the Secretary-General of the Conference-Exposition: to be submitted by 30 June 1974;

- (b) Evaluation of proposals and recommendations by panels of experts at the level of the regional economic commissions: to be completed by 31 August 1974;
- (c) Selection by an international panel of experts: to be undertaken by 30 September 1974.

30. Meanwhile, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (Centre for Housing, Building and Planning) has identified several technical cooperation projects in its field which are deemed appropriate for presentation at Vancouver. The ECAFE Regional Seminar on Rural Housing and Community Facilities, to be held in Bandung in March 1974, is also expected to produce useful examples of projects suitable for presentation. The most recent meeting of the Executive Secretaries of the regional economic commissions (21-22 January 1974) discussed the contributions which the commissions can make towards the preparatory process for "Habitat '76".

31. Furthermore, special attention has been given to the potential role of international non-governmental organizations in furthering the objectives of "Habitat '76". A number of those organizations, as well as professional bodies, have already started to consider what they could do to maximize their impact on the Conference-Exposition. A calendar of relevant meetings of such organizations and bodies has been drawn up by the Preparatory Planning Group.

VI. Public information programme

32. The entire Conference-Exposition is conceived as an "information programme" designed to share techniques and solutions. The information programme itself has consequently been oriented along these lines, with provisions for obtaining contributions from appropriate members of the United Nations family and other international organizations and for utilizing these same channels to disseminate information.

33. A consultant was engaged by the Centre for Economic and Social Information of the Office of Public Information (CESI) to prepare an outline and budget for information activities. The sum of \$640,000 was originally proposed for the information programme, though this will undoubtedly be somewhat reduced after review, in order to comply with the budget approved by the General Assembly. In cooperation with CESI consultant, a plan for information activities was prepared, including outlined strategies and operating guidelines. No action has been taken on these proposals, pending selection of the staff responsible for information activities.

34. The first number of an information newsletter, concerning "Habitat '76" was issued in January 1974; it is intended to publish further numbers regularly.

VII. Preparations for the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the Conference-Exposition

35. As mentioned in the Note of the Secretary-General (A/9238), there will be three sessions of the Preparatory Committee which was established by General Assembly resolution 3128 (XXVIII) to advise the Secretary-General on preparations for the Conference-Exposition. All three sessions are scheduled to take place at United Nations Headquarters. The first of these will be a two-week session to be held as soon as possible after the second session of the Governing Council.

The Preparatory Planning Group has prepared background material and documentation for that session, including a proposed agenda, a note on the themes of the agenda for the Conference-Exposition, a note on the status of preparations for the Conference-Exposition (including arrangements made by the Host Government); a note on the concept of selection of demonstration projects; a note on proposed documentation for the Conference-Exposition; and a note on the content and format of the Exposition. The Group has also assisted, in co-operation with the Host Government, in the preparation of a special slide-show presentation regarding "Habitat '76".

VIII. Recommendation

36. The foregoing report has summarized the progress made in preparing for the Conference-Exposition on Human Settlements during the period since the first session of the Governing Council. This preparatory work has been carried out as an integral part of the programme of work approved by the Governing Council. As has been mentioned above, 16/ the General Assembly has approved the allocation of \$2,614,900 from the United Nations regular budget, for expenditures related to the Conference. The Assembly has, however, in effect left to the Governing Council the decision as to the financing of the Exposition, involving expenditures estimated at \$3,072,300.

37. The Executive Director believes, on the basis of the preparatory activities undertaken to date, that the work to be carried out for the Exposition is essentially and directly related to the priority subject area of "Human Settlements, Human health, habitat and well-being", as well as to other priority areas in the Environment Programme. This work may therefore be regarded as forming part of the Programme.

38. The Executive Director recommends, therefore, that the Governing Council accept in principle responsibility for the financing of the Exposition component of the Conference-Exposition and requests that he be initially authorized to utilize the resources of the Environment Fund in the amount of 1.5 million dollars for financing the exposition component. Every effort should be made between now and the next session of the Governing Council to obtain contributions to the remaining portion of the budget from other sources within and outside the United Nations system. In the light of the results of these efforts in relation to the requirements for additional funds, the Governing Council at its third session would be asked to approve a further contribution from the Fund of UNEP to assure the necessary funding of the work for the Exposition.

16/ Para. 13.