

*PrepCom II, Nairobi

*New NGO Facilitating Group Formed

Representatives of over 100 NGOs attended the second Habitat II Preparatory Committee and the 15th UNCHS Commission meetings in Nairobi, 24 April - 5 May. This included NGOs in at least 15 official delegations. Their presence and the generally open nature of the sessions gave NGOs many opportunities to influence these meetings. NGOs and UNCHS will have to work together closely to meet the high level of expectations for similar NGO involvement in PrepCom III planned for New York, 13-23 February 1996, and in the Istanbul conference.

Attempts by members of the U.S. and Mexican delegations to keep NGOs out of Commission working groups were a warning that the doors can be shut. Rules adopted for NGO participation will also give special status to the NGOs representing local governments. While local authority participation in Habitat's work is long over due, many communities are aware that local officials are often in the front lines of corruption and forced evictions of the poor. It will be very troubling if they are allowed full access while NGOs that have long supported UNCHS are kept out of the meeting rooms.

The Habitat International Coalition (HIC) organized a workshop to prepare for the meetings. Working groups and caucuses were formed, and daily coordination meetings set up. Caucuses on children, youth, women and values had some success, especially in having resolutions adopted on children's and women's issues. Working groups were less successful in providing substantive inputs on the Global Plan of Action and other documents. A small group was able to track and lobby the very important debate on housing rights which has emerged as one of the key Habitat II issues.

A lot of NGO work focused on setting up an International Facilitating Group (IFG) of about 15 NGO representatives from regions, major coalitions and caucuses. Its mandate is to facilitate NGO inputs to PrepCom III and Istanbul, and to generally increase NGO/CBO involvement in the Habitat II process. IFG membership is open and its mandate will be reviewed at PrepCom III. Some of the IFG members will meet during the UN50 meetings in San Francisco in June. A full meeting may take place in Istanbul in August. The IFG can be reached through its Co-Chairs or by writing to Rooftops Canada. (See "Contacts")

Official delegates experienced many of the same difficulties as the NGOs. Delegates were confused by the many committees and overlapping work of UNCHS 15 and PrepCom II. Facilities were barely adequate to handle caucus meetings and prepare documents.

Most importantly, delegates were not happy with the structure and content of the draft Global Plan of Action which will be the main document of the Istanbul conference. Both the European Union and African groups proposed major changes which were similar to NGO concerns. An open ended drafting group including two NGO representatives worked day and night to re-write the document, but could not complete the task. It was agreed that the group would keep meeting in the period up

to PrepCom III. It will remain informal which will permit the NGOs to stay involved. This provides a terrific opportunity for NGO inputs, but also means that there is presently no official draft document.

Draft proposals for organizing forums and partner inputs to the Istanbul conference adopted by PrepCom II are outlined elsewhere in this issue. These proposals will need wider consideration and ownership if they are to succeed. Special emphasis must also be given to preparing NGO/CBO positions and inputs, and to ensuring that community based organizations are able to play a more active role in Habitat II. There were very few CBOs present in Nairobi, and while NGO representation was mostly from Southern countries, this was almost entirely from Africa. More than moral support from major agencies will be needed if the wide community of CBOs and NGOs is to play a full role in the Habitat II process. To date, there has been little financial support for national or global CBO/NGO activities.

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*Evictions Mar PrepCom II

A few days before PrepCom II, 63 families were forcibly evicted from the Korogocho settlement of Nairobi. More than 200 people, mostly women and children, were left homeless when Nairobi City Council police demolished their homes in the early hours of the morning. Families had occupied the government owned land for 20 years. It was sold to a private developer without being offered for purchase by the community. A delegation of NGOs attending the PrepCom visited the evicted community and a protest was registered with the Kenyan UNCHS delegation. Another similar eviction took place during the PrepCom. These two cases are symptoms of a much deeper problem in Kenya and many other countries.

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*NGO/CBO Principles for Habitat II

The Habitat International Coalition (HIC) has started a broad consultation process in preparation for Habitat II. This includes developing a series of principles on the Habitat II themes from the perspective of community organizations and the NGOs aligned with them. A draft statement of principles was debated at an international workshop in Havana in March attended by over 125 NGO/CBO representatives. A second draft was circulated during PrepCom II in Nairobi.

