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HOUSING, BUILDING AND PLANNING*

Implementation of resolution 1917 (XVIII) of the General Assembly

Report of the Secretary-General

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* Item 48 of the provisional agenda.

A. Background

1. In resolution 1917 (XVIII) of 5 December 1963, the General Assembly expressed its concern "at the critical deficiency of housing and related amenities in the developing countries owing to over-rapid urbanization in a setting of slow economic and industrial growth and scarce resources". It recalled, in this connexion, that earlier resolutions of the General Assembly and of the Economic and Social Council had established a United Nations Programme of Pilot Projects in Housing, Building and Planning;^{1/} and it made a number of recommendations and suggestions to the Committee on Housing, Building and Planning, the Governments of the developing countries, the Secretary-General, the regional economic commissions, the specialized agencies concerned and the inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations.
2. The General Assembly invited the Committee on Housing, Building and Planning to recommend as soon as possible practical measures Governments might take to solve their housing problems and to suggest appropriate emergency action during the second half of the Development Decade, including the development of national building industries, the preparation of suitable targets for programmes in housing and environmental development, and practical methods and criteria for establishing standards for such programmes; it further recommended to Governments the creation and execution of low-income housing programmes and invited the Secretary-General to explore the appropriate methods of expanding the programme of pilot projects in housing, building and planning in co-operation with the United Nations Special Fund. Finally, the Assembly invited the Secretary-General and others concerned to co-operate with the Committee in formulating and executing specific action programmes in housing and environmental development within the framework of general development, taking into account the internal resources and external aid available for such programmes.
3. The Economic and Social Council, at its resumed thirty-sixth session, referred the resolution to the Committee on Housing, Building and Planning and to the regional economic commissions. The Committee considered the resolution together with a report on goals and standards for housing and environmental development

^{1/} General Assembly resolution 1508 (XV) and Economic and Social Council resolution 976 E (XXXVI).

prepared by the Secretary-General pursuant to this resolution. The Committee's discussions and recommendations are contained in the report on its second session.^{2/} The implications of the resolution for the work of the regional economic commissions were considered at the meeting of the executive secretaries in July 1964.^{3/} Finally, the Economic and Social Council at its thirty-seventh session considered the recommendations of the Committee on Housing, Building and Planning concerning this resolution.^{4/}

The present interim report has been prepared in response to the General Assembly's request that the Economic and Social Council and the Secretary-General report to the General Assembly at its nineteenth session on the implementation of Assembly resolution 1917 (XVIII).

B. Action taken by the Committee on Housing, Building and Planning

4. With regard to the Committee on Housing, Building and Planning, the General Assembly resolution specifically:

"1. Invites the Committee on Housing, Building and Planning to prepare as soon as possible recommendations to Governments suggesting practical and effective measures they may take to solve their housing problems;

"2. Recommends that as a matter of priority the Committee on Housing, Building and Planning should suggest appropriate means of emergency action during the second half of the United Nations Development Decade, and that it should:

(a) Study and recommend practical methods of establishing appropriate national bodies which could promote the development of national building industries;

(b) Prepare suitable targets for housing and environmental development consistent with the targets for the Decade set out in the Secretary-General's proposals and in Economic and Social Council resolution 916 (XXXIV) of 3 August 1962;

^{2/} Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, Thirty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 12 (E/3858), paras. 159-177.

^{3/} Ibid. Thirty-seventh Session, Annexes, agenda item 17, document E/3937.

^{4/} Official Records of the General Assembly, Nineteenth Session, Supplement No. 3 (A/5803), chapter VIII, section I.

(c) Suggest practical methods and criteria for establishing appropriate standards for such action along the lines of Economic and Social Council resolution 975F (XXXVI), taking into account the resources available for housing and urban development."

5. The Committee at its second session emphasized the importance of sound policy and organization at both national and international levels, so that investment resources can be guided within this sector into areas that are most strategic for development. It considered that additional international assistance should be used to help Governments make most effective use of the available national resources.

