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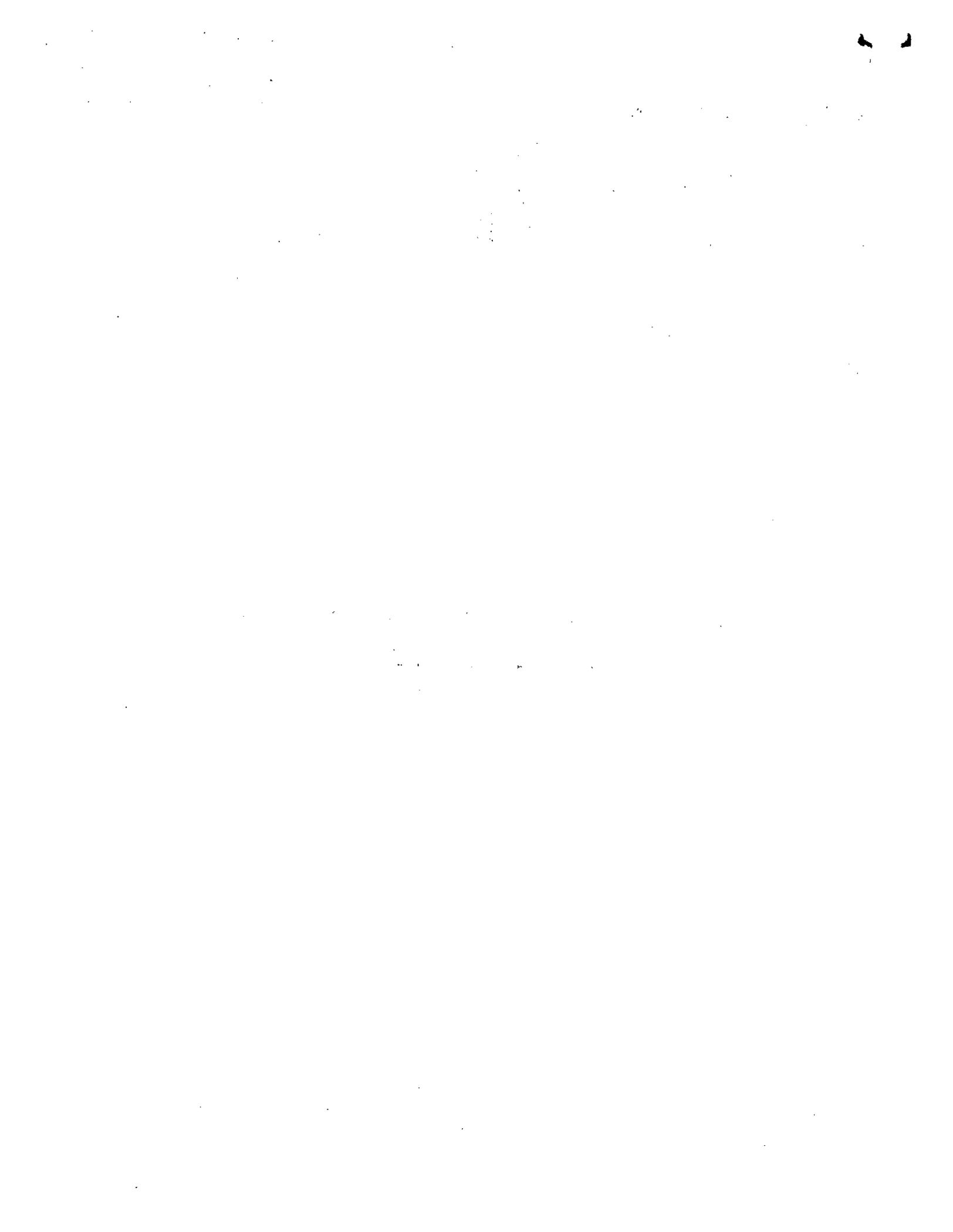
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REGIONAL CO-OPERATION IN THE FIELD OF HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

Note by the secretariat

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1. Background to the Latin American Regional Conference on Human Settlements

In the Declaration of Caracas on Human Settlements, the representatives of the Governments participating in the Regional Preparatory Conference for Latin America on Human Settlements 1/ stressed that the magnitude and characteristics of the problem of human settlements and their future trends represented a challenge to all the countries of the world, and especially to the developing countries, which require priority attention.