The principles are the first part of an NGO position paper which will include commitments and an NGO plan of action. HIC is requesting inputs from others. HIC hopes that many NGOs will endorse the paper. It will also be a guide for considering the official documents.

The NGO/CBO principles are intended to enrich the commitments that will be ratified by governments at the Habitat II conference and contribute to a long-term NGO/CBO action strategy.

The text is structured around five central themes:

1. A Rights Based Approach: The struggle for the full implementation of universally recognised human rights is the starting point for achieving the objectives of Habitat II.
2. Democratic governance is essential if equity and sustainability are to be achieved.
3. A new development ideal based on social justice is needed to reverse the poverty and environmental deterioration which are the result of the current economic model. International solidarity among NGOs and CBOs is essential to develop and achieve this ideal.
4. People's shelter and settlement processes are most likely to achieve improved quality of life.
5. Resources should be provided for those that need them and to support peoples housing and settlement processes.

The full text is being edited for wider distribution. Look for this document on the APC online conference: <un.habitat.gen>

*WOMEN AND HABITAT II

*Beijing, Then Istanbul

A "Super-Coalition" of three international networks was formed in 1994 to map out common concerns and strategies on women and shelter issues. The three groups are: HIC Women & Shelter Network; Grassroots Organizations Operating Together for Sisterhood (GROOTS) ; and the International Council of Women. The coalition worked closely with the UNCHS Habitat Women's Program to develop a common statement for the Copenhagen Social Summit, the Beijing conference and Habitat II.

A crucial issue which the Coalition will promote in Beijing and Istanbul is housing, land, and property rights of women. Events planned for the Beijing NGO Forum in September are intended to bring more women into the struggle for women's housing rights and against forced evictions.

The Coalition was well represented at PrepCom II in Nairobi. An open workshop was held by the Coalition and presentations were made by a panel of delegates from each region. The Coalition also held a well attended press conference. Women voiced their concern that although they constitute more than 50% of the world's population, women are not included in decision making even when the issues pertain to their own well being! The delegates demanded an equal voice in policy making processes in their governments.

Women also expressed concern that governments present at PrepCom II who opposed the right to housing have given more power to those who evict women and children from their homes.

For copies of the Coalition's joint statement, please contact Women and Shelter Network, Mazingira Institute. (See "Contacts")

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*HOUSING RIGHTS AND HABITAT II

*USA Denies Housing Rights

Two days debate in the UNCHS 15th session focused on a UNCHS secretariat report, "Towards a Housing Rights Strategy", requested by the 1993 Commission session. Debate was sparked by vigorous efforts of the U.S. delegation to deny the formal existence of an internationally recognized legal right to housing. Many countries did not agree with the U.S. position. Those that include housing rights in their constitutions were especially uncomfortable about attempts to remove references to them.

While it was agreed that UNCHS would continue to investigate a strategy around housing rights, this was constrained by the need to consider views regarding the existence of these rights. The debate spilled over to the PrepCom where the GPA drafting group could not agree on rights language in the preamble. NGOs and others who believe in a rights based approach to meeting housing needs will have to work hard to remove the square brackets now around the reference to housing rights entitlements in point 6 of the preamble. Many would consider it shocking if UNCHS moves forward into the next century not fighting for basic human rights such as housing.

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*Housing Rights in Turkey

Housing and human rights violations in Turkey continued with extreme ferocity in the period following PrepCom I. This included continuing forced evictions in Kurdish regions and reports of numerous deaths among Turkish journalists. The UNCHS Secretariat continues to down play the issue which concerns both governments and NGOs. The Secretariat provided no detailed report at PrepCom II simply verbal affirmation that there will be no problem for delegates meeting in Turkey.

