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ECLAC

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

**REPORT OF THE FOURTH REGIONAL MEETING OF MINISTERS AND HIGH-LEVEL
AUTHORITIES OF THE HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT SECTOR
IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

(Santiago, Chile, 16-17 November 1995)

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A. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

1. Background

1. Regional Meetings of ministers and high-level authorities of the housing and urban development sector in Latin America and the Caribbean were initiated early in 1992 in response to repeated attempts to join forces within the region on a sectoral level in order to pool their knowledge and experience with respect to human settlements. The first meeting was convened by the Government of Chile with support from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and was held in Santiago, Chile, from 16 to 20 March 1992. It was co-sponsored by the United Nations Development Fund (UNDP), the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS-Habitat) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). That meeting focused attention on the priority issues of the time: international financing for housing, channelling resources into low-cost housing, restoration and repopulation of city centres and establishment of a permanent mechanism for regional consultation and exchange of experiences in the sector. The latter concern led to the establishment of the Regional Meeting of Ministers and High-level Authorities of the Housing and Urban Development Sector in Latin America and the Caribbean (MINURVI) which holds biennial sessions. This first meeting also identified a number of issues to be pursued by certain countries and reported on at the following meeting: urban land management (Mexico), institutional-building at the sectoral and municipal levels (Spain), ways of financing basic sanitation infrastructure (Colombia) and exchange of experiences and information on technologies and production processes (Peru). Twenty-six countries were represented at that meeting.

2. The second ministerial meeting (MINURVI II) was held in Cartagena, Colombia, from 29 November to 3 December 1993 and was sponsored by ECLAC, the Ministry of Economic Development of Colombia, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS-Habitat) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Current priority issues were discussed, and it was agreed that thereafter ministerial meetings would be held annually. It was also agreed that the Interim Secretariat would be headed by the host country of the previous ministerial meeting, and the Technical Secretariat by a multilateral organization (ECLAC), which would be a permanent presence and serve as the institutional memory for the sector. Eighteen countries were represented at that meeting.

3. The third ministerial meeting (MINURVI III) was held in Quito, Ecuador, from 16 to 18 November 1994 under the auspices of ECLAC, the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing of Ecuador, UNCHS-Habitat and USAID. On-going studies were presented to two working groups during the technical meetings (Group 1: Human settlements management; Group 2: Financing, technology and standardization). A third working group focused its discussions on the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) scheduled for 1996. Nineteen countries participated in that meeting.

4. The fourth ministerial meeting (MINURVI IV), the subject of this report, was convened by the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing of Ecuador, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development of Chile and ECLAC, at the place and on the dates indicated below. Co-sponsors of the meeting were the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS-Habitat), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and USAID.
5. The meeting considered the final presentation of the studies mandated by the meeting in Cartagena (MINURVI II), and discussions were held on current priority issues relating to human settlements, which resulted in new commitments on work to be undertaken by countries of the region.

2. Dates and place of the meeting

6. The fourth Regional Meeting of Ministers and High-level Authorities of the Housing and Urban Development Sector in Latin America and the Caribbean (MINURVI IV) took place on 16 and 17 November 1995 at ECLAC headquarters in Santiago, Chile. It included a technical stage and a ministerial stage.

3. Attendance¹

7. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following States members of ECLAC: Argentina, Barbados, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, France, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Spain, United Kingdom, United States, Uruguay and Venezuela.
8. Aruba was also represented as an associate member of the Commission.
9. The following United Nations bodies were represented: United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS-Habitat), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).
10. The following United Nations specialized agencies were also represented: International Labour Organization (ILO), Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO), World Health Organization-Pan-American Health Organization (WHO-PAHO), World Bank-International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), International Telecommunication Union (ITU), World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).
11. The intergovernmental organizations attending were: Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and Organization of American States (OAS).

¹ See appended list of participants.

12. The following governmental organizations were also represented: United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Spanish Agency for International Cooperation and German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ).

13. Also present were the following non-governmental organizations listed with ECOSOC: Latin-American Association of Development Financing Institutions (ALIDE), Inter-American Housing Union (UNIAPRAVI), United Towns Organization (UTO), Union of Ibero-American Capitals (UCCI), World Association of the Major Metropolises (Metropolis), Habitat International Coalition (HIC); and a large number of other non-governmental organizations: Centre for Urban and Regional Studies (CEUR), Centre for Urban and Regional Research and Projects (CIPUR), National Federation of Low-cost Housing Organizations (FEDEVIVIENDA), Foundation for Education, Environment, Development and Health (FEMADS), Isis-International Women's Information and Communication Service (ISIS) and PRODECO.