6. The Committee accorded high priority to initiating action and impact programmes at the earliest possible moment and to directing assistance to Governments in:

- (1) the establishment of national policies, programming and administration in housing, building and planning at all levels;
- (2) the training of personnel required for the formulation, execution and management of these activities;
- (3) the creation of a national building industry and of related branches of other industries and services;
- (4) the carrying out of fundamental and applied research in housing, building and planning;
- (5) the provision of specialist teams to assist developing nations in the establishment of basic programmes and requisite industries;
- (6) the projection of a five-year programme as a basis for a major continuing long-term international programme in these fields.

7. A resolution on the development of national building industries was adopted by the Economic and Social Council at the recommendation of the Committee.^{5/} The Committee stressed that the development of building materials and construction industries cannot be accomplished separately from the general economic and social development plans of the countries concerned. On the other hand, the growth of national building materials and construction industries will obviate the need to

^{5/} Economic and Social Council resolution 1024 B (XXXVII).

import materials, components and skills, and will constitute at the same time an important factor in reducing the cost of development, in helping to increase employment and in training industrial and other skilled workers.

8. In compliance with this resolution, an exchange of experience and a broad inquiry on the industrialization of building will be undertaken by the proposed centre for housing, building and planning in collaboration with the Centre for Industrial Development, the regional economic commissions, the International Labour Office, the existing regional and national centres, the International Council for Building Research, Studies and Documentation (CIB) and other competent professional bodies. In this connexion, the Council noted that a series of regional seminars and studies will be organized in the next three years, to be followed by an international conference on the industrialization of building.^{6/}

9. The Committee reviewed and approved the principles set out in the interim report of the Secretary-General^{7/} on the methodology for developing targets and standards for housing and environmental development. While these were considered to be reasonable and helpful to developing countries in determining their own programmes and policies, the Committee stressed that to be acceptable in a country the targets and standards must take into account the particular physical characteristics and levels of economic, social and technological development of each country at the time of their adoption.

10. An interim report on the related question of priorities^{8/} was considered by the Committee pursuant to resolution 975 F (XXXVI) adopted by the Economic and Social Council on the proposal of the Social Commission. Recognizing fully that there are important distinctions in the priority needs of countries at different stages of development, the Committee nevertheless indicated as its preliminary conclusions in this matter the following order:

^{6/} The Economic Commission for Europe organized the first seminar in this series in 1964 in co-operation with the Government of Czechoslovakia, on the topic "The changing structure of the building industry". The Third Congress of the CIB will meet in 1965 in Denmark and devote its full attention to the subject of the industrialization of building.

^{7/} E/C.6/22.

^{8/} E/C.6/21.

- (a) Training of personnel for emergency action programmes;
- (b) Planning and execution of programmes for lower-income groups;
- (c) Initiation and execution of pilot and demonstration projects;
- (d) Emergency programmes in rapidly growing urban and rural areas;
- (e) Research into and evaluation of these action programmes;
- (f) Dissemination of information on experiences gained.

11. In connexion with the implementation of General Assembly resolution (1916 (XVIII)) the Secretary-General has invited Member States to prepare specific targets in the major sectors, including housing and urban development for the second half of the Development Decade. It is hoped that the response of Governments to this request will provide data and guidance for the preparation of the Secretary-General's reports on targets, standards and priorities.^{9/}

C. Action taken by Governments

12. The General Assembly, in its resolution 1917 (XVIII), underlined the importance of the role Governments must play in the provision of housing and related facilities for the low-income groups; paragraph 3 of the resolution specifically:

"Recommends that Governments take all necessary measures designed to ensure the creation and execution of low-income housing programmes, including the encouragement of housing co-operatives, and to guard against any practices, especially speculation in real estate, which may prove detrimental to such programmes".

In accordance with a proposal of the Committee on Housing, Building and Planning, the Council has submitted to the General Assembly a resolution containing, inter alia, a number of recommendations to Member States.^{10/}

13. The proposed resolution stresses that in order to bring about a substantial improvement in the housing and urban situation the Governments concerned should assume a major role in the planning and organization on a continuing basis of housing and urban development programmes of sufficient magnitude. To this end they

^{9/} As requested in General Assembly resolution 1917 (XVIII) and Economic and Social Council resolution 975F (XXXVI).

^{10/} Council resolution 1024 A (XXXVII) (see annex below).

should make provision in their national development planning for the necessary activities and resources. It therefore recommends that Member States should establish central and other appropriate organizations or bodies in charge of housing, building and planning, and endowed with the necessary authority.

