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COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

Sixty-fifth session

(Geneva, 20-22 September 2004)

(Item 6 of the provisional agenda)

DRAFT PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR 2005-2006

Introduction

1. The present note provides information to assist the Committee in discussing and establishing its programme of work, the duration of each activity, as well as its methods of work. The Committee's Bureau met twice between the sixty-fourth and sixty-fifth sessions of the Committee to review the programme of work and its implementation.
2. The draft programme of work is set out below. When discussing its programme of work, the Committee may wish to keep in mind that the programme should reflect the real commitment of member countries and their willingness to contribute to its implementation in terms of expertise, human and financial resources.
3. At its sixty-fourth session the Committee stressed the importance of linking the priorities identified in the Habitat Agenda, in the Declaration and the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development as well as in the Millennium Declaration with its programme of work. The Committee acknowledged that policy reforms on social stability and equity needed to become a critical element of the national, regional and local strategies for sustainable human settlements and that measures should be taken to prevent illegal housing development and the promotion of self-help activities (ECE/HBP/129, para. 11).
4. At the Committee's session, the secretariat will report on the Human Settlements Trust Fund's expenditures and balance in 2004. It is important to stress that without the Trust Fund the Committee would not have been able to carry out its programme of work. However, the Trust Fund needs to be maintained at a level that allows the Committee to fulfil its tasks. It is,

therefore, important that countries should continue to make either general contributions to the Trust Fund or specific contributions to earmarked programme elements.

5. The Committee's sixty-sixth session is scheduled to take place in Geneva on 19-21 September 2005. The Working Party on Land Administration will hold its fourth session in Geneva on 21-22 November 2005.

Proposed decisions by the Committee

6. In the light of the discussion, the Committee may wish to:

- (a) Take into account the outcome of the first UNECE Regional Implementation Forum on Sustainable Development and the 12th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development;
- (b) Take note of the progress made in the implementation of the programme of work;
- (c) Discuss and adopt its programme of work for 2005-2006, as presented below;
- (d) Call upon Governments to make either general contributions to the Human Settlements Trust Fund or specific contributions to earmarked programme elements.

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7. At its sixty-fifth session, the Committee is expected to discuss the UNECE Strategy for a Sustainable Quality of Life in Human Settlements in the 21st Century, especially the relevance of its goals, and to revise the Strategy taking into account the new developments in the region as well as the particular needs of the countries of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

8. The Committee may decide to entrust its Bureau with assessing the Strategy and putting forward a revised version to be discussed for adoption at a high-level/ministerial segment of its next session in September 2005.

SUBPROGRAMME 10 - HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

10.1.1 Country profiles on the housing sector

Description: The housing sector has a critical role to play in ensuring the success of economic and social development in the UNECE region and the reform in countries in transition. At the same time, the transition to a market economy has had a profound impact on housing policy implementation and management. This project represents a tool for Governments to analyse their housing policies, strategies, institutional and financial frameworks for the housing sector and to compare the progress made internationally. The country profile is a process-oriented exercise. At its core is an analytical study on the housing sector, drafted by independent international experts. It draws on the Committee's work on housing statistics. Recommendations for improving policies and practices are an essential part of the programme. It also aims to provide information to potential investors.

Work accomplished: The country profiles on the housing sector of Bulgaria, Poland, Slovakia, Lithuania, Romania, the Republic of Moldova, Albania and Armenia have been published.

The study for the Russian Federation (started in April 2003) was finalized and that for Serbia and Montenegro (started in May 2004) is being prepared. The concept of the country profiles has been revised so as to strengthen the focus on thematic areas which are of particular concern for the country under review. Follow-up activities related to the implementation of the recommendations in the country profiles were organized in Romania in October 2002 and in Albania in 2004. The workshop in Albania was organized to evaluate the developments in the housing sector since the preparation of the country profile in 2002.