14. The following persons attended as special guests: Monseigneur Cristián Precht, on behalf of the Latin American Episcopal Council; Mr. Daniel Alvarez, on behalf of the Municipal Sugar Board; Senator Oscar López Velarde, on behalf of Global Parliamentarians on Habitat; Mr. Salvador Schelotto, on behalf of the City Council of Montevideo; Mr. Carlos Varas for the Municipality of Santiago; Mr. Henry Cherkezian for the Municipality of São Paulo; Mr. Fernando Caballero for the Town-planning Office of Madrid; Mrs. Cristina Barreto for the Prefecture of the City of Rio de Janeiro; Mr. Pablo Trivelli for the Urban Management Programme; Mr. Jorg-Werner Haas, for the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ); and the following officials from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development of Chile: Yazmín Balboa, Francisco Pinto, Jaime Champín, Claudio Salcedo, María Paulina Bonilla, María del Valle, Víctor Hugo Véliz and Luis Jeffrey Mercado.

15. Attending the meeting on behalf of the Interim Secretariat were Mr. Francisco Albornoz, Minister of Urban Development and Housing of Ecuador, and Mr. Juan Ordóñez, Under-Secretary for Urban Development of Ecuador.

16. Attending on behalf of the Technical Secretariat were Mr. Gert Rosenthal, Executive Secretary of ECLAC; Mr. Ernesto Ottone, Secretary of the Commission; Ms. Miriam Krawczyk, Assistant Secretary of the Commission; Mr. Horacio Santamaría, Director of ECLAC subregional headquarters in Mexico; Mr. Daniel Blanchard, Director of ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean; Ms. Helga Hoffmann, Chief of the Environment and Natural Resources Division;² Mr. Hans Peter Chr. Jensen, Coordinator of the Joint ECLAC/UNCHS Unit on Human Settlements. The meeting was also attended by a number of observers.

4. Opening session and agenda of the technical stage

17. The technical stage of the fourth Regional Meeting of Ministers and High-level Authorities of the Housing and Urban Development Sector in Latin America and the Caribbean (MINURVI IV) was opened by Mr. Francisco Albornoz, Minister of Urban Development and Housing of Ecuador, who, as Interim Secretary of MINURVI, welcomed the participants of the technical stage of the meeting and highlighted the invaluable technical work carried out by countries in devising instruments

² Now the Environment and Development Division

for more efficient implementation of policies on human settlements and the significant effort sustained throughout the two-year period in preparing the studies that were about to be presented.

18. The Technical Secretariat then reported on the activities carried out during the two-year period (1994-1995) since the previous meeting in accordance with the MINURVI II and III agreements. It also reported on the meeting held in Madrid, Spain, in April 1995 preparatory to the current ministerial meeting and the agreements reached on that occasion concerning dissemination of MINURVI outputs (courses; seminars; workshops; meetings of experts; decision-making models; indicators and statistics; technical cooperation among developing countries; channelling external cooperation; documents, reports and publications), and on the proposal for new work guidelines (studies on subsidies as instruments, urban policy in the context of the globalization of economies, policies for dealing with situations of social conflict, tax exemption for low-cost housing and implications of decentralization for the sector).

19. Delegations then made presentations on the studies carried out in the 1994-1995 biennium and gave details on the reports made at MINURVI IV in accordance with the mandate set out in Cartagena.³ Upon completion of the above presentations, it was agreed that the competent technical officers would prepare a summary on each of the subjects addressed for presentation in the afternoon at the ministerial stage.

5. Opening session and officers of the ministerial stage

20. The opening session of the ministerial stage of the fourth Regional Meeting of Ministers and High-level Authorities of the Housing and Urban Development Sector in Latin America and the Caribbean was held on 16 November. The plenary meeting was chaired by Mr. Francisco Albornoz, Minister of Urban Development and Housing of Ecuador, and Mr. Gert Rosenthal, Executive Secretary of ECLAC. Officers also included ministers and high-level authorities of the countries present at MINURVI IV and the Technical Secretariat. Also attending as observers were representatives of organizations and specialized agencies of the United Nations system, intergovernmental organizations, government bodies and non-governmental organizations.

