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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

REPORT ON THE FIFTY-NINTH SESSION  
(14 to 16 September 1998)

SUMMARY

The Committee on Human Settlements further considered the implications of the ECE Plan of Action and recommendations adopted at the Commission's fifty-third session, related to its Principal Subsidiary Bodies. In line with these recommendations, it updated and adopted its 1998-1999 programme of work, set priorities and decided to consider its medium-term work programme for 1999-2002 at its sixtieth session in September 1999. The Committee deemed the first year of activity of the Housing and Urban Management Advisory Network to be fully satisfactory. The Committee recommended that the Meeting of Officials on Land Administration should be granted standing character. It agreed that urban governance should be an umbrella topic for all programme activities in view of its role in strengthening local governance and democratization, and in facilitating the involvement of the private sector and the general public in decision-making. It also decided to strengthen its country profile project. It adopted a statement on social and economic benefits of good land administration.

It agreed to promote activities on sustainable consumption patterns, to evaluate the practice of urban renewal, and to look into ways to develop sustainable housing and land-use planning indicators. The Committee also supported the continuation of the ECE Urban and Regional Research Conferences.

## Introduction

1. The Committee on Human Settlements held its fifty-ninth session in Geneva from 14 to 16 September 1998. Mr. P. Veld (Netherlands) chaired the meeting.
2. Representatives of the following countries participated: Austria, Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, and United States of America.
3. The United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) was represented.
4. The following non-governmental organizations (NGOs) attended: Institut de recherche sur l'environnement (IREC), International Cooperative Alliance (ICA), International Federation for Housing and Planning (IFHP), International Real Estate Federation (FIABCI), International Society of City and Regional Planners (ISoCaRP), International Union of Tenants (IUT), Union Internationale de la Propriété Immobilière (UIPI), and World Fire Statistics Centre.
5. Members of the Committee=s Housing and Urban Management Advisory Network also attended (for its membership, see annex I).

### **I. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

6. The provisional agenda (ECE/HBP/109) was adopted.

### **II. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE FIFTY-THIRD SESSION OF THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE OF CONCERN TO THE COMMITTEE**

7. The Committee took note of the Commission=s decisions taken at its fifty-third session in April 1998 and its recommendations to the Principal Subsidiary Bodies. The Committee agreed to bear these decisions and recommendations in mind when discussing its programme and methods of work.

### **III. WORK OF THE BUREAU AND ESTABLISHMENT OF THE HOUSING AND URBAN MANAGEMENT ADVISORY NETWORK**

8. As a result of the discussion held on the position paper (HBP/1998/5) presented by Mr. G. Gundersen, member of the Network, and on the progress report of the Bureau=s work, the Committee:

- (a) Approved the progress report of the Committee=s Bureau;
- (b) Agreed on the usefulness of the proposals presented in the position paper of the Network;
- (c) Assessed the first year of activities of the Housing and Urban Management Advisory Network as being positive;

(d) Noted that the work of the Network was also in line with the principles adopted by the Commission for strengthening ties with the business community;

(e) Agreed that the Network should assist the Committee in organizing a series of events in the ECE countries (including a meeting in London and a workshop in Poland) to publicize the activities of the Committee and disseminate their results;

(f) Recommended that the Network should avail itself of the existing network of NGOs on matters of common interest;

(g) Invited the Network to draw up a progress report of its activities for the next session of the Committee in September 1999.

#### **IV. IN-DEPTH DISCUSSION: THE UNDERSTANDING AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CENTRAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND THE CAPACITY OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT**

9. The Committee concluded that the discussion on urban governance, moderated by Ms. M. WIKSTRÖM, Co-Chairperson of the Network, with three keynote speakers, Mr. G. GUNDERSEN, member of the Network, Mr. V. NADIN, Professor at the University of West England, and Mr. J. MANTHORPE, Adviser to HM Land Registry of the United Kingdom, indicated that this topic was important for the ECE region, in particular for countries in transition, in shaping the role of the State, the private sector, and local authorities, in encouraging public participation, as well as in strengthening democratization.

10. The Committee:

(a) Agreed that urban governance should be an umbrella topic for all its programme activities;

(b) Further agreed on the usefulness of its in-depth discussions and requested the Bureau with the assistance of the secretariat to find a specific topic for next year=s debate;

(c) Decided to organize a workshop on governance, and invited its Bureau to develop a programme for a workshop at its meeting in January 1999 in coordination with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Habitat and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

11. The Committee invited all delegations to submit their suggestions for the workshop=s programme to the secretariat by 30 October 1998 and to indicate their willingness to host the workshop.