14. The resolution further lists a number of measures needed to ensure the establishment and execution of long-term programmes in housing and building and in urban and regional development. These include recommendations concerning the industrialization of building, technical training, building design and the reforms needed to ensure a steady and rational solution of housing and industrial construction problems, balanced urban and rural development, the elimination of speculation in building land and a more equitable use of available resources in the interests of the whole population.

15. In this connexion, the Committee and the Council recognized the need for a continuous review and evaluation by Governments of housing and urban development trends based on adequate statistical and other kinds of data, both quantitative and qualitative, relating to national programmes. The Council therefore proposed, also in resolution 1024 A (XXXVII), that a biennial survey should be carried out by the United Nations. It would be based on regional reports prepared by the respective regional economic commissions on the basis of country reports. The value of such a survey to international bodies and bilateral assistance agencies, as well as to the developing countries in improving their own projections and programming techniques in housing and building and urban and regional development was fully recognized. Continued assistance to Governments in this regard was recognized to be of considerable importance for national development generally.^{11/}

16. As it had done at its first session, the Committee reiterated its recommendations concerning the need for co-ordinating physical planning with economic and social planning, and for adopting suitable administrative policies conducive to their integration. The Committee agreed that permanent central units concerned with physical planning should be established at an appropriate place

^{11/} Three seminars on this subject have already been held within the programme of technical co-operation and a seminar is being planned in 1965 for African countries and one for the Middle Eastern countries later on.

within each national Government, and that these should be supplemented with regional and local institutions and organizations as a means of carry out the necessary research and facilitating citizen participation in the planning and development process. The Committee recommended that the Governments of developing countries should review their planning legislation and land policies as they affect the problems of urbanization. It also considered that there was a need for basic reforms in the sphere of land ownership and land use as a means to the realization of urban and regional development plans.

D. Technical co-operation and pilot projects^{12/}

17. In connexion with the expansion of the programme of technical co-operation and the programme of pilot projects in housing, building and planning, the General Assembly, in resolution 1917 (XVIII) specifically:

"5. Invites the Secretary-General to explore appropriate methods of expanding, within the framework of the United Nations programmes of technical co-operation and with the co-operation of interested Governments, the programme of pilot projects in housing, building and planning as a means of facilitating the achievement of national targets for the remainder of the Decade;"

and

"6. Invites the Managing Director of the Special Fund to consider the feasibility of including suitable aspects of such pilot projects among the pre-investment activities essential for environmental development as part of general development."

18. The Economic and Social Council noted the Committee's definition of objectives for this programme and of criteria for the selection and implementation of projects. As the programme suffered from a lack of adequate financing, it was recommended that the resources of the Special Fund and the Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance should be enlisted to a larger extent than heretofore. It was considered that part of the capital funds required for pilot projects should be provided by host countries in the form of building sites, local labour and

^{12/} The United Nations Technical Co-operation Programme in housing, building and planning has grown from \$505,480 (43 experts and 32 fellowships) in 1960 to \$1,340,460 (139 experts and 49 fellowships) in 1964. The four Special Fund projects approved to date carry United Nations contributions totalling \$3,392,000 and a counterpart expenditure by the host Governments of \$4,845,155.

materials, and other suitable means, while the remainder should be contributed voluntarily by interested Member States. Agreement was expressed with the view that the projects undertaken by the United Nations within this programme should be on a sufficiently large scale to justify the mobilization of resources which the programme encouraged: that the programme should include urban development projects with such supporting features as the provision of land and utilities; and that adequate financing should be available for a sufficient period of time to demonstrate conclusively the project objectives, to develop suitable administrative methods and procedures and to train the necessary personnel in the large scale application within national programmes of the experiences gained in pilot projects.

19. The Council noted the particular advantages and benefits and the specific experiences the international community could derive from this programme. It provided, for example, an opportunity for country-to-country aid within the framework of the United Nations programme of technical co-operation. It helped, furthermore, to mobilize national resources often dormant - by injecting suitable external aid; and it demonstrated the feasibility of using effectively local resources available for housing and building and for urban development and improvement.