21. The Minister of Urban Development and Housing of Ecuador, in his capacity as Interim Secretary of MINURVI, stressed the importance of the countries' work in promoting regional integration of the human settlements sector and reviewed the events that had taken place in the biennium 1994-1995, highlighting the preparatory meeting of the ministerial Coordinating Committee held in Madrid in April 1995, the preparatory meeting held in Quito from 29 to 30 August 1995, and the emergence of new common issues as a result of the processes of integration and complementarity in the sector.

22. Mr. Kraig Baier, Director of the Regional Office for Housing and Urban Development for South America of the United States Agency for International Development (RHUDO/SA-USAID), and Mr. Robert Daughters, representative of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), presented the broad outlines of the work their respective organizations were undertaking in the region and prospects for future activities.

³ See Annex 1

23. The Technical Secretariat gave a brief status report on the mandates handed down by the ministers at MINURVI II and III and presented a list of subjects and MINURVI outputs proposed at the preparatory meeting of the ministerial Coordinating Committee in Madrid together with the new list of priorities for the process of regional integration of the sector arising out of the meetings preparatory to Habitat.

6. Agenda of the ministerial stage

24. The ministers and high-level authorities reviewed the results of the various studies commissioned in Cartagena (see details in Annex 1):

i) Argentina, with the support of the Inter-American Housing Union (UNIAPRAVI): Indicators, statistics and sectoral information systems (urban and residential). The importance was stressed of reconciling the systems of urban and housing indicators developed and proposed by Habitat with support from IBRD with those of the "Urban Data" system (developed by UNCHS) and those applied in very different ways by the countries themselves. The presentation was made by Mr. Rogelio Camarasa, Under-Secretary of Housing of Argentina.

ii) Cuba: Institutional and operational mechanisms for linking the public and private sectors, presented by Mr. Salvador Gomila, Deputy Director of the Housing Institute of Cuba.

iii) Chile with support from Peru: Proposals for financing housing and housing improvements, presented by Mr. Edmundo Hermosilla, Minister of Housing and Urban Development of Chile, followed by a supplementary report by Mr. Eduardo Chullén, Under-Secretary of Housing and Construction of Peru.

iv) Spain: Modernization of institutional structures: Towards a new concept in strategic planning and management of human settlements, presented by Mr. Antonio Llardén, Under-Secretary of Public Works, Transport and the Environment of Spain.

v) Colombia: Land management in the context of urban policies, presented by Mr. Fabio Giraldo, Under-Secretary for Housing, Urban Development and Drinking Water of Colombia.

vi) Peru and Argentina: Exchange of technological and production experiences, standardization and process industrialization, presented by Mr. Rogelio Camarasa, Under-Secretary for Housing of Argentina, and later complemented by Mr. Eduardo Chullén, Under-Secretary of Housing and Construction of Peru.

25. The ministers and high-level authorities handed over copies of the various studies to the Technical Secretariat and asked it to procure the support of the cooperation organizations present (USAID, IDB and GTZ) to finance the editing and publication of the reports.

26. Following the opening of the final session of the ministerial stage on 17 November, the Technical Secretariat recapitulated the agreements of the previous day and summarized the list of MINURVI outputs proposed by the preparatory ministerial Coordinating Committee, and the new priority topics for the process of regional integration still to be defined for the intersessional period 1995-1996, namely:

- i) Dissemination of MINURVI outputs:
 - Courses, seminars, workshops and meetings of experts;
 - Decision-making models, indicators and statistics;
 - Establishment of networks for technical cooperation among developing countries and channelling external cooperation;
 - Documents, reports and publications.

- ii) Proposed new work guidelines:
 - Studies on subsidies as instruments for housing policies;
 - Urban development policy in the context of the trend towards the globalization of economies;
 - Human settlements policies in situations of social conflict;
 - Tax exemption for low-cost housing;
 - Implications for the housing sector of the decentralization processes underway in the region.