The Habitat International Coalition has had extensive contacts with Turkish NGOs and rights groups over the past year. Based on these, HIC has decided to participate in the Conference and related activities. HIC will continue to raise concerns about the desperate situation in Turkey while supporting those working for change. A statement endorsed by some of the NGOs at PrepCom II indicated continuing wariness about the venue. It called for "clear commitments that the Conference and related forums will be conducted in a completely open and democratic way. There cannot be any restrictions on the participation and content of the forum. All delegates must be able to interact with any of the sectors of Turkish society. The forum venue must be fixed and open to all those who wish to attend." These concerns also relate to the recent unilateral decision by Chinese authorities to move the women's NGO forum some 70 kms away from the official women's conference in Beijing.

*REGIONAL PROCESSES

*AFRICA

*Tanzanian NGO/CBO Habitat II Workshop

A Tanzanian NGO/CBO Steering Committee was formed at the Habitat II Launching Workshop held in Dar es Salaam in early April. 25 people attended the workshop, co-sponsored by the Women Advancement Trust and Rooftops Canada. Participants looked at shelter delivery, employment creation, and urban governance, in the context of overviews of human settlements and Habitat II issues in Tanzania. Two Tanzanian NGOs are on the National Habitat II Committee. Further NGO/CBO workshops will provide inputs into the national preparatory process.

*ASIA

*People's Agenda

An Asia Pacific Regional NGO Consultation, Our Cities, Our Homes - Developing A People's Agenda, was held in Kuantan Malaysia, 9- 13 April. The meeting brought together thirty-two regional networks representing a diverse range of interests. Participants committed themselves to a Plan of Action and 17 facilitating teams were established to coordinate implementation, including:

- Building public awareness of links between the dominant development model and the social, environmental, and economic crisis of our cities, towns, and villages.
- Encouraging peoples efforts to articulate their own visions of the future and achieve those visions.
- Facilitating local, national, regional, and global alliances.

For copies of the meeting statement contact, Asia Pacific 2000, c/o UNDP, PO Box 12544, 50782, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Tel: 603 255 9122 Fax: 603 253 2361.

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*Asian Women and Shelter Network (AWAS)

AWAS was launched at the Kuantan meeting by participants interested in women and shelter issues. They wanted a network to strengthen local initiatives and national lobbying efforts. Regional and international level linkages were seen as relevant and useful only within this context. AWAS is a loose network of women and women's organizations working on shelter issues. It will work with the Asian Coalition of Housing Rights (ACHR) and the HIC Women and Shelter Network. Contact: Susanna George c/o Asia Pacific 2000. (see address above)

*EUROPE

The U.K. National Council for Habitat II was launched on March 28, 1995. The secretariat is Homeless International (HI) , an NGO that supports Asian, African, Latin American and

Caribbean communities to improve living conditions through self-help.

The National Council will ensure that the U.K. National Plan of Action reflects the major concerns of key stakeholders. The UK delegation to Habitat II is expected to include representatives from the private sector, local authorities, environmental and housing campaign groups, consultants and academics. For copies of the UK National Council's newsletter, contact Homeless International. (See "Contacts")

*LATIN AMERICA

*Quito - People's Posters

A Habitat II/"Cities for Life" Conference, hosted by NGOs and universities with professional association and government support is planned for 13-18 November 1995 in Quito, Ecuador. A strong emphasis on sharing experiences will be reinforced by the call for People's Posters recounting experiences relevant to the Habitat II themes. Individuals and groups are invited to submit a single A1 sized sheet including photos, drawings, text, etc in any media. Each story should include: location, background, description, lessons and references to the main actors. 50 posters will be selected for a travelling exhibit ending in Istanbul. The Quito organizers encourage groups in other countries to promote similar initiatives. For more details, contact Rooftops Canada and/or the organizers: CIUDAD, Calle Fernando Meneses 265 y Av. La Gasca, Casilla 17-08-8311, Quito. Fax: 593 2 500322. e-mail: confe@ciudad.ec

*NORTH AMERICA

*Canada

Residents of Vancouver, the site of Habitat 1976, are planning a number of Habitat II activities including: a video with footage from Habitat and more up to date developments in Vancouver; commemorative activities to be held at the site of the 1976 NGO Forum to coincide with Habitat II; and the University of British Columbia will hold a monthly lecture series, "From Vancouver to Istanbul: Human Settlements in the 21st Century" starting in September, 1995.

