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REPORT OF THE AFRICAN REGIONAL PREPARATORY CONFERENCE

ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

(Cairo, 21-26 June 1975)

(Note by secretariat. This is the Report of the Regional Meeting called for by the Preparatory Committee of HABITAT: UN Conference on Human Settlements, and sponsored jointly by the UN Economic Commission for Africa and the HABITAT Secretariat, hosted by the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt).

REPORT OF THE AFRICAN REGIONAL PREPARATORY CONFERENCE ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

1. Through the courtesy of the Arab Republic of Egypt, the Regional Preparatory Conference on Human Settlements for Africa was held at Cairo, Egypt, from 21 to 26 June 1975. All delegations, the Secretary-General of Habitat and the Deputy Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa expressed their appreciation of and thanks for the support given to the Conference and the hospitality extended by the host government.
2. The Conference was attended by representatives of the following member States of ECA: Algeria, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Dahomey, Egypt, Gabon, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Liberia, Libya, Mauritius, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zaire and Zambia.
3. The Conference noted that some of the member governments were not present at this conference and expressed the hope that all member nations of the region would participate in the Vancouver Conference so that the experience of all nations could be fruitfully exchanged.
4. Observers from the following member countries of the United Nations attended the Conference: Canada, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America. On behalf of the host Government of the Habitat Conference, the representative of the Government of Canada made a statement on the host facilities to be provided at Vancouver for the Conference, the commitment of his Government to the Conference as a participating nation, and also the willingness of his Government to assist certain countries with which it has bilateral programmes in order for them to participate effectively in the Conference at Vancouver.
5. Representatives of the following United Nations bodies also attended: Economic Commission for Africa, United Nations Environment Programme, World Food Programme, Centre for Housing, Building and Planning of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, International Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation, and Centre for Social and Economic Information of the Office of Public Information.
6. Representatives of the following specialized agencies also attended: United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Children's Fund, World Health Organization, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
7. The following non-governmental organizations were present as observers: Baha'i International Community, Muslim World League, World Ekkistics Society, Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola, International Planned Parenthood Foundation, Associated Country Women of the World, Afro-Asian Housing Organization, Community Development Foundation and the Afro-Asian Organization for Economic Cooperation. A complete list of participants is being published separately.

Election of Officers

8. The following officers were elected unanimously by the Conference: H.E. Mr. Ibrahim Naguib (Egypt) as Chairman, H.E. Dr. Henry K. Matipa (Zambia) as First Vice-Chairman, Mr. Kenguemba Mokemat (Central African Republic) as Second Vice Chairman, and Mr. Ibrahim Jacob Mtiro (Tanzania) as Rapporteur.

Documentation

9. A list of documents presented is being published separately.

Agenda and proceedings

10. The Agenda adopted by the Conference is shown at Annex I.

11. The Conference was called to order by Mr. Mostafa El-Hifnawi, Chairman of the General Organization for Housing, Building and Planning Research of Egypt. H.E. Mr. Ibrahim Naguib, Minister of Tourism of Egypt, welcomed the delegates and read a statement from H.E. Mr. Mamdouh Salem, Prime Minister of Egypt, which noted that the issues of human settlements were of great interest and importance to his country and to the entire world in the light of the rapid growth of populations and the increasingly hard living conditions facing the majority of mankind.

12. The Conference then heard a message from Dr. Kurt Waldheim, Secretary-General of the United Nations, which was presented by the Secretary-General of Habitat, welcoming the participants and conveying his appreciation to their governments for their support of the preparatory process leading to the Habitat Conference in Vancouver.

13. Statements also were made by the Secretary-General of Habitat, Mr. Enrique Penalosa, the Deputy Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa, Mr. Mamadou Aw, and the Director of the Centre for Housing, Building and Planning of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Mr. Paul Mwaluko.

14. In his statement, Mr. Penalosa stressed the need for the Conference to adopt a bold approach to the problem of human settlements and to formulate recommendations which would ensure that the views of the participating countries were reflected in the agenda and documentation of the Habitat Conference. He also noted that in most countries the division of people into categories of urban and rural was arbitrary and that the Conference should address itself to the minimum needs of all people regardless of where they live.

