Committee of Permanent Representatives
to the United Nations Human Settlements Programme
Eighteenth regular meeting
Nairobi, 29 September 2005

Minutes of the sixteenth 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 Monday, 14 March 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 62 representatives from 42 countries and two observers.

3. The Chair welcomed the following new members of the Committee: Mr. Lorenz Barth, Deputy Permanent Representative of Germany, Mr. John E. Aggrey, Honorary Consul and Permanent Representative of Ghana, Mr. Polydore Kokonas, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Greece, Mr. Andre-Thomas Eid, Deputy Permanent Representative of Norway. He also bade farewell to the following representatives who had left or were leaving the Nairobi duty station: Mr. Atle Fretheim, Deputy Permanent Representative of Norway.

Item 1: Adoption of the agenda

4. Before the adoption of the agenda, one representative wished to know if the UN-Habitat response to the Indian Ocean disaster, as set out in document HSP/CPR/16/7, which was before the Committee, would be discussed by the Committee in its current meeting. A representative of the secretariat said in reply that the item would be brought up under agenda item 7 (Other matters).

5. The Committee adopted as amended the provisional agenda for the meeting, as set out in document HSP/CPR/16/1.

Item 2: Adoption of the minutes of the fifteenth regular meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, held on 9 December 2004

6. The Committee approved and adopted as amended the draft minutes of its fifteenth meeting, held on 9 December 2004, as contained in document HSP/CPR/16/2.
Several representatives raised the issue of the possible conflict of dates of other meetings with the following session of the World Urban Forum in June 2006 as mentioned by the Executive Director in paragraph 6 of the minutes of the fifteenth meeting of the Committee, and sought clarification as to whether the Bureau of the Committee had addressed the issue. The Executive Director responded by saying that the forthcoming session of the Governing Council would ask Conference Services in New York to include the World Urban Forum session on the official United Nations meeting list. One representative suggested that, instead of waiting for the Governing Council session, the Chair of the Committee could be mandated to write a letter to Conference Services in New York on behalf of the Committee, explaining the position and requesting the inclusion of the World Urban Forum session on the meeting list. The Committee agreed to that suggestion.

**Item 3: UN-Habitat work plan for the year 2005**

Introducing the item, the Executive Director referred to document HSP/CPR/16/3, entitled “UN-Habitat: Work plan for 2005”, which she said derived directly from the biennial work programme for 2004-2005 that had been approved by the Governing Council and the General Assembly. It included all the outputs from that biennial work programme that had not been included in the work plan for 2004 or had not been completed in 2004. In keeping with the request by the Committee, the outputs had been divided into two categories, namely, those with high priority and others. She then highlighted the main areas of focus and actions for each of the four subprogrammes and the Programme Support Division.

Several representatives took the floor to thank UN-Habitat for its rapid response to the tsunami disaster and for assisting countries in the Caribbean affected by a series of hurricanes.

The representative of Japan, while echoing those sentiments, announced that his Government would shortly exchange a note verbale with UN-Habitat in order to finalize a grant of $1.85 million for emergency aid to internally displaced people in Somalia.

The representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland said that his Government attached great importance to the monitoring role of UN-Habitat under subprogramme 2, with regard to progress towards target 11 on slum upgrading, and for that reason had decided to contribute $700,000 towards the Monitoring Urban Inequities Programme.

Many representatives highlighted the usefulness of regional offices and the work of Habitat programme managers. Several said that the option of closing down regional offices because of financial constraints would not be acceptable, and questioned the need to finance those offices from extra-budgetary rather than general budgetary sources. Several representatives said that they hoped that the issue could be addressed and resolved at the forthcoming session of the Governing Council.

In response, the Executive Director expressed her thanks to the Governments of Japan and the United Kingdom for the contributions mentioned by their representatives. She said that, with regard to the financing of regional offices, she could only appeal to the Member States for help with their funding, and she recommended that representatives should send a message about the need to find support for regional offices to their colleagues in the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly in New York.

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

**Item 4: Report of the working group on preparations for the twentieth session of the Governing Council of UN-Habitat**

Mr. Bernd Braun (Germany), the chair of the working group on preparations for the twentieth session of the Governing Council of UN-Habitat, gave a report on the work of the working group. The main focus of the working group had been a review of the document entitled “Work programme of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, UN-Habitat, for the biennium 2006–2007 and budget of the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation for the biennium 2006–2007” (document HSP/GC/20/9). The working group had made several recommendations on the substance of that report, which had been acted upon by the secretariat.

The working group had also considered a total of 12 draft resolutions, a list of which was before the Committee as document HSP/CPR/16/4. Those draft resolutions were in various stages of consideration and additional meetings of the working group had been scheduled in order to finalize them. Two additional draft resolutions had been distributed the previous week, one on the provisional agenda for the twenty-first session of the Governing Council of UN-Habitat, and the other on themes for that twenty-first session, and those would be considered by the working group at future meetings. In
addition, a draft resolution had been submitted to the secretariat by the Russian Federation, entitled “Sustainable development in the Arctic region”. He reported that a subgroup under the chairmanship of Mr. José Casal (Argentina), had been established by the working group to review the structure and organizational arrangements of future sessions of the Governing Council, and the subgroup would make recommendations to the working group, to enable the latter to finalize its recommendations on that item. In conclusion he thanked the members of the working group and for their active participation in the deliberations of the group, and urged them to continue to do so to facilitate the successful conclusion the work entrusted to the group by the Committee.