- iii) Together with the issues agreed on at the Habitat II meetings:
 - Policies for dealing with urban poverty and emergencies;
 - Regional agreements on data, indicators and information systems for drafting policy on human settlements;
 - Development of common procedures for the formulation and monitoring of housing policies;
 - Involving the private sector in the provision of urban services;
 - Proposals for an approach to the issue of urban competitiveness (of cities and urban systems).

27. In addition to the above, it would be necessary to follow up and inform countries of the progress made in incorporating the Regional Plan of Action at the meetings leading up to the Habitat II Conference to be held in Istanbul (June 1996).

28. The ministers and high-level authorities asked the Technical Secretariat to prepare proposals for addressing the above issues and, to that end, to take the necessary steps to secure funding from countries and bilateral and multilateral donors.

29. The ministers and high-level authorities also agreed unanimously to accept the offer of Mr. Easton Douglas, Minister of the Environment and Housing of Jamaica, to host the fifth MINURVI meeting in Kingston, Jamaica, in November 1996; approved the appointment of Ecuador as Interim Secretariat until the next meeting; and selected the preparatory ministerial Coordinating Committee for that meeting, to be made up of the ministers of Ecuador (Interim Secretariat), Jamaica (as future host), Costa Rica and Chile, with support from the Technical Secretariat (ECLAC). It was agreed that the Committee would be open-ended so that any minister of the region could participate in its meetings.

30. In view of the offer of Mr. Edgar Arroyo, Minister of Housing and Human Settlements of Costa Rica, it was agreed in principle that MINURVI VI would be held in San José, Costa Rica, in November 1997.

7. Closing session

31. At the closing session of the fourth Regional Meeting of Ministers and High-level Authorities of the Housing and Urban Development Sector in Latin America and the Caribbean (MINURVI IV), Mr. Edmundo Hermosilla, Minister of Housing and Urban Development of Chile, speaking on behalf of his colleagues, thanked the participants and expressed his appreciation to ECLAC for its hospitality throughout the week of intensive deliberations and in particular during the last two days and for its role in securing the MINURVI IV agreements.

32. Mr. Gert Rosenthal, Executive Secretary of ECLAC, thanked those present for their sustained efforts over the previous four years in the pursuit of regional integration within the sector and wished the ministerial forum continued success in the future. He especially thanked Mr. Edmundo Hermosilla, Minister of Housing and Urban Development of Chile, for his outstanding work and for the hospitality extended by the Government of Chile in hosting both events.

33. Mr. Francisco Albornoz, Minister of Urban Development and Housing of Ecuador, in his capacity as Interim Secretary of MINURVI, thanked the participants of the ministerial stage and underscored the importance of the work carried out in both the technical and ministerial stages, which augured well for a productive intersessional period 1995-1996; he also expressed appreciation for the support received from USAID, IDB, the Government of Chile and ECLAC in organizing the meeting, and thus declared closed the meetings of MINURVI IV with an invitation to all delegations to come together in Jamaica.

Annex 1

SUMMARY OF THE PRESENTATIONS IN THE TECHNICAL STAGE

The following is a summary of the presentations made by technical officials from the various countries in the technical meetings on 16 November.

i) Argentina, with support from the Inter-American Housing Union (UNIPRAVI): Indicators, statistics and sectoral (urban and housing) information systems. The corresponding report was handed over to the Technical Secretariat for editing, publication and distribution. The report discussed the experience accumulated to date and the information needed of the sector. It also described the infrastructure and working methodology designed and implemented in connection with a Latin American Centre for Housing Statistics established by UNIAPRAVI in 1989. The Centre maintains a network linking a number of organizations in the sector in member countries. A proposal was presented for the design of an experimental urban data bank for Argentina, which could serve as a model for the instrument in other countries. The proposal was discussed in depth by delegates from different countries and their comments will be incorporated in the final document.

ii) Cuba: Institutional and operational mechanisms for linking the public and private sectors. The Cuban experience was presented with emphasis on the progress achieved with respect to existing national housing stocks and their characteristics in terms of being up to standard or substandard, the shortage of housing and projections for increases, actual and potential demand for housing and the cost structure and level, in addition to the financing mechanisms applicable to housing. Attention was drawn to the different modes of financing available according to the form of construction, i.e. by the State, by agricultural cooperatives or through self-help construction schemes. Cuba requested additional time until March 1996 to allow it to present its final report containing proposals.