15. Mr. Aw drew the attention of the participants to the very rapid urbanization in the countries of the region, noting that this will pose serious problems not only for urban but for rural areas. He stressed that policies on human settlements must be integrated with social and economic development plans, and that such policies must be closely co-ordinated with plans and programmes at the regional and sectoral levels. He also noted the negative effect of current trends of urbanization on traditional family, tribal and social structures.

16. Mr. Mwaluko observed that policies on human settlements should seek to avoid double standards of rich and poor. Instead, they should embody the concept of progressive, gradual improvement for all members of the society. The need was stressed for the developing countries of Africa to have their own training institutions for manpower development which would develop appropriate curricula in the fields of housing, building and planning to suit their specific technological requirements.

17. The following three days of morning and afternoon sessions were devoted to discussions by national delegations of the substantive themes for the Vancouver Conference and the African Regional position regarding its agenda. Each major theme was introduced by presentations by regional and international experts.

18. On national human settlement policies, the first expert presentation noted the differences in human settlement problems between developed and developing countries, stressing that the problems of the latter were a reflection of overall under-development. In this regard were mentioned the specific issues of poverty, population growth, lack of governmental resources, unemployment and underemployment. It was also argued that conditions of inequality were tending to increase and that the models of the industrialized world were not applicable to developing countries because conditions for linear development were not present in most cases and because of the disparities in investment capacity.

19. The second presentation reviewed the conditions and circumstances in Kenya which led the Government of that country to adopt a human settlement strategy with several objectives: (1) to reduce the rate of urbanization through improvement of facilities and services in rural areas; (2) to reduce migration to the primate city through development of growth centres in other parts of the country; and (3) to reduce disparities in incomes and services through the creation of a network of service centres and through various incentives to attract employment creating activities to growth centres. The need for national physical land planning was cited as imperative for the proper location of public facilities and utilities.

20. Discussions by the national delegations revealed a broad consensus that national human settlement policies were necessary, and that more should be done to establish or refine them to meet present and future needs. It was also felt that such policies, although based on territorial and physical planning, should include social, cultural and ecological considerations.

21. It was agreed that national policies and plans should vary according to circumstances, but that in all cases they should have political support at the highest level. Stress was put on the primacy of rural settlements in national policies and also on the advantages and necessity of self-help concepts in the light of the limitations in resources available.

22. Regarding institutions for the implementation of human settlement policies, the first expert presentation cited the need for appropriate institutions at national, regional and local levels, and the necessity for a comprehensive and integrated approach to problems. The requirement for more and better trained personnel was noted, and it was suggested that governments adopt the techniques of cost-benefit analysis in human settlement programmes and projects. Land use and land tenure were cited as basic to overall policies, including their role in promoting public confidence and popular participation in programmes.

23. The second expert presentation expressed the view that existing institutions for human settlements had failed and that every country should create a central authority to co-ordinate all aspects of economic, social and physical planning. Training programmes were called for to provide technical personnel in numbers commensurate with the problems in each country.

24. Discussions by national delegations centered on the need for new institutions of appropriate kinds, but in particular those devoted to finances, technical training and research. It was further stated that such institutions should be established at the national and regional levels (where possible with support from the international community) in order to ensure concentration on and understanding of specifically African problems, and to facilitate exchange of experiences between nations of the region. The issue also was raised of the degree of decentralization of administration that was needed in order that human settlement institutions can be effective in reducing the disparities between rural and urban services.

25. On the subject of minimum standards, expert presentations pointed to the need for objective analysis of human requirements in both rural and urban contexts and also according to income levels, traditions and cultures. It was noted that more research was required to develop measurable standards.

26. Discussion by delegations took up the issues of minimum standards in the areas of housing, health, food, education, water supply, sanitary facilities and electrification. Priority for rural settlements again was stressed, as well as the value of self-help, sites and services, and slum improvement programmes.