The country profile project is presented on the Committee's web site :
<http://www.unece.org/env/hs/cph>.

Work to be undertaken: The Committee will continue its activities for the preparation of country profiles on the housing sector. The following countries have stated or restated their interest in having a country profile carried out: Belarus, Ukraine and Hungary.

Further workshops or ad hoc meetings of experts will be held to discuss the results of policy implementation as a follow-up to the studies' recommendations and to provide additional expertise in specific areas where needed.

The Ministry of Urban Development of Armenia is planning to organize a workshop in early spring 2005.

Cooperation with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the European Union and the World Bank will be maintained and strengthened.

The Committee will also undertake a study on trends and progress in housing reforms in South-Eastern Europe in cooperation with the Council of Europe and its Development Bank, following the outcome of the High-level Conference on Housing Reforms in South-Eastern Europe, jointly organized by the Council of Europe Development Bank and the World Bank in Paris on 23-24 April 2003.

10.1.2 Improvement of urban environmental performance

Description: Local systems and cities are efficient starting points for promoting sustainable human settlements development. Numerous initiatives have already been launched in cities and towns to raise public awareness of the environmental impact of individual consumption behaviour, to promote environmentally sound goods, services and sustainable use of energy, water, raw materials and land by individuals and communities. It is recognized that environmentally sound urban and regional transport coordinated with sustainable land use and planning at the central, regional and local levels may lead to a substantial reduction in the impact on human health, natural resources and the environment, while improving the quality of life and economic performance. Modern community development planning focuses on a broad range of

additional issues and factors: social, economic, environmental, financial, etc. It is important to develop effective local planning systems as an integral part of strategic national and regional planning and development.

Work accomplished: As a follow-up to the workshop on encouraging local initiatives towards sustainable consumption patterns (Vienna, February 1998), the Committee on Human Settlements and the UNECE/World Health Organization (WHO) Steering Committee on Transport, Health and Environment jointly organized a workshop on environmentally sound and healthy urban transport integrated with sustainable land-use planning, hosted by the Department of Town Planning and Housing of the Ministry of the Interior in Cyprus (November 2003). The main objective was to review and discuss good practices and lessons learned on integrating environment and health considerations into transport and land-use planning through case studies.

Work to be undertaken: At its present session, the Committee will hold a joint in-depth discussion with the International Society of City and Regional Planners (ISOCARP) on the contribution of strategic planning to improving housing and urban planning policies, and will consider the modalities for the preparation of UNECE guidelines on spatial planning.

The delegation of Poland will organize a workshop in the first half of 2005 to discuss practical experience in the functioning of spatial planning systems, bottlenecks and effective solutions and methods. Case studies presented in a common format and lessons learned will be reviewed during the workshop.

10.1.3 Land registration and land markets

Description: Proper land registration is crucial for security of tenure and property rights, effective housing policies and the promotion of market-oriented reforms in economies in transition, as well as in the context of European integration. The activity is aimed at providing assistance to countries in transition in reforming cadastre and land registration systems and sharing information and experience of modernizing land administration systems in the developed market economies through education and training; research and development; exchange of experience; transfer of technology; and standardization.

Work accomplished: The study on land mass valuation systems for taxation purposes in Europe and the survey on restrictions on ownership, leasing and transfer of real property in the UNECE countries were prepared and published in 2002 with the assistance of the Federal Land Cadastre Service of the Russian Federation. The Guidelines on real estate units and identifiers were prepared and are ready for publication.

Two workshops were held: on organizational sustainability and capacity-building in Edinburgh (United Kingdom) in October 2003, and on title registration systems and real property market in Erevan in May 2004.

An international team of experts undertook a land administration review on the Russian Federation (2003). In February 2004 a follow-up event was organized in Moscow. In March 2004 a land administration review was carried out in Lithuania.

