United Nations Human Settlements Programme

Committee of Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Human Settlements Programme
Twentieth regular meeting
Nairobi, 16 March 2006

Minutes of the nineteenth regular meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Human Settlements Programme

Opening of the meeting
1. The meeting was opened at 9.50 a.m. on Friday, 1 December 2005, by the Chair, Mr. Wojciech Jasiński, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Poland to the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat).
2. The meeting was attended by 69 representatives from 55 countries and 1 observer.
3. The Chair welcomed the following new members of the Committee: Mr. Syeed Ahmed, High Commissioner and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh, Mrs. Cristina Funes-Noppen, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Belgium, Mr. Bo Jensen, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Denmark, Mr. Eric Van der Linden, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the European Commission, and Ms. Elisabeth Jacobsen, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Norway. He also bade farewell to the following representatives who had left or were leaving: Mr. Mohammed-Hacene Echarif, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Algeria, Mr. Yousef Rajab Radii, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Palestine, Mr. J.F. de Sales Mascarenhas, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Portugal, Mr. Enoch Chikamba, High Commissioner and Permanent Representative of Zambia and Mr. Elisha Muzonzini, High Commissioner and Permanent Representative of Zimbabwe.

Item 1: Adoption of the agenda
4. The Committee adopted the provisional agenda for the meeting, as set out in document HSP/CPR/19/1.

Item 2: Adoption of the minutes of the eighteenth regular meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, held on 29 September 2005
5. The Committee approved and adopted the draft minutes of its eighteenth meeting, held on 29 September 2005, as contained in document HSP/CPR/19/2.
Item 3: Elections of the Bureau of the Committee of Permanent Representatives for the biennium 2006–2007

6. Following the established pattern of rotation among the various regional groups of posts in the Bureau of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, the following officers were elected by acclamation for the biennium 2006–2007, after nomination by their respective regional groups:

Chair: Ms. Elisabeth Jacobsen (Norway)
Vice-Chair: Mr. Wojciech Jasinski (Poland)
Rapporteur Mr. Zahir Hussain (Pakistan)

7. The two remaining bureau members would be elected at the following meeting of the Committee, after the African and Latin American regional groups had concluded their consultations regarding their nominations.

Item 4: Developments at the sixtieth regular session of the General Assembly

8. Introducing the item, the Executive Director said that she had addressed the Second Committee of the General Assembly on 1 November 2005. The statement that she had delivered had been circulated to the members of the Committee of Permanent Representatives for their information. The Second Committee had had before it three reports, namely, the report of the outcome of the twentieth session of the UN-Habitat Governing Council (document A/60/8), the Secretary-General’s report on the implementation of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and the strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (document A/60/168) and the report of the Secretary-General entitled “Coordinated Implementation of the Habitat Agenda” (document E/2005/60); which was presented to the Economic and Social Council in July 2005 and transmitted to the Second Committee. The response of the Second Committee to the reports and to her statement had been very positive, and the outcome of the Committee’s consultations on UN-Habitat had been draft resolution A/C./2/60/L.13, bearing the title “Implementation of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and the strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme”. The Second Committee was expected to adopt the draft resolution on 2 December 2005, with final adoption by the General Assembly during the week of 19 December 2005. A copy of the draft resolution was being circulated to the members of the Committee of Permanent Representatives during the current meeting.

9. It was clear from the draft resolution, as well as from the outcome of the World Summit, that Member States were in agreement with the important role of UN-Habitat in meeting the development and humanitarian challenges of the international community in the coming decades.

10. She informed the Committee that the Secretary-General had appointed a new Deputy Executive Director for UN-Habitat, Ms. Inga Björk-Klevby, a senior Swedish diplomat with wide international experience who would be joining UN-Habitat in January 2006. She took the opportunity to pay tribute to and express her heartfelt thanks to Mr. Daniel Biau, who had been Acting Deputy Executive Director since 1998. She said that Mr. Biau would now be focusing on the leadership of the Regional and Technical Division, a post to which he had been appointed by the Secretary-General in December 2002.

11. She congratulated the outgoing Chair and other members of the Bureau of the Committee on their work over the previous two years, and also congratulated the new Bureau on its election, as UN-Habitat sought to consolidate the gains of the last years and contribute to the strengthening of its human settlements programme.

12. Several representatives, including the representatives of the various regional groupings, took the floor to express their congratulations to the new Deputy Executive Director, and their appreciation of the work done by Mr. Daniel Biau and also their thanks to the outgoing Bureau.

13. Several representatives referred to the statement of the Executive Director to the General Assembly, under the heading of “Funding” (on page 6 of the circulated statement), and specifically to the topic of the case for voluntary assessed contributions, and stressed that no consensus had yet been reached on voluntary assessed contributions. The Executive Director responded that, while she was advocating voluntary assessed contributions, she had not said that it had been agreed.