27. Other issues raised in the discussions on minimum standards included: unrealistic standards such as are found in existing building codes, maximum standards in order to control or eliminate disparities in resource use, the link between minimum standards and agricultural development, the pressure on governmental capacities in the face of population growth, the link between minimum standards and resources, and the connexion between minimum standards and the inequities of the world economic system. The question also was raised as to whether basic international standards could not be established in such areas as, for example, minimum standards for human habitation.

28. On the subject of land as a key resource for human settlements, expert presentations raised the issues of public versus private ownership, land reserves for future public use, methods of public land acquisition, measures to restrict speculation, and the recapture by the community of land value added as a result of public investment. A second expert presentation noted the relationship between land, people and proper use of resources, and raised the question of interregional co-operation to ensure fair distribution of the benefits of resources.

29. Discussions by delegations showed a broad consensus that governments should take a very active role in land use and management relating to human settlements and that public ownership was required in varying degrees up to systems of total public ownership now in effect in some countries. Land ownership was discussed in terms of social justice as well as use allocation.

30. It was further noted that land policy should be a central instrument in overall development strategy, that land policies should include ecological considerations, that water resources should be closely linked to land policies, and that countries of the region would benefit from an exchange of experiences and policy innovations regarding land controls and use. It was suggested that all countries of the region which have not already done so should organize national symposia on human settlement problems such as land use in order to raise public awareness of the issues.

31. On the subject of international financing agencies and their role in the development of human settlements, the first expert presentation traced the evolution of the traditional African settlements and took note of the need to revive the values which were embodied in them as a criterion for future human settlement planning concepts.

32. A second presentation described the International Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation, which was created by the twentieth session of the General Assembly and established under the aegis of UNEP as of 1 January 1975.

33. Its assigned objectives are described by the UNEP Governing Council as follows:-

"Its primary operative objective will be to assist in strengthening national environmental programmes relating to human settlements, particularly in the developing countries, through the provision of seed capital and the extension of the necessary technical and financial assistance to permit an effective mobilization of domestic resources for human habitat and environmental design and improvement of human settlements";

"Including (1) stimulating innovative approaches to pre-investment, pre-project and financing strategies; (2) organizing technical assistance and management training programmes, and (3) promoting adaptation and transfer of appropriate scientific and technical knowledge on human settlement projects".

34. The Conference then heard an outline of policies in relation to human settlements of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank), introducing sectoral papers on urbanization, housing, sites and services schemes and urban transportation. It was noted that Bank policies emphasize self-help, standards that incorporate local traditions and social systems, projects which stimulate employment, and improvement of conditions in squatter settlements. It was also stated that the bottleneck in Bank lending for human settlement projects was not availability of funds but the readiness of governments to bring forward requests for assistance.

35. Throughout the discussions of this and previous sessions reference was made to financing problems in relation to human settlement programmes. It was noted, for example, that these programmes and projects are not productive in terms of capital return and therefore add to the debt burden of aid receiving countries. However, there was broad consensus that more international financing should be made available for human settlement programmes.

36. Other points made by national delegations included : priority for foreign assistance to rural programmes, relaxation of the criteria for loans for human settlement improvement, the possibility of interest-free loans, the obligation of former colonial powers in matters of financial assistance, a greater role in human settlements by the African Development Bank, and possible co-operation of the international lending agencies in research into building materials.

37. On the subject of regional and international co-operation, which occupied a great part of the discussions by delegates throughout the Conference, there was broad consensus that much more should be done at both levels. It was repeatedly suggested that the United Nations should create a new agency to deal with human

settlements, with special attention given to technical assistance, training and research. However, it was also stated that the objectives of improvement in human settlements also could be attained through strengthening and better use of existing UN organs.

38. Also discussed were the need for international assistance in formulating integrated human settlement plans; the drafting of land policy legislation, and research into minimum standards. The view also was expressed that co-operation between nations regionally would be more effective than new organizations on a global basis.

39. A report on "Foreign investment and its impact on human settlements in developing countries" was suggested during the Conference as a possible addition to the documentation being prepared for Vancouver.