#### **V. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HABITAT AGENDA IN THE ECE REGION**

12. The Committee took note of the discussion paper prepared by Mr. Vasko (consultant) based on replies from member countries on the follow-up to the Habitat II Conference and the implementation of the Habitat Agenda. It agreed:

(a) To strengthen the practice of regularly exchanging best practices, and invited the Bureau to consider this issue at its next meeting;

(b) To follow the implementation of the Habitat Agenda in the ECE region in the context of its programme of work;

(c) On the importance of the topic on housing sector reform, including housing privatization, and requested the Bureau and the secretariat to consider the proposals for holding workshops by the delegations of Poland (in cooperation with the Cooperative Housing Foundation (CHF) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)), Romania, the Russian Federation (on condominiums) in cooperation with interested NGOs.

## **VI. PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR 1998-1999**

### 13. The Committee:

(a) Agreed on its programme of work and a tentative list of meetings, as presented in annexes II and III, and requested its Bureau and the secretariat to implement the decisions taken concerning individual activities (workshops and other events);

(b) Considered that all programme elements were of equal importance, but indicated the priority ranking according to the timing of their expected results;

(c) Indicated that if any additional resources were available it would not undertake any new activity but would implement the existing programme elements in greater depth;

(d) Requested its Bureau, with the assistance of the Network and the secretariat, to present a medium-term strategic plan for its work to be adopted at its sixtieth session;

(e) Agreed to provide expert assistance to Kyrgyzstan in the framework of its National Strategy for Sustainable Human Development and invited the delegation of Kyrgyzstan with the Bureau, the Network and the secretariat to prepare proposals.

14. In regard to individual programme elements, the Committee:

**(a) Country profiles on the housing sector (10.1.1)**

- (i) Invited the secretariat in consultation with the Bureau to start preparation for the fourth and fifth (subject to availability of resources) country profiles;
- (ii) Decided to further develop the project implementation methods with an emphasis on timing and cooperation with other organizations and bilateral assistance agencies;

**(b) Improvement of urban environmental performance (10.1.2)**

- (i) Agreed to continue the programme element and invited the secretariat with the Bureau to prepare a concrete proposal with detailed information on the composition of the task force, work to be undertaken and a timetable;
- (ii) Invited countries to signal to the secretariat their specific interest in participating in the project with a city in their country, not later than 30 October 1998;
- (iii) Decided to report on the status of implementation of this activity to the Joint Meeting on Transport and the Environment;

**(c) Land registration and land markets (10.1.3)**

- (i) Adopted the statement on social and economic benefits of good land administration (HBP/1998/8);
- (ii) Endorsed the report of the second meeting of Officials on Land Administration (HBP/AC.11/4);
- (iii) Recommended that the Commission should grant the Meeting of Officials on Land Administration standing character;

**(d) Strategies for the implementation of urban renewal and housing modernization policy (10.1.4)**

- (i) Decided to finalize the case studies on urban renewal in Bratislava (Slovakia) and Budapest (Hungary) and finalize the case study on Ljubljana (Slovenia);
- (ii) Requested the task force to prepare a draft paper on the evaluation of the practice of urban renewal through the four case studies and its impact on the ECE countries, to be presented at the Committee's next session in September 1999;
- (iii) Agreed to hold an ad hoc meeting of experts to discuss the implementation of renewal policies and their impact on ECE countries in the year 2000;

**(e) Development of human settlements statistics (10.1.5)**

- (i) Decided to publish the ECE Bulletin on Housing and Building Statistics every two years;
- (ii) Invited the secretariat to make the current housing and building statistics available on the Internet;
- (iii) Took note of the interest expressed by several delegations (Finland, Germany, Poland, Russian Federation, Spain, United Kingdom) in developing sustainable housing and land-use planning indicators;
- (iv) Invited the secretariat and the Bureau to work out modalities for a network of experts and international organizations (Habitat, OECD) to develop ECE human settlements indicators;

**(f) Major trends characterizing human settlements development (10.1.6)**

- (i) Agreed that the ECE Conferences on Urban and Regional Research are a unique forum for policy makers and researchers to discuss topical issues, and expressed its general interest in continuing to hold such meetings at regular intervals;
- (ii) Welcomed the readiness of the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions of the United Kingdom to organize the ninth Conference on Urban and Regional Research around 2002;
- (iii) Decided to update and revise the publications Human Settlements Trends in Central and Eastern Europe and Major Trends Characterizing Human Settlements Development in the ECE Region every five years and to consolidate them into one publication.

**VII. OTHER BUSINESS**

15. The secretariat provided information on the use of the ECE Human Settlements Trust Fund since the previous session of the Committee.