They also emphasized that the problems of human settlements should be considered within the framework of the economic and social development of the countries and not in isolation, and pointed out that the Vancouver Conference provided a unique opportunity to exchange experience, solutions and political and social arrangements to facilitate the adoption by Governments of decisions which were indispensable in order to face the challenge of man, his environment and his manner of life on this earth.

A little earlier, at CEPAL's sixteenth session, when adopting the second regional appraisal of the International Development Strategy and the establishment of a New International Economic Order, 2/ the Member Governments had stressed the need to introduce a new unified approach to development, designed to promote both accelerated economic growth and a fairer social order, and to take appropriate action. They had also stated that the recent trends of economic growth and social change had in many ways accentuated the differences that existed between countries and even within their respective territories, although due recognition must be given to the regional development efforts being made in the countries. Such

1/ See Report of the Rapporteur, (ST/CEPAL/Conf.55/L.5/Rev.1).

2/ Chaguaramas Appraisal, resolution 347 (XVI).

trends had placed Latin America in a special situation within the other groups of developing countries, since in some respects the region had attained levels equal to those of the developed countries, while in others the prevailing conditions were those of the most underdeveloped nations. The Chaguaramas Appraisal also noted - taking up similar ideas already expressed in the first regional appraisal of the International Development Strategy - 3/ that in the last few years the trends towards concentrated urbanization and modernization of patterns of consumption, explosive growth of secondary and higher education, industrialization based on the production of consumer goods, and the increased relative importance of the urban employment strata in the medium- and high-income groups had given rise to new situations whose characteristics were predominantly unfavourable, although by no means completely negative, considering the Governments' capacity to promote more integrated development styles that were more compatible with the total satisfaction of the material and cultural needs of the broad masses under conditions of equality, human dignity and national autonomy.

It is from this standpoint of unified growth in economic and social development that the problems of human settlements have been receiving an increasing amount of attention from the countries of Latin America and the United Nations regional bodies acting in the region, including CEPAL, the Latin American Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES) and the Latin American Demographic Centre (CELADE). These bodies and their secretariats have from the start been insisting on the need to adopt suitable measures to tackle the problems of urban concentration, which it will be difficult to solve without the necessary changes in the rural sectors where mass migration towards the cities continues to be generated.

3/ Quito Appraisal, resolution 320 (XV).

Common concern for these and other related problems led the Governments of the region to include in the Declaration of Caracas on Human Settlements the recommendation that "a network of Latin American centres should be set up for training, technical assistance, scientific and technological research, and dissemination work on priority aspects of urban and rural human settlements.^{4/}

Similar anxieties and proposals relating to the problems of human settlements were also reflected in the programme of work and priorities adopted by the Member Governments of the Caribbean Co-operation and Development Committee, as well as in other CEPAL subsidiary bodies and in the discussions and conclusions of meetings held under its auspices.

The need for collaboration at the regional and sub-regional levels was again raised at the Latin American Preparatory Working Meeting for the fourth session of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (Caracas, 8-11 March 1976). On that occasion, among other regional priority projects, one was approved for the establishment of a regional system of co-operation in connexion with the environment, for the exchange of information, experience and technical personnel among the countries of the region.^{5/}

In turn the Vancouver Conference gave a fresh stimulus both to the concept of a unified policy in the field of human settlements and to the strategies and action to be followed in different areas, including the regional and sub-regional levels. Part IV of resolution 1 ^{6/} of the Vancouver Conference, on programmes for international co-operation, is devoted to the action to be undertaken at the regional and subregional levels and includes the recommendation that regional intergovernmental committees on human settlements

^{4/} See Report of the Rapporteur, (ST/CEPAL/Conf.55/L.5/Rev.1).