40. The Conference, in the light of the exchange of views among the participants; the documentation presented jointly by the Habitat Secretariat and the Economic Commission for Africa, the presentations of the international and regional experts and statements by participants and special guests, arrived at the following basic conclusions.

Conclusions

41. There is widespread agreement that problems of uncontrolled population growth, rural stagnation, migration, the inability of urban centers to cope with present rates of population increase, and environmental deterioration, demand corrective action at both national and international levels, and that this is the objective of the Habitat Conference.

42. Corrective action will require national human settlement policies based on a comprehensive and integrated approach and such policies must be supported at the highest political level.

43. The objective of the human settlement policies of each nation should be to secure a minimum standard of living - goods, facilities and services - for all living and future peoples and to restrain excessive consumption by privileged groups until these minimum standards are attained for all people.

44. The Habitat Conference should lead to recommendations for action at national, regional and global levels in relation to human settlements, but it will be the individual nations which will determine, within the framework of their social and economic circumstances, their own human settlement policies.

45. As the great majority of the peoples of Africa still live in rural areas, it is assumed that the first objective of human settlement policies will be to improve conditions of life in these areas, and that regional and international programmes in relation to human settlement problems will take this into consideration.

46. Human settlement policies will be designed to ensure the well-being of all citizens and therefore must be free of any form of discrimination, and must take into account all social aspects of African family and community life.

47. Land is seen as the key resource of human settlements and national human settlement policies for reasons of social justice, should provide for proper allocation through use and protective measures.

48. A major effort is needed to prepare technical and administrative cadres for the planning and management of future human settlements and for research and exchange of information. This is seen as an important action by regional and international organizations both within and outside the United Nations system.

49. A primary objective of human settlement policies will be the ending of rural isolation in countries where such conditions exist through the creation of human settlements offering adequate facilities and services and an acceptable quality of life.

50. In view of the scarcity of resources, the most important tool for ameliorating the housing problem in human settlements in Africa will be the concept of self-help, and this mobilization of human energy should be supported by all governments through site and service schemes, adult education and training, small loan capabilities and similar programmes.

51. Stemming from these conclusions, and Conference discussions the following recommendations are made for national, regional and international action before, during and after the Habitat Conference.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. All nations of the world, especially the developed and rich nations, should agree to give an adequate portion of their aid to all countries in need for realization of human settlement programmes.
2. The rich nations of the world should agree to give an adequate portion of their aid to African countries for realization of human settlement programmes.
3. The Habitat Conference should lead to the creation of special world training centres on human settlement planning and management; one of these centres should be located on the African continent. Meanwhile, all African nations should multiply their efforts to train more personnel in this field. This training should be interdisciplinary and adapted to pragmatic solutions to human settlement problems.
4. A platform of Inter-African Co-operation should be established for exchange of information and documentation, establishment of research programmes, establishment of common action programmes, interchange of field trips of specialised staff, training and refresher courses in African countries for specialised staff, development to the maximum of existing institutions in human settlement fields, and creation of an autonomous African institution of co-ordination in the field of human settlements.
5. The Habitat Conference should consider the creation of a special autonomous United Nations Agency specializing in human settlement problems and this specialized agency should be located in a developing country.
6. A special conference of African nations should be organized, following the Habitat Conference, to review a common African strategy on human settlement policy.