**VIII. ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

16. In accordance to the rotation principle, the following officers were elected for the sixtieth session of the Committee (13 to 15 September 1999): Mr. John Zetter (United Kingdom), Chairperson; Mr. Wolfgang Förster (Austria), Mr. Anatoly Nichkasov (Belarus), Mr. Bert Emmerich (Netherlands), Mr. Nikolai V. Maslov (Russian Federation), Ms. Bozena Lipej (Slovenia), and Ms. Ayse Sayin (Turkey), Vice-Chairpersons.

Annex I

Members of the Housing and Urban Management Advisory Network (HUMAN)\*/

Mr. M. Mataš (Chairperson)  
General Secretary  
Private Construction Contractors  
Association of Slovakia  
Nobelova 18  
831 02 Bratislava, Slovakia  
Fax: (421 7) 503 1249                      Tel: (421 7) 503 1260

Ms. Margot Wikström (Vice-Chairperson)  
President, Swedish Association of Local Authorities  
S-118 82 Stockholm, Sweden  
Fax: (46 8) 772 4612                      Tel: (46 8) 772 4601

Mr. Henning Grann  
Statoil Deutschland GmbH  
Jannes-Ohling-Straße 40  
Postfach 22 62  
D-26702 Emden (Germany)  
Fax: (49) 49 27 91 73 33                      Tel: (49) 49 27 91 73 00 (32)  
E-mail: konheng@statoil.no.com  
Home: Helstedsvej 4G, 3480 Fredensborg (Denmark)  
Home fax/tel: (45) 48 47 50 10

Mr. Igor Jakobson  
Director, Estonian Housing Fund  
Kiriku Street  
2/4 EE0100 Tallinn, Estonia  
E-mail: ehf@ehf.ee  
Fax: (372) 645 1539                      Tel: (372) 645 2985  
E-mail: ehf@ehf.ee

Mr. Peter Gauder  
Managing Director, Quo Vadis Consulting  
Városház u. 7,  
Budapest 1052, Hungary  
E-mail: quovadis@mail.matav.hu  
Fax: (36 1) 395 2139                      Tel: (36 1) 317 2042

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\*/ The terms of reference of the Housing and Urban Management Advisory Network were adopted by the Committee on Human Settlements at its fifty-eighth session in September 1997 (ECE/HBP/104, annex II).



Mr. Gert A. Gundersen  
Consultant, O. Kyrres Gt 11  
5014 Bergen, Norway  
E-mail: opusbgo@online.no  
Fax: (47) 552 141 60 Tel: (47) 552 141 50

Mr. C|lin C|t|lin Chiri<=>  
Mayor, Sector 5 Bucharest  
B-dul Elisabeta nr. 29-31  
Bucharest, Romania  
Fax: (401) 311 2268 Tel: (401) 314 4318 / 149  
(401) 315 9482 Mobile: (401) 094 530 787

Mr. Serge P. Melnichenko  
Deputy Chief, Main Architectural and Planning Department  
of the Moscow Committee for Architecture and Town Planning  
Triumphalnaya Sq. 1  
125047 Moscow, Russian Federation  
Fax: (7095) 251 5157/250 0841 Tel: (7095) 209 5440/250 0036

Mr. Herbert G. Pfeiffer  
Member of the Board, Building Savings Bank  
Bajkalska 30, P.O. Box 48  
820 05 Bratislava 25, Slovakia  
Fax: (421 7) 521 5082 Tel: (421 7) 523 1301/303

Mr. Lee Shostak  
EDAW Limited  
1 Lindsey Street  
LONDON EC1A 1X 8NA 9HP, United Kingdom  
Fax: (44 171) 674 0799 Tel: (44 171) 674 0700

Mr. Michael E. Doyle  
President, CEO Cooperative Housing Foundation  
8300 Colesville Road, Silver Spring  
Maryland 20910, United States of America  
E-mail: doyle@chfhq.com  
Fax: (1301) 587 2626 Tel: (1301) 587 4700

Annex II

PROGRAMME OF WORK

SUBPROGRAMME 10 - HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

10.1.1 Country profiles on the housing sector

Description: The housing sector is a key element of the overall economy. In countries in transition this sector has a critical role to play in ensuring the success of economic and social reforms and the establishment of democracy. However, at present there is a lack of urgently needed information for the assessment and management of this sector. Therefore, this project to collect and analyse data in the form of country profiles is intended as a tool for Governments to analyse and assess the economic, social and environmental aspects of their housing policies, and to compare the progress made internationally. The country profiles also aim to provide essential information to potential investors and are coordinated with the Housing Indicator Programme prepared for the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and the Committee's work on statistics and indicators. Major issues identified in all countries in transition are the development of a sound housing finance and credit system, the promotion of banking sector development and the real-estate market.

Work accomplished: The country profiles on the housing sector of Bulgaria and Poland have been published (ECE/HBP/101; ECE/HBP/107). A study on the Slovak housing sector has been finalized.

Work to be undertaken: The Committee will continue activities for the preparation of country profiles on the housing sector. The delegations of Lithuania and Romania have stated their interest in such studies being carried out in their countries. In autumn 1998, work will start on a fourth study. The Committee and its Bureau will supervise the substantive work and consider the possibilities for holding ad hoc meetings of experts with the participation of donors to discuss project implementation and the application of the results in ECE countries. Workshops on housing issues will be organized in Poland, Romania, the Russian Federation and the United Kingdom (see annex III). Possibilities for cooperation with Habitat, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), USAID, the European Union and the World Bank will be further explored.

Duration: 1998 - 2000.

Priority: Higher.

10.1.2 Improvement of urban environmental performance

Description: Local systems and cities are crucial for promoting sustainable consumption patterns. 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 and

services and to further sustainable use of energy, water, raw materials and land by individuals and communities. Cross-sectoral partnerships should constitute the basis for encouraging effective and equitable local initiatives. The gender perspective in housing and urban planning will be addressed.

Work accomplished: Five cities have carried out case studies: Porvoo (Finland) (ECE/ENHS/NONE/1997/42); Lyons (France) (ECE/ENHS/NONE/1997/43); Riga (Latvia) (ECE/ENHS/NONE/1997/39); Apeldoorn (Netherlands) (ECE/ENHS/NONE/1997/41); Cracow (Poland) (ECE/ENHS/NONE/1997/40). They examined important variables, such as population density, land use, infrastructure mobility and lifestyles. Instruments applied to influence personal choice or to guide and encourage environmentally friendly behaviour were looked at, together with the measures applied to improve the quality of the urban environment and cities= environmental performance. The Committee on Environmental Policy, in cooperation with the Committee on Human Settlements, organized a workshop on encouraging local initiatives towards sustainable consumption patterns in Vienna in February 1998. The report of the workshop (HBP/1998/2) sets out follow-up activities. Contributions on physical planning were made to the environmental performance reviews of Slovenia and Lithuania carried out under the auspices of the Committee on Environmental Policy.

Work to be undertaken: More case studies will be prepared by interested Government/city pairs and experts from academic, business and NGO communities and international organizations. These case studies will focus on environmentally sound urban and regional transport management coordinated with sustainable land use planning where joint action may substantially reduce the overall impact from a life-cycle perspective on human health, natural resources and the environment, while maintaining and improving the quality of life. Their assessment would: (i) identify partnership arrangements which could be recommended to ECE Governments in their action towards sustainable consumption patterns; (ii) identify barriers (e.g. regulations planning, economic and fiscal disincentives) which need to be dismantled to promote sustainable consumption initiatives at the local level; (iii) demonstrate how central/local level cooperation on sustainable consumption issues promotes urban governance including public participation and awareness.

A workshop will be organized in the year 2000 possibly in cooperation with the Committee on Environmental Policy. The project will be supervised by a small task force composed of experts from interested ECE Governments, city authorities and international NGOs.

Duration: 1998 - 2000.

Priority: Higher.

### 10.1.3 Land registration and land markets

Description: Land registration issues have become increasingly important for security of tenure and land rights, effective housing policies and the promotion of market-oriented reforms in countries in transition, as well as in the context of the European integration. The activities in this area are aimed at providing assistance to countries in transition in reforming cadastre and land registration systems and sharing information and learning from the experience of modernizing land administration systems in the developed market economies. These activities are intended to promote education and training; research and development; exchange of experience; transfer of technology; standardization; etc. The Meeting of Officials on Land Administration is the intergovernmental forum for these activities.

Work accomplished: The ECE Land Administration Guidelines have been published (ECE/HBP/96). The ad hoc meeting on financing land administration projects in countries in transition was organized in consultation with the World Bank in Geneva in March 1997. An inventory of national authorities responsible for land administration was prepared and published with the United Kingdom as lead country. Documentation on international land administration projects in countries in transition was prepared and published with the assistance of Austria. A workshop on definitions and numbering of objects in cadastres and land registers was organized in Oslo in June 1997. The second meeting of Officials on Land Administration was organized jointly with the EU Phare programme in Warsaw. The meeting was held in conjunction with a workshop on land administration reform in Poland. A workshop on cadastre reform took place in Prague in February 1998 in conjunction with the meeting of the steering group of the Meeting of Officials on Land Administration. A workshop on land administration reform in the Baltic States took place in Riga in May 1998. HM Land Registry (United Kingdom) updated the land administration inventory for ECE countries. A team of land administration experts from Austria, Spain and the United Kingdom visited Albania to assess its land reform. With the assistance of the delegation of Slovenia, the Meeting of Officials on Land Administration set up a homepage on the Internet.

Work to be undertaken: The Meeting of Officials on Land Administration will promote the practical application of the ECE Land Administration Guidelines in countries in transition, inter alia through different types of operational activities in these countries. A survey of the current structure of land ownership and the existing legislation to restrict/limit the sale of property in ECE countries will be prepared by mid 2000. A workshop on land markets will take place in Budapest from 30 November to 2 December 1998. In 1999 workshops are planned in Germany (March) and in the United Kingdom (September). The third meeting of Officials on Land Administration will take place in Geneva on 15-16 November 1999.

Duration: 1998 - 2001.

Priority: Higher.

10.1.4 Strategies for the implementation of urban renewal and housing modernization policy

Description: The Committee promotes the application of the ECE Strategies for urban renewal and housing modernization (ECE/HBP/97). Its case studies provide an understanding of how renewal policies are implemented nationally and locally. They are an opportunity to look in detail at how existing and emerging housing problems can be solved and the quality of life improved in a move towards sustainable development.

Work accomplished: The case studies on Vienna and Bratislava are ready, that on Budapest is under way. The case studies include conclusions and recommendations.

Work to be undertaken: A task force of international experts will continue to review the ECE Strategies for the implementation of renewal policies, identify and analyse concrete examples of how renewal and modernization policies are put into practice in the ECE countries. The appropriate legal, organizational and financial frameworks will be looked at and special emphasis will be given to the responsibilities of the public sector, at national, regional and local levels, and of private actors (owners, tenants, business, investors, etc.). Different forms of tenure are investigated as an important factor for renewal activities and types of problem areas are defined. The case studies on Budapest will be finalized. A case study on Ljubljana will follow. The Committee will consider the possibility of holding an ad hoc meeting of experts with the participation of local authorities, the private sector, etc. in the year 2000 to discuss the implementation of renewal policies and the impact that they may have on the ECE countries.

Duration: 1998 - 2000.

Priority: Higher.

#### 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 Annual Bulletin of Housing and Building Statistics for Europe and North America, recommendations for housing censuses, ECE indicators for monitoring and evaluating sustainable human settlements development, etc.

Work accomplished: The 1998 Annual Bulletin of Housing and Building Statistics for Europe and North America has been published.

Work to be undertaken: The Committee will prepare the next issue of the Bulletin of Housing and Building Statistics for Europe and North America to be published in 2000 (new two-year interval). Work on indicators for sustainable housing and land-use planning will be undertaken.

Duration: 1998 - 2000.

Priority: Lower.

#### 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, the key factors affecting the housing sector 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 study on Major Trends Characterizing Human Settlement Development (ECE/HBP/108) was published as a result of work carried out by two task forces. The study served as a background paper for the Eighth Conference on Urban and Regional Planning. An abstract of the study was prepared to assist the participants in the preparation of their response papers for the Conference. The Eighth Conference took place in Madrid from 8 to 11 June 1998. It was preceded by a study tour in the metropolitan area of Madrid. A new study Human Settlements Trends in Central and Eastern Europe was prepared by the secretariat in October 1997 (ECE/HBP/105).

Work to be undertaken: A workshop on governance will be organized in cooperation with UNDP, Habitat and OECD in 1999-2000. A research conference will be organized in the United Kingdom around 2002. Both above-mentioned publications will be updated and revised every five years in a single volume.

Duration: 1999 - 2002.

Priority: Medium.

Annex IIITENTATIVE LIST OF MEETINGS<sup>\*</sup>/

30 November to 2 December 1998	Budapest (Hungary)	Workshop on land markets
May 1999	Poland	Workshop (jointly with CHF and USAID) on housing sector reform
13-15 September 1999	Geneva	Sixtieth session of the Committee on Human Settlements
23-24 September 1999	London (United Kingdom)	Workshop on land administration
15-16 November 1999	Geneva	Third meeting of Officials on Land Administration
Autumn 1999	Bucharest (Romania)	Workshop on housing sector reform
Autumn 1999	London (United Kingdom)	Meeting on public/private partnership in human settlements development
Winter 1999	Moscow (Russian Federation)	Workshop on condominiums

<sup>\*</sup>/ Bureau meetings, task force meetings and other informal consultations are not listed.