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*U.S.A.

The fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations (UN50) was celebrated in San Francisco 21-24 June. The "We the Peoples" meeting focussed on the relationship between NGOs and the UN system. An integrated International Peoples Forum on Human Settlements helped raise awareness about Habitat II. The new International NGO Facilitating Group for Habitat II met at the same time. For information on the meetings contact Don Edwards. (See "Contacts")

*INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZING

*Youth for Habitat II

Youth for Habitat II is a partnership of youth and youth organisations promoting youth involvement in the Habitat II process. They have identified regional contact points and a number of projects including a newsletter, an international youth consultation, a video, skill building workshops, and exchange programmes. For more information contact the Youth for Habitat II focal point in your region. (See "Contacts")

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*Children and Habitat II

During the UNCHS Commission and Prep Com II in Nairobi, participants were forcefully reminded that most people affected by poor housing and forced evictions are children. Girl children are especially vulnerable. They are often required to help manage households and they are subject to sexual abuse. The Rights of The Child Caucus continued its work at the Population and Social Summits by successfully lobbying the Commission to include a full consideration of children's housing rights in its work plan, and in Habitat II preparations.

If possible, an expert seminar on this theme will be held prior to the Istanbul conference. A "City of the Child" is planned for the City Summit as is a children's drawing competition. For more information, contact: Han van Oosten, PLAN International, Chobham House, Christchurch Way, Woking GU21 1JG, U.K. Tel: 44 1483 733222, Fax: 44 1483 756505

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* FOCUS ON PROCESS: PERU

The COMISION HABITAT, a group of 11 NGOs, has been leading the Habitat II process in Peru. The COMISION launched its work following a regional Habitat II meeting sponsored by HIC in San Salvador, January 1994. It set up theme groups on housing, services & environment, municipalities, and urban space & production. Proposals from these groups were discussed at a major seminar in Lima in November 1994.

The Peruvian government launched its own broad based national preparatory committee with the NGO COMISION taking on the role of Executive Secretary. The COMISION is now actively formulating reports and proposals for the national committee while maintaining links to civil society. This will include holding a first regional meeting on "Cities in the Jungle" and various zonal workshops in Lima leading to a national meeting on "popular habitat" in September.

The Peruvian NGOs are taking advantage of Habitat II to strengthen civil society's capacity to contribute to solving settlements problems. They intend to ensure that a National Plan of Action is in place and will monitor its implementation.

* ON THE FORMAL ROAD - NGOs AND UNCHS

*Global Plan of Action Update

The GPA is still an unofficial, non-negotiated text being worked on by an informal drafting group including three NGO representatives. The text includes four main sections: the Preamble, Principles, Commitments, and Strategies for Implementation. The draft text and NGO drafting group member comments are available in English on various Internet sites and conferences.

The drafting group met again 17-21 July in Nairobi, and will meet again in the year. It is critical for NGOs to review the text and comments from the NGOs on the drafting group. Please send your comments to the NGO representatives, Han van Putten or Cecilia Kinuthia-Njenga, ELCI, and to Jay Moor at the UNCHS Secretariat. (See "Contacts")

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*Istanbul Conference Proposals

Innovative proposals for the Istanbul Conference were adopted by PrepCom II for approval by the UN General Assembly in October. Two main committees are recommended. Committee 1 will conclude the GPA for recommendation to the plenary. Committee 2 will have similar status, and report on statements and commitments from other UN agencies, local authorities, NGOs (broadly defined) , CBOs and thematic round tables. The proposed "Istanbul Covenant on the Future of Human Settlements" will include both the GPA and the report on partners' inputs. This access to the formal process was widely welcomed. NGOs remain concerned that they may be cut off from Committee 1 where the GPA will be finalized, and where local authority groups will have full access, except for voting. More thought will have to be given to this aspect of process.

Proposals for related events including forums and thematic round tables were also considered. NGOs expressed reservations about the separation of partners that have in the past worked together under a broad NGO tent including academics, professionals and trade unions. It is anticipated that the IFG will meet in Turkey in August with Turkish NGOs and Habitat II Secretariat staff to debate the form and content of Habitat II events.

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