7. The Habitat Conference should recommend that international assistance be given to any country requesting it for the purpose of designing and/or implementing a national human settlements policy, including research and analysis regarding that country's physical and demographic problems and the amelioration of the conditions of squatter settlements in all countries.
8. African governments should join in a pooling of resources to upgrade and expand existing institutions dealing with human settlement affairs, and the Habitat Conference should recommend that this effort be given international support.
9. The United Nations Environment Programme should institute a programme of technical assistance to countries to analyze and correct environmental problems in human settlements and urge governments to participate and make full use of ongoing human settlement programmes of that Organization.
10. The Habitat Conference should endorse policies for better distribution of resources affecting the quality of human settlements.
11. The Economic Commission for Africa should make available all information on solutions to particular human settlements problems in Africa.
12. The lending policy and priorities of international financing institutions should be reviewed to assist in a greater effort to solve human settlement problems. The Habitat Conference should recommend this change of priorities and also that policies of these agencies follow the priorities laid down by member nations.
13. The Habitat Conference should recommend that international aid be channelled into integrated programmes associated with human settlements rather than into direct sectoral programmes proposed by donors.
14. The Habitat Conference should make recommendations that a world survey of land be undertaken which would include classification by appropriate use and ecological considerations. This world land survey should include assistance for the establishment of appropriate agencies in countries where these do not exist, as well as training of technical personnel.
15. All countries of Africa should organize national meetings and seminars on human settlement problems prior to the Habitat Conference in order to prepare national positions reflecting an interdisciplinary approach and also to increase the awareness and interest of public opinion in the need for solutions to human settlement problems. The Habitat Secretariat should aid countries planning such meetings by providing relevant documents and other assistance.
16. The Habitat Conference should recommend that countries make a maximum effort to lower the cost of housing construction through innovative use of local materials and standards which are realistically designed to meet human needs. International assistance should be provided for such efforts.
17. Recognizing the importance of water resources to human settlements, the Habitat Conference should recommend internationally supported training programmes for water management and conservation.

18. The Habitat Conference should recommend that special programmes be set up under the proposed human settlements agency for technical and financial assistance to countries suffering damage to their human settlements through catastrophes such as floods, earthquakes, droughts, wars, aggression, etc..
19. The Habitat Conference should recommend that governments enlist the support of appropriate non-governmental organizations in human settlement planning and programmes, and African governments are urged to involve members of such organizations in all activities related to human settlements.
20. The Habitat Conference declaration on human settlements should stress that human settlement planning must be considered a fundamental part of strategies for national development, and that they should be integrated into national territorial, social, economic and financial planning.
21. The Habitat Conference should recommend that national policies recognize the physical and financial investment already made by the poor people in creating their own human settlements, particularly in uncontrolled and unplanned settlements attached to urban areas.
22. The Habitat Conference should recommend that the creation of health care centres and other basic services and facilities for all human settlements be a major goal of national human settlement policies.
23. The Habitat Conference should recommend that the Centre for Housing, Building and Planning of the United Nations in co-operation with the UNDP prepare a study of the means and the promotion and increase of such means by which international assistance can be guided into national programmes for the improvement of human settlements.
24. The Habitat Conference should recommend that research and development of unconventional and non-polluting sources of energy, such as solar and wind energy, be given a higher priority and that governments consider them as valuable resources for human settlements.
25. Taking into account past actions in defiance of various United Nations resolutions, which actions are in direct contradiction to the spirit of Habitat, the Conference opposes any sort of participation in the Habitat Conference by Israel, South Africa or Rhodesia. Although agreeing with the sentiments expressed in this recommendation, the delegate of Kenya suggested that this Conference was not the appropriate forum for it. He suggested that the issue would be more appropriately discussed in the General Assembly, when that body takes up the rules of procedure for the Vancouver Conference.

At the close of the final session, this report was adopted by consensus.

ANNEX I

HABITAT: UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS
Regional Preparatory Conference on Human Settlements for Africa
21 - 26 June 1975, Cairo, Egypt

PROVISIONAL AGENDA

1. Opening addresses
2. Election of officers
3. Adoption of the agenda
4. Major issues requiring national action
 - a. The establishment of national human settlement policies and the development of plans at the national, regional and local levels;
 - b. Management and development of appropriate institutions for human settlements through, inter alia, the development of human resources;
 - c. The development and attainment of meaningful minimum standards in human settlements;
 - d. The redistribution of resources and the promotion of their innovative use;
 - e. Land as a resource
5. Proposals for regional and international co-operation and action
 - a. The role of international financing agencies in the development of human settlements;
 - b. Regional and international co-operation
6. Other issues and conclusions and recommendations
7. Adoption of the report of the Conference