14. One representative said that the Executive Director had invited comments on the issue of Habitat programme managers, and recalled that operative paragraph 5 of Governing Council decision 20/15 had requested an independent strategic evaluation of the programme for Habitat
programme managers. He believed that the programme needed a more profound justification, founded on independent evidence, since it was a major innovation. In providing an input from the secretariat on the programme, he wondered if that was pre-judging the issue. Several representatives spoke in favour of having Habitat programme managers. In reply, the Executive Director said that she was not prejudging the issue and was awaiting an independent evaluation.

15. The Committee noted with appreciation the report of the Executive Director.

Item 5: Progress report on the implementation of the work programme of UN-Habitat for the biennium 2004–2005

16. Introducing the item, the Executive Director referred to the progress report on the implementation of the work programme of UN-Habitat for the biennium 2006–2007, contained in document HSP/CPR/19/5. She noted that the report was in a new format, incorporating results-based principles, in accordance with the new reform measures of the United Nations, to ensure that programmes were regularly monitored towards expected accomplishments. She then highlighted and summarized the main points in the report.

17. Several representatives suggested that the report could be discussed at subcommittee level, since it had been circulated the previous week and members of the Committee had not yet had time to study it. The Chair said that the Bureau would discuss the matter.

18. One representative expressed his wish to draw the attention of the Committee to achievements at ground level, and mentioned in particular the leading role played by the regional office in Fukuoka, Japan. He added that it would be useful if the secretariat could provide a presentation on the Aceh Nia Settlements Support Programme (ANSSP) Indonesia and recommended that the Division of Regional and Technical Cooperation should take a more active role in post-tsunami projects. The Executive Director said that Mr. Biau, the Director of the Division, would circulate briefing material to the members of the Committee.

19. The representative of Indonesia said that his country had been honoured to celebrate World Habitat Day in 2005, and he paid tribute to the help provided by UN-Habitat to Governments and thanked the secretariat and the UN-Habitat Regional Office in Japan for their response to the tsunami disaster.

20. The Committee noted with appreciation the report of the Executive Director.

Item 6: Progress report on the financial situation of UN-Habitat

21. Introducing the item, the Executive Director recalled that the financial update as of October 2005 had been circulated to the members of the Committee. She then highlighted some details of the current financial situation, as reflected in the financial update. She was happy to announce that the total annual contributions to UN-Habitat continued to rise steadily, and as at 30 October 2005 had amounted to $75 million. She thanked all the donors for their financial support to UN-Habitat during the year, particularly those Governments that were helping the trust funds, such as Canada and Norway.

22. One representative said that it would be useful to have comparisons with more years than just 2003/2004. He also wished to have more information about the trust funds, and the Executive Director said in reply that the secretariat would endeavour to provide more information in the future.

23. The Committee noted with appreciation the report of the Executive Director.

Item 7: Report of the working groups of the Committee of Permanent Representatives

24. Mr. Pedro L. Pedroso (Cuba) and Mr. Surendra Kumar (India), the chairs of the working groups on policy and programme matters and on budget, finance and administrative matters, respectively, gave reports on the work of their working groups since the previous meeting of the Committee. Mr. Bernd Braun (Germany), on behalf of the chair of the working group on preparations for the third session of the World Urban Forum, also gave a report on the work of that working group.

25. One representative, speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the meetings of the working groups should be scheduled to discuss the following four issues: the medium-term institutional plan, a review of the global campaigns, the strategy for dealing with disasters and the recommendations of the Office of Internal Oversight Services. He also wished to have information on the process for the writing of the strategic framework for the following biennium’s work programme and to know whether
that process could begin in January 2006. The Executive Director agreed that a number of policy
documents had to be prepared, as the integration of the issues mentioned was crucial. A representative
of the secretariat said that the instruction to prepare the strategic framework should already have been
received from New York; the secretariat was hoping to distribute the relevant documentation in mid-
December and discuss it in the third week of January 2006. He added that the working group on budget
and work programme had already begun to discuss the medium-term work programme and institutional
plan, but noted the constraints imposed by the resource situation and the need to engage consultants.

26. The Chair said that the new Bureau would address those issues and prepare a calendar for the
working groups.

27. The Committee noted with appreciation the reports of the chairs of the working groups.

Item 8: Report on the “Forward-looking strategic plan” on the two global
campaigns of UN-Habitat

28. Introducing the item, the Executive Director said that the Committee had before it a summary
report based both on internal reflections and on inputs obtained from consultations, for the development
of a strategic plan for the two global campaigns (document HSP/CPR/18/8). The secretariat was looking
forward to receiving further guidance from the Committee, and the secretariat intended to solicit more
reactions and inputs from other United Nations agencies and from other partner institutions that had
been working closely with the campaigns. The strategic plan would be integrated into the continuing
work on developing the UN-Habitat strategic framework and the strategic and institutional plans for
2008–2013. She noted however that there was a funding gap, and the Foundation resources were not
table to do more for the campaigns, which made the future situation unpredictable.