^{5/} See Final Report (UNEP/LA/76/4).

^{6/} "Report of Habitat: United Nations Conference on Human Settlements" (A/Conf.70/15).

should be established within the economic commissions to be responsible for the formulation of regional and sub-regional policies and programmes and their final execution.

Resolution 4 7/ of the Vancouver Conference, considering that each region has different characteristics which should be taken into account for the purposes of international co-operation, and deeply convinced of the need for immediate action by governments and international bodies to solve the problems of human settlements, recommended that the Secretary-General of the United Nations, if possible before the thirty-first session of the General Assembly or, failing that, before the following session, should organize within the framework of the regional economic commissions regional meetings to prepare guidelines to co-ordinate within each region the measures which should be taken to tackle the problems of human settlements and report to the General Assembly on the result of their discussions.

With regard to the Latin American Governments, it should be pointed out that at the meetings of the Latin American group held during the Vancouver Conference the representatives of the countries of the region specifically analysed, inter alia, the desirability and timeliness of the convening by CEPAL of a regional meeting following the Conference. The Latin American group stressed in this connexion that the regional meeting should, if possible, be held before the following United Nations General Assembly to facilitate the articulation of the positions which the countries of the region might wish to voice at the General Assembly. In the course of these discussions of the Latin American group at Vancouver, the delegation of Mexico officially offered to host the regional meeting in Mexico.

When stressing the unique character of the Vancouver Conference, which in itself was a sign that the Governments recognized the urgency of the problems relating to human settlements, the

7/ Ibid.

United Nations Secretary-General emphasized that the main stimulus should be given by the national authorities. International assistance could only be a complement to national action.

In turn, the Secretary-General of the Vancouver Conference pointed out that the three main points considered were, first, the extremely rapid growth of population and the imbalances between the rural and urban zones caused by migration to the cities; second, the increasing differences in income and opportunity within societies and regions; and, third, the absence of suitable control over the use of land and over urban growth.

He noted that the Conference had unanimously adopted a series of recommendations of considerable significance at the national level, which might lead to spectacular changes in the organization of all national societies. It had also unanimously adopted recommendations for international action which, if accepted by the United Nations General Assembly, would create a new and valuable framework for world development and co-operation. Finally, it had adopted a declaration of principles which would not only serve as an inspiration but would also constitute a standard with which to measure the position of each society and the living conditions of people throughout the world. The Conference and its preparatory work, including the regional meetings, had aroused a new awareness of the questions relating to human settlements. Its real success could be measured by the policies, plans and programmes carried out in the future, if the national governments should so decide. In this respect, he also stressed the importance of the regional meetings envisaged in the Vancouver recommendations.

It was therefore up to Member Governments both in the General Assembly and the preceding regional meetings, including the regional meeting convened within CEPAL's sphere of action, to decide on the action to be taken in the different spheres, including what should be done through regional co-operation.

2. Present situation

The problems of human settlements are relatively more serious in Latin America than in other regions. Nowhere else in the world are there as many urban agglomerations suffering from what has been called "uncapitalized urbanization" or explosive urban growth without an adequate endowment of basic social capital and the organizational means to co-ordinate overall economic development with urbanization.

In no other region are the proportion and importance of the urban population greater than in Latin America. Urbanization in Latin America has followed similar paths in practically all the countries, even those where it began at the turn of the century, earlier than in the rest of the region.

The Latin American countries present a strikingly uniform picture within a number of increasingly homogeneous categories of human settlements whose characteristics and problems are similar. These problems arise differently in each group and become more serious according to the extent to which the model of accumulation adopted by the region has taken hold. It is possible to distinguish:

Rural areas, characterized by a wide dispersion of the settlements, extremely limited opportunities, particularly of employment, which leads to a continual process in which population is forced away and traditionally migrates to the urban areas.

Medium and small towns, where the picture is one of abandonment and general backwardness, and lack of opportunities and services, which means that the conditions are lacking to develop dynamic productive activities and retain the population.