iii) Chile with support from Peru: Proposals for financing housing and housing improvement. The report, which was submitted to the Technical Secretariat for editing, publication and distribution, included two studies. The study dealing with systems of financing for housing focused on the need to establish a system that would transcend national boundaries. It listed the available options and possibilities, based particularly on the Chilean experience. Some processes were identified which would help to improve financial systems, including participation and flexibility, understood as the adaptation of systems to the changing realities of urban poverty and market response, which determines whether a system of financing corresponds to the demands of the market in which it develops. A study was also presented on integrated financing of human settlements. The proposed focus sought to harmonize four factors that were fundamental for solving the problem of housing shortages: an efficient, targeted, planned public investment programme; a broad active role for the private sector; the role of users; and the participation of disadvantaged social sectors. A series of alternative mechanisms was proposed for financing housing, including joint financing, private capital investment and cost internalization.

In addition, Peru presented ways of financing housing plans through supervised loan programmes. The proposal presented was discussed in depth and it was agreed that comments would be included in the final document.

iv) Spain: Modernization of institutional structures in line with a new concept in strategic planning and management of human settlements. On the basis of Spain's experience, the proposals were grouped under two specific, interrelated headings: institutional decentralization of functions and land use planning and management. The conclusions referred to five concrete aspects: the need to disseminate new instruments of strategic planning, the suitability of establishing models for cooperation of public and private agents, the need to establish mechanisms for coordination and concerted action, the development of new forms of association between institutions, and the advisability of supporting the implementation of pilot projects which would serve as models and have a significant multiplier effect. The proposal presented was discussed by delegates, and their observations were to be incorporated in the final document, inasmuch as the corresponding report was handed over to the Technical Secretariat for editing, publication and distribution.

v) Colombia: Land management in the context of urban development policies. It was considered that many of the unresolved problems of Latin American cities were issues related to land and, especially, land management. Some of the factors that contributed to the enduring problem of land management were: lack of information and clear-cut policies with respect to the land market, variables that affect it, lack of flexible intervention procedures, absence of appropriate institutional frameworks, limited resources and lack of political consensus or agreement. Although the problems with regard to land management and urban development were serious, there had been positive experiences which suggested the existence of the professional capacity and political will to move forward resolutely in those areas. At MINURVI II, three studies had been presented on the subject, and at MINURVI III, another had been presented on proposals for urban land management in Colombia. The present proposal was discussed by the participants, but no provision was made to incorporate their observations in the final document since it had already been edited and published by the country itself, which distributed it at the meeting.

vi) Peru and Argentina: Exchange of technological and production experiences, standardization and process industrialization. The reports were handed over to the Technical Secretariat by both delegations for editing, publication and distribution. The technical presentation of Peru's report was made by the sole member of the Peruvian delegation to the plenary session of the ministerial stage; he explained that agreement had been reached in Santiago, in March 1992, for the establishment of a mechanism for exchanging technological know-how and experiences in urban development management, and proposals had been made for the negotiation and joint establishment by the countries of the region of a regional network to be supported initially by a multilateral aid project. Peru offered its services in putting the proposal into effect on the basis of the experience accumulated in the field by the various institutions which had been participating since 1970 in the National Technology Network. That initiative had led to the project of the Inter-American Network of Housing Technology (HABITEC), for which funding negotiations were being pursued with potential donors, funding for the initial set-up of the network having been provided under an earlier agreement. In its report, Argentina put forward the idea of working on standards at all phases of the construction process (urban, neighbourhood and housing plans, industries producing materials and construction components, service infrastructure, and the construction process itself). The functioning of bureaux of standards, state intervention in the application of standards and quality controls were discussed. Argentina had had considerable experience with respect to standards in the housing sector and with construction pathologies associated with non-compliance with those standards.

The proceedings concluded with a series of proposals: a firm decision by Governments to set standards and insist upon construction quality; to draft regional rules on housing consistent with

international standards and with the opening and globalization of markets; to promote, from the government level, plans which would ensure the quality of housing products; to use systems or seals to certify the quality of construction materials and components; and to prepare manuals for the dissemination and progressive use of more efficient, higher-productivity industrial technologies. There was no opportunity to discuss those two complementary proposals. Therefore, delegates were asked to send in written suggestions or comments to the Technical Secretariat for incorporation in the final report.

Annex 2

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