Work to be undertaken: A task force and a steering group will continue work on updating the UNECE Land Administration Guidelines (ECE/HBP/96). Guidelines on public access to data, and a report on public/private partnership are being prepared. The delegation of the United Kingdom will update the land administration inventory. In 2005 a land administration review is planned in Azerbaijan.

A workshop on real property administration in developing an information society will be held in Lithuania on 24-25 September 2004. The workshop will also consider the implementation of recommendations made in the land administration review on Lithuania. Workshops are planned in Hungary (spring 2005), Finland (31 August – 3 September 2005), Georgia (spring 2006) and the Czech Republic (autumn 2006).

The fourth session of the Working Party on Land Administration will take place in Geneva on 21-22 November 2005. Cooperation with key partners, such as the World Bank, the Central European Land Knowledge Center, the Permanent Committee on Cadastre in the European Union and EuroGeographics, will be further developed.

10.1.4 Housing modernization and management

Description: This activity mainly aims at identifying and providing tools to face problems related to the existing housing stock and its management. It also provides an opportunity to look at urban renewal policies and at the existing and emerging housing problems, especially regarding housing financing. As a result of privatization in countries in transition, the proportion of owner-occupied dwellings in multi-family housing has increased considerably. It is therefore important to establish property rights, define mixed ownership, and establish a legal and institutional framework for operating housing condominiums. This programme element also focuses on the basic mechanisms for social housing development.

Work accomplished: The UNECE Guidelines on Condominium Ownership of Housing were published in 2003 (ECE/HBP/123). A second workshop on housing condominiums was held in Moscow in November 2003. The Guidelines have been translated into Russian and Serbian. A workshop on social housing was held in Prague in May 2003 as a first step in the preparation of UNECE guidelines on social housing and a first consolidated draft has since been produced. A task force for the further preparation of the guidelines on social housing was established. It has met three times since October 2003. A draft of the guidelines on housing finance was discussed by a project steering group in 2003 and 2004.

Work to be undertaken: The Committee and its Bureau will continue to promote the practical application of the Guidelines on Condominium Ownership of Housing and ensure their wide dissemination in countries in transition. The draft guidelines on housing finance systems for countries in transition will be presented to the Committee, and once endorsed, will be published. The draft guidelines on social housing will be presented to the Committee and further discussed at the second workshop on social housing in Vienna on 28-30 November 2004. It is envisaged that the final draft will be adopted by the Committee in 2005.

10.1.5 Development of human settlements statistics

Description: The Committee, together with the Conference of European Statisticians, develops and improves international human settlements statistics, and publishes the Bulletin of Housing Statistics for Europe and North America every two years.

Work accomplished: The Committee prepared a new edition of the Bulletin of Housing Statistics for Europe and North America and posted it on the Web in 2003. The human settlements statistics web site is accessible at: <http://www.unece.org/env/hs/bulletin/>.

Work to be undertaken: A steering group set up by the Bureaux of the Committee and of the Conference of European Statisticians will organize a consultation on how to further coordinate the collection of housing statistics with other international organizations. It will also identify areas of interests to policy makers where statistics are not available, but could be collected in the future.

10.1.6 Major trends characterizing human settlements development

Description: The development of human settlements encompasses a wide range of changes and trends, which are not always compatible with the principles of sustainability. More knowledge of the forces influencing the configuration of urban development and the characteristics of the implementation of urban policies will be provided by studying major trends characterizing human settlements development and presenting national experiences in formulating and implementing policies for a more sustainable development of human settlements.

Work accomplished: The Ninth Conference on Urban and Regional Research took place in Leeds (United Kingdom) on 9-12 June 2002. A preparatory group for the 10th Conference on Urban and Regional Research was established in 2004 in Slovakia.

Work to be undertaken: The Committee will continue the exchange of experience in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda and the Millennium Declaration, and will consider the priorities of the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development in the context of its programme activities. The 10th Conference on Urban and Regional Research will be organized in Slovakia in cooperation and consultation with the European Network for Housing Research.