"Frontier towns", created by the concentration of new economic activities which provide employment opportunities, but not services, and where the lack of any kind of organization leads to chaotic agglomerations of persons and activities with every kind of urban problem, including environmental pollution.

/Large towns,

Large towns, national and sub-national economic centres. They receive the flows of migrants from the countryside and the smaller towns, which leads to explosive urban growth and problems of deterioration of the traditional structures, appearance of makeshift settlements, shortage of services and environmental deterioration. It is in this category of human settlements that many of the opportunities of development are to be found and most of production and consumption is generated.

Metropolitan areas, where the extreme level of concentration of population and activities leads to qualitative changes in the urban problems and worsens traffic congestion, social tensions, and environmental pollution. The big Latin American metropolises are already among the largest in the world, and their position is much more serious because of under-development and the smaller supply of material and organizational resources available to solve their problems.

The mass displacement of population from rural zones to the cities, particularly the metropolitan areas, causes a cumulative process of concentration of population and productive processes and this hinders decentralization and thus a more homogeneous spatial and social distribution of opportunities.

In these circumstances, human settlements are largely spontaneous, i.e., the traditional institutions have little share in them. The makeshift urban settlements and the rural communities have to improvise forms of organization and building methods which provide a de facto solution to the problem of "uncapitalized urbanization", even if these may appear to be unacceptable types of settlements from the standpoint of the modern sector of society.

However, makeshift settlements are in fact a form of social energy which is not properly exploited, and whose potential can only be used inasmuch as it is linked to the institutional organization of society.

/This state

This state of affairs contains truths and contradictions which indicate that a change is taking place: the concentration which was unquestionably inevitable in the interests of the best use of the region's limited resources must be replaced by a process of organized decentralization involving the economic, technological and political capacity of the Latin American countries in such a way that it appears that the limited national efforts would be insufficient.

In this connexion there is little the Latin American countries can hope for from the more developed countries, where urbanization had different features and human settlements developed with the use of methods which cannot be applied in the circumstances prevailing in the region. It does not seem possible, therefore, to question that the region is in a situation which can only be tackled by integrating national efforts jointly and creatively at the regional level.

3. International co-operation

External assistance in the field of human settlements has been considerable but by no means sufficient to make good the present regional shortcomings, nor can it be expected to be a decisive factor in the future, although it may well be a very necessary complement to Latin America's internal action in this field. Furthermore, the present state of international co-operation, particularly financial assistance, cannot encourage optimism, all of which accentuates the need to develop and increase inter-Latin American co-operation.

In this respect, the prospects of regional co-operation are excellent, bearing in mind the absence of competition between national interests in this area and the complementarity which exists, in principle, in the experience and supply of knowledge of the relatively more developed countries, which could be placed at the disposal of the other countries of the region.

/The existence

The existence of a number of common languages, and the similarities of culture, economic and social structure and history should facilitate the regional and sub-regional application of "horizontal co-operation" as defined at the Intergovernmental Meeting for Latin America and the Caribbean on Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries, held at Lima from 10 to 15 May 1976. Thus the more advanced countries of the region could provide their knowledge and technology to the less developed countries, within the framework of an expanded programme of international co-operation which will increasingly include mutual assistance among developing countries.

In the past, external financial assistance has been concentrated chiefly in housing and health services and in the urban areas. The countries of Latin America received loans amounting to nearly 10 per cent of the basic social capital investment of the region.^{8/} External participation in these fields, however, has been reduced in recent years compared with other sectors, which may indicate that less external resources are available on terms which are compatible with the income levels of the population. This would point to the need to use more efficiently the resources available, as well as to the urgency of possessing technology which substantially reduces urbanization costs.