29. One representative said that she could not support the current draft as it contained a
“rights-based” approach, and she asked for that to be removed.

30. Another representative said that it would be useful if the targets and expected effects could be
better defined and the interlinkages between the present draft strategy and the overall strategy further
elaborated.

31. The representative of the European Union said that he supported the two campaigns fully, but
stressed that to make them successful all parts of the organization must buy into them; if the two
campaigns were central to the work of UN-Habitat, then the other parts of the programme should be
responding to the demands of the campaigns. The Executive Director said in reply that she agreed that
the work of UN-Habitat should be guided by the campaigns, and she noted that the campaigns must be
operationalized; for example, the right to land could not be obtained by decree but had to have an
operational part at country level. She appealed to all to respond to the present document, as it was the
starting point for discussions.

32. The Committee noted with appreciation the report of the Executive Director.

Item 9: Progress report on preparations for the third session of the World Urban
Forum (Vancouver, Canada, 19–23 June 2006)

33. Introducing the item, the Executive Director informed the Committee that the first deadline for
the submission of networking events for the World Urban Forum had passed and she was pleased to say
that there had been an overwhelming response, totalling in excess of 140 proposals. She said that she
was pleased also that the working group had discussed and agreed on the structure and organization of
the Forum. Negotiations for the host country agreement were at an advanced stage and should be
completed by the end of the year. She expressed her appreciation to the Government of Canada which
had not only supported the preparations for the World Urban Forum with an initial contribution of
$600,000, but had pledged an additional $1,900,000 to facilitate participation by least developed
countries and other Habitat Agenda partners. She appealed for additional financial contributions to
assure balanced participation of Government, local authorities and Habitat Agenda partners.

34. The representative of Canada said that the host country agreement should be completed and
signed by 31 December 2005. He hoped that the new Canadian contribution would ensure varied
participation from all countries and sectors.

35. The Committee noted with appreciation the report of the Executive Director.
Item 10. Brief review of disaster management strategic plan

36. Introducing the item, the Executive Director referred to the brief review of the Disaster Management Strategic Plan, contained in document HSP/CPR/19/10. The document had been prepared in response to operative paragraph 3 of Governing Council resolution 20/17, and constituted an introduction to the strategic plan for disaster management, which would be discussed in greater detail at a working group meeting early in 2006.

37. She noted that UN-Habitat was receiving increasing demand for substantive input into humanitarian affairs, which extended to the normative objectives of its Disaster Management Programme to produce tools, training and operational and technical support for member States and its partners. A measure of that had been the level of funding received to support UN-Habitat work in countries in crisis – a total of $62 million investment through UN-Habitat for the benefit of the people facing crisis in those countries. It was therefore crucial to have a policy in place to ensure that future engagements were structured more strategically and to ensure that the UN-Habitat goal of assisting the development of sustainable human settlements was initiated at the earliest possible moment.

38. The representative of Pakistan expressed his gratitude to UN-Habitat for its support in relief activities after the recent earthquake in his country. He noted that a UN-Habitat office in Islamabad had opened on 10 October 2005, and he hoped that it would receive wide support.

39. The representative of Sweden said that his Government was producing a new document in February 2006, which, among other things, would outline his country’s perception of the proper role of UN-Habitat in disaster management; he would be pleased to provide input from that document in late February 2006. He said that what was missing from the document tabled by the secretariat was a discussion on what activities UN-Habitat should engage in and what activities it should not engage in, and also on how the disaster management strategy related to the overall resource mobilization strategy.

40. Several representatives raised the issue of the relationship between disaster strategies and the UN-Habitat mandate, while one representative said he disagreed with the disaster mandate set out in the document under discussion. In reply, the Executive Director gave several examples of how Member States and also the Office of the Secretary-General had requested UN-Habitat to provide emergency assistance: she added that UN-Habitat had a mandate for shelter policy, although not for building shelter, and that policy was the reason that UN-Habitat had to be present at the beginning in the case of disasters.

Item 11. Other matters

41. The representative of Uganda said that she wished to commend UN-Habitat and the Government of the United States on the East African High-level Peer Exchange on Government Enablement of Private Sector Lending for Affordable Housing held from 16 to 18 November 2005.

42. A representative of the secretariat proposed a timetable for the preparation and review of the UN-Habitat strategic framework document for the 2008-2009 work programme. This involved the distribution of the document and its review by a CPR Working Group in early 2006. The Chair said that the new Bureau would take that into consideration.

Closure of the meeting

43. The Chair declared the meeting closed at 1.15 p.m.