17. The representative of the Netherlands, speaking on behalf of the European Union, called for the agenda for the ministerial segment to be refocused on preparing an input to the thirteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development on human settlements issues, and on contributing to the review of the Millennium Development Goals. The Ministerial Dialogues (on the themes of “human settlements financing” and “decentralization and strengthening of local authorities”) were also relevant to the session of the Commission. She suggested that UN-Habitat should learn from the ministerial segment at the recent UNEP Governing Council, in particular, that more focus on the agenda of the Commission and more active moderators would lead to a more lively debate. Those concerns were echoed by several other representatives.

18. Disappointment was also expressed by one delegation that the secretariat had ignored the recommendations for improving the preparations for the Governing Council, agreed by the Committee in December 2003. Several of the draft resolutions lacked substance. It was also regretted that the secretariat had resisted proper debate by the Committee of the draft budget and work programme and had also ignored the recommendations pertaining to the structure of the Governing Council. Several other representatives echoed those comments, including the representatives of the United States of America, Russia and Cuba (on behalf of the Group of 77 and China). The representative of Cuba complained that relevant officers had been absent from working group discussions of the resolutions, and called for the secretariat to pay more attention to the work of the Committee.

19. Several delegations gave notice that they would table additional resolutions, namely,

20. “Declaration on Right of Access to Basic Services” (France); “Sustainable Development of Arctic Cities” (Russia); “Vulnerable and Disadvantaged People's Rights in Human Settlements Development and Slum Upgrading” (Algeria – covering disabled people, single mothers, the elderly, orphans, indigenous people, minorities and refugees); and, “The African Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development (AMCHUD)” (Uganda).

21. One representative expressed concern that numerous pre-session documents for the Governing Council were not yet available in French. That concern was echoed by other representatives. A representative of the secretariat said that the matter had been brought to the attention of the UNON Conference Services several times and he apologized on behalf of Conference Services for the delay in translation, which had occurred because of heavy workloads of a great deal of documentation requiring editing and translation.

22. In response to the discussion, the Executive Director noted that while the nineteenth session of the Governing Council had not put the matter of the Commission on Sustainable Development on the agenda for the twentieth session of the Council, there would be no conflict if in that session it was decided to put it on the agenda, and possibly a ministerial roundtable could be held on inputs to the thirteenth session of the Commission. She appealed to countries to assist in providing extra finance for the attendance at the Governing Council session of UN-Habitat partners and delegations from developing countries. She asked delegates to approach her if they had any outstanding concerns regarding the budget and work programme.

23. The Chair sought and obtained the approval of the Committee to adopt the report of the working group and also to entrust the finalization of the draft resolutions to the working group on behalf of the Committee.

24. The representative of the Netherlands said that her delegation was not satisfied with the Executive Director’s responses. She argued that it was too late to set up a ministerial roundtable just three weeks ahead of the start of the Governing Council, and added that only the most rudimentary information about the organization and structure of the sessions of the Governing Council was available, and nothing at all on side events. She said that draft resolutions had been tabled too late, and the Committee had not had time to consider them properly.
Item 5: Report on the evaluation of the two global campaigns on urban governance and secure tenure

25. Introducing the item, a representative of the secretariat referred the Committee to document HSP/GC/20/INF/7, which contained a note by the secretariat and an annex containing the evaluation report on the two global campaigns. He said that the document would serve as the information document dealing with the same topic at the forthcoming Governing Council session. A copy of the evaluation report had previously been circulated to members of the Committee. He then summarized the main findings of the evaluation, which he said had developed some constructive and helpful recommendations for the future of the campaigns.

26. Several representatives took the floor to welcome and support the recommendations of the evaluation and to say that they looked forward to discussing it in both the working group in regard to the relevant draft resolution and in the forthcoming Governing Council session. One representative said that he welcomed the language on the centrality of the campaigns to the work of UN-Habitat and the need for links with other UN-Habitat activities and for more visible articulation of the campaigns at a global level. He also suggested that all the recommendations should be covered in the draft resolution on the campaigns.

27. The Committee noted with appreciation the report of the secretariat.

Item 6: Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the evaluation of UN-Habitat programmes and activities

28. Introducing the item, the Deputy Executive Director said that the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the evaluation of UN-Habitat programmes and activities was still being worked on, and would be shared with the Committee when completed.

29. One representative requested the secretariat to consider giving an informal briefing to Governing Council delegates on the report in question before the end of the current month, and to put it on the agenda for the proposed meeting of the Committee on 5 May 2005.

30. The Committee noted with appreciation the report of the Deputy Executive Director.

Item 7: Other matters

31. Introducing the item, the Executive Director and a representative of the secretariat briefed the Committee on the following matters:

32. The report of the Commission for Africa;

33. The response of UN-Habitat to the Indian Ocean disaster of 26 December 2004;

34. The adoption on 13 January 2005 of the Mauritius Declaration and Strategy for further implementation of the Barbados Programme for Action for the sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States;

35. The African Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development, held in Durban, South Africa, 31 January–4 February 2005;

36. Staffing in UN-Habitat as at 31 January 2005 (Staffing report 2005 No.1).

37. One representative urged the secretariat to seek another secondment from the United Nations Office of Legal Service.

38. A report on the post-tsunami activities of UN-Habitat was circulated. While noting the important role of UN-Habitat, one expressed his concern about some of the activities listed - clearing rubble and reconstructing houses were not areas of comparative advantage for UN-Habitat. The Deputy Executive Director replied that the role of UN-Habitat was that of facilitator. They were not building houses, but providing grants and technical assistance to allow householders to build their own houses. This was how they had proceeded in Afghanistan, with funding from the European Commission and the Governments of Japan and Italy.

Closure of the meeting

39. The Chair declared the meeting closed at 1.40 p.m. on Monday, 14 March 2005.