The countries of the region have received technical assistance for housing and urban development through the United Nations, particularly the Centre for Housing, Building and Planning, and some United Nations specialized agencies, and through a number of OAS programmes (Inter-American Housing and Planning Centre (CINVA), established in 1951 and later changed to Inter-American Urban Development Information Service (SIINDU), and Inter-American Programme

^{8/} The international loan-making bodies which provide financial resources that may be used for human settlements are mainly the Inter-American Development Bank, the World Bank and, to a lesser extent, some bilateral agencies such as the Agency for International Development (AID) of the United States Government.

for Urban and Regional Planning (PIAPUR), established in 1960). The Pan-American Health Organization has provided technical assistance since its inception both directly and through the Pan-American Centre for Sanitary Engineering and Environmental Sciences (CEPIS). IDB and AID have also contributed by offering technical assistance for human settlements, as have some governments from outside the region.

This technical assistance was directed, in general, towards housing and services aimed primarily at spreading the system of savings and loans throughout the region and the creation of national housing bodies. However, IDB and IBRD recently adopted new policies for unified urban development.

Nevertheless, the technical assistance provided hitherto has not kept step with the growing relative importance of the problems of human settlements, and it is therefore clear that its objectives and characteristics should be reviewed in the light of the discussions and recommendations adopted at the Vancouver Conference in order to be able to help the countries of the region more effectively. There is no doubt, however, that it is for the Latin American countries themselves to define these characteristics to complement their internal capacity for co-operation.

The stimulating effects of the Stockholm Conference have also reached human settlements. UNEP considers human settlements to be a priority area for action. New co-operation institutions have been set up within the United Nations family: the United Nations Foundation for Human Settlements and the Habitat and the International Centre for Training in Environmental Sciences (CIFCA) in Madrid. Within the region UNDP has for the first time participated in two important pollution control programmes in Brazil and Mexico, while other projects directly related to human settlements have been undertaken by United Nations specialized agencies at the world and regional levels.

For its part, CEPAL prepared on behalf of UNEP an inventory of the main environmental problems of Latin America and is about to begin

/two important

two important projects of regional scope: a basic study of human settlements financed by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA); and a Human Settlements Technology Programme (UNEP-CEPAL) for which an advisory meeting of experts has just been held in Mexico City (2-6 August 1976).

In the countries of the region there is a rapidly-growing interest in human settlements stemming not only from the stimulus given by the Stockholm Conference but also from a recognition of their own needs. Colombia, Costa Rica, Brazil, Guatemala and Honduras have set up special funds to finance urban development investment in addition to the housing bodies which exist in practically all the Latin American countries. Mexico has just enacted special legislation on human settlements, as have Venezuela and Colombia in the broader field of the environment. Brazil has established a National Urban Policy Commission and has begun to carry out an ambitious urban development programme, while Cuba has effectively decentralized economic activities and improved the situation of the cities of the interior and the rural areas. In general, practically every Latin American country's perception of habitat problems has begun to change considerably, and the countries are preparing to tackle them in a new spirit.

A new interest in the training of human resources may also be seen in the region. Already some 15 post-graduate courses exist in urban development and seminars on the subject have proliferated on all sides. The Xochimilco Autonomous Metropolitan University of Mexico has just established a professional degree course in the design of human settlements, an important precedent for the region.

The Vancouver Conference, its Declaration of Principles and its recommendations are a new and very important stimulus. It provides a new view of human settlements, making possible a unified approach to them within the general field of development, and a new organization of international co-operation in this respect, with a regional emphasis which does not exist in other United Nations Programmes. The fact that human settlements problems are of a particularly local nature is largely the reason for this, and at the same time underlines the need for more efficient forms of co-operation within the region, as well as the desirability of rapidly organizing systems of regional co-operation in order to make more effective use of external assistance.

4. Guidelines for regional co-operation

The exceptional characteristics of urbanization in Latin America combined with its stage of economic development present a challenge which each country of the region would find it difficult to meet on its own. Considering only the material consequences of the present rates of urban population growth, it may be concluded that it is practically impossible to meet the requirements of urban growth without radically altering the distribution of the population and the technology applied to human settlements.