E. Co-ordination and expansion of the international programme

20. The General Assembly reiterated its appeal for concerted action by all concerned and for the strengthening of activities in the field of housing, building and planning. More specifically, resolution 1917 (XVIII):

"4. Invites the Secretary-General, the regional economic commissions, the specialized agencies concerned and the interested inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations to co-operate with the Committee on Housing, Building and Planning and to assist requesting Governments in formulating and executing, within the framework of general development and taking into account internal resources and external aid available for such programmes, specific action programmes in housing and environmental development consistent with the targets and standards recommended."

21. In this connexion, the Economic and Social Council, in resolution 1024 C (XXXVII), approved the proposals of the Committee on Housing, Building and Planning concerning reorganization of the Housing, Building and

Planning Branch through the establishment, within the limits of the present United Nations budget, of a Centre for Housing, Building and Planning in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. According to paragraph 2 of the resolution the Centre would be considered "an important step forward in the development of an integrated and comprehensive United Nations programme in the field of housing, building and planning". The Council took into account during its discussion the particular function the regional economic commissions have in guiding basic and essential co-ordination and organization at the national level, and the strategic position of the proposed Centre in its co-ordinating role within the United Nations family of organizations. At the same time, the Council stressed the need for a closer relationship between this particular development field and economic and industrial development, in addition to its traditional relationship to social welfare and development.

22. The Council recognized that housing and urban development represented an important element of national development and that its potential in raising productivity and assisting economic growth and social progress warranted greater emphasis in the work of the United Nations. Consequently, in paragraph 3 of the resolution it urged that the housing, building and planning efforts should "... receive the proper share of the total United Nations funds which are available every financial year, a share which will reflect the relative importance of this sector of human action to the others"; that the Secretary-General should "provide within the limits of the present budget of the United Nations the additional posts and resources which he has estimated would be required to implement the recommendations of the Committee on Housing, Building and Planning", and that he should "... make the necessary reorganization of existing work and facilities to implement these recommendations".

ANNEX

Economic and Social Council resolution 1024 A (XXXVII)

HOUSING, BUILDING AND PLANNING IN THE UNITED NATIONS
DEVELOPMENT DECADE

The Economic and Social Council

Recommends to the General Assembly at its nineteenth session the adoption of the following draft resolution:

"The General Assembly,

"Noting that in countries throughout the world the housing problem is one of the most important problems calling for solution without delay,

"Recognizing that the housing problem can be successfully solved only by mobilizing the efforts and resources of the nations,

"Recognizing further that social reforms aimed at accelerating social and economic development have an important part to play in the successful solution of housing problems,

"1. Recommends that Member States should:

"(a) Assume a major role in the solution of the housing problem in every country and to this end make provision in their national development planning for the necessary activities and resources;

"(b) Establish for this purpose central and other organizations or bodies in charge of housing and town and country planning, and sufficiently empowered with the necessary authority;

"(c) Take all necessary measures to develop a building material industry utilizing local raw materials to the maximum and to promote or establish as appropriate building design and construction organizations which will improve efficiency, lower costs and will establish designs and standards that are appropriate to relevant cultural, social and economic requirements;

"(d) Prepare and implement programmes for training architects, and construction engineers and workers in sufficient numbers to carry out national development programmes;

"(e) Bring about conditions in the spheres of land ownership and land use, by basic reforms if such conditions have not already been achieved, that will ensure a speedy and rational solution of housing and industrial construction problems, harmonious town and rural development, the elimination

of speculation in plots of land, and a more equitable use of housing resources in the interests of the whole population;

"2. Recommends that international assistance to developing countries in the field of housing, building and planning, whether multilateral or bilateral, be directed towards the financing of housing, the establishment of a national or, if necessary, state building materials and components industry and of national or, if necessary, state building design, construction and financing organizations, the training of national cadres of architects and construction engineers and workers, the establishment of national bodies in charge of housing construction and town-building, and the planning and execution of pilot projects contributing to the earliest possible solution of the housing problem;

"3. Suggests that the Secretary-General prepare biennial progress reports on the application of this resolution in close co-operation with the executive secretaries of the regional economic commissions;

"4. Invites the Committee on Housing, Building and Planning, on the basis of those reports, to work out additional practical and effective measures for the implementation of the above recommendations and the solution of the housing problem."

1345th plenary meeting,
11 August 1964.
