

**Workshop on Effective and Sustainable Land Management –A Permanent Challenge for
Each Society (Munich, Germany, 24-25 May 2007)**

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

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Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen!

**On behalf of the secretariat of the United Nations Economic Commission
for Europe I would like to welcome you to this workshop in Munich, and I thank
the host authorities of Germany for organizing this event, in particular ~~on behalf
of the secretariat of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe~~ the
German Federal Task Force on Land Development and the Working Committee
of the Surveying Authorities of the States of the Federal Republic of Germany.**

**The 2nd part of the title of the workshop – “A Permanent Challenge for Each
Society” – reminds us that land management is a dynamic and changing task
rather than a static and fixed undertaking. Within the work of the UNECE
Committee on Housing and Land Management and certainly its Working Party**

on Administration, land management has always been seen as a crucial factor for urban as well as rural development. At the same time, the Committee emphasizes the close linkages between land management, spatial planning, and housing policies.

Challenges can be noted in both rural and urban areas today. Distressed urban areas, for instance, were discussed at a Ministerial meeting in Geneva in September last year. At this workshop, we will particularly address the issues of rural development and land consolidation.

Nowadays, the disparities between rural and urban areas are growing in most countries in the UNECE region. We observe increasing migration to urban areas, and deteriorating infrastructure, worsening socio-economic conditions (such as unemployment), and declining population numbers in rural areas, accompanied by scarce financial resources at the local government level. Villages and rural areas are no longer seen as attractive places to live and work by many people. What can land management do to address this challenge? Land management can contribute considerably to narrowing the gap between cities and villages. Employment opportunities in the agricultural sector – which is still the backbone

of rural economies – as well as in non-agricultural industries such as small and medium-sized enterprises, particularly those involving services and crafts, can be extended through effective land management policies. Infrastructure such as transport links and utilities can be improved and upgraded. Eventually, the protection of the natural environment leads to a higher quality of settlements.

Within this framework, land consolidation is a useful instrument to promote rural development. In many transition countries, the restitution of land has led to fragmented and scattered land holdings. For instance, the UNECE Environmental Performance Review of the Ukraine of 2007 found that almost half of the country’s population holds small land parcels. It is not only a tool to create larger and better-sized land parcels and more favourable land division, but also to contribute to agricultural development and other improvements of public, socio-economic and community interest, such as the upgrading of infrastructure and village renewal.

An important factor in the design of land consolidation schemes is the involvement and participation of the public, particularly that of the residents concerned. Land consolidation projects can encounter resistance and rejection.

Authorities and local communities should therefore ensure the information and participation of residents not only in the early planning stage but also during the implementation phase. Different solutions and approaches to create this involvement, as well as a sense of ownership of the process among the citizens, will also be discussed today and tomorrow.

The workshop will conclude with a discussion of the social and constitutional dimensions and the legal framework of land management. Here the central questions will be: How can interventions into private ownership rights be justified? What needs to be regulated by land codes and decrees, and what can be left to other regulation mechanisms? To find the appropriate legal balance is a continuing challenge. However, it is also important to note that implementation and enforcement of laws is also an important part of a well-functioning constitutional and legal framework.

I would like to wish you all successful and pleasant discussions and good results at the Workshop!

Thank you for your attention.