In fact, if the present population growth rates are maintained, particularly in the urban sector, there would be an additional 10 to 12 million persons annually in the cities and towns of the region over the next 25 years. With the norms and technology currently applied to human settlements, an amount equal to the region's total gross capital formation would be required to cover its needs in terms of infrastructure, housing and services of the urban population, and to satisfy the rural population's needs, even if only in a somewhat primitive fashion, while there would still remain to be estimated the resources necessary to absorb the cumulative deficits.^{9/}

This rough estimate is sufficient to show that it is absolutely imperative to adopt adequate national policies of population distribution and to introduce radical changes in the technology hitherto applied to human settlements.

In order to satisfy both these requirements it would be most useful to have suitable regional and sub-regional co-operation machinery: in the case of the former, because the location of economic activity, particularly in the less economically developed countries, could be greatly facilitated by regional and sub-regional economic integration and co-operation systems. In the case of the latter,

^{9/} If it is accepted that the cost of urbanization is only 2,000 dollars per person and the average cost of dwellings is 10,000 dollars per unit, the demand for capital, excluding the value of the land, would amount to approximately 40 billion dollars annually in urban areas and an additional 10 billion in rural areas, with far more modest standards.

/because the

because the effort required to produce a radical technological change calls for a scale and resources which are not to be found in the countries of the region acting individually. Added to these regional co-operation efforts are the benefits of an exchange of experience at the world level. The search for new development models, or at least of effective forms of decentralization of economic activity compatible with the current cumulative model, and the creation of suitable technologies for human settlements are tasks falling within the policy definitions of each country. Adequate and efficient co-operation can, however, reduce their costs and multiply the effects of the action taken separately.

A task of this magnitude cannot be easy, but there are some grounds for thinking that it is not impossible. In the first place, the centralist trends that have prevailed in the region in the past have themselves contributed to the accumulation of considerable reserves in terms of capital and organization which could be transferred to the less developed areas, particularly in countries with the oldest urbanization. Secondly, by virtue of their climate, most of the Latin American countries offer excellent conditions for the use of dwellings whose structure and services could be much simpler and cheaper than those currently in use, which are generally imitations of models essentially found in cold and temperate countries with bigger incomes and more complex technologies.

(a) Spheres of action

In order to take advantage of these possibilities, however, the Latin American countries should take concerted action, at least in the following fields of activity:

- (i) planning and administration;
- (ii) research;
- (iii) personnel training.

(i) Planning and administration. Although human settlement policies are the prerogative of the governments and should therefore be conceived and implemented in accordance with national procedures which can scarcely be subject to international co-operation, the methods

/of analysing,

of analysing, planning and administering human settlements constitute instruments which, as such, permit a considerable degree of generalization and political neutrality. To devise and perfect such methods requires specialized knowledge and experience which are not always available in the countries, especially those undergoing explosive urbanization processes, as in Latin America.

The organization and control of the development of human settlements is really a complex political activity requiring considerable instrumental support. In the first place, there should be efficient means of determining and evaluating community needs, particularly where the population has little say in the decision-making processes. Secondly, public investment in human settlements needs to be programmed and financed, which calls for procedures and machinery that have not always reached the same degree of development as other sectors. Lastly, it is necessary to establish and improve the existing machinery for intervention and control of the geographical organization and administration of services.

These are difficult tasks, in practice, when production systems have to be organized and general development planned, and they are made even harder by the rates of urban growth and the scattering of the rural population. Generally speaking, the organization of human settlements is advancing at a much slower pace than the creation of new administrative needs.

Accordingly, it is logical to think that a concerted regional and sub-regional effort, i.e., at the levels of the different types of human settlements, would provide the Latin American countries with a new opportunity to overcome the existing limitations in this field. In this respect, advantage could be taken of the experience of those countries with the oldest urbanization, which in any case are more similar to the rest of the countries in the region than those whose municipal organization and administration formulas are usually imitated. This is because of the similarity of the political and cultural contexts of the countries of the region.

(ii) Research. The forms of architectural and urbanistic design and technology applied to urban settlements in Latin America are basically the same as those of the more developed countries whose development models have been adopted by the countries of the region. This transfer is meaningful only for those social groups whose aspirations and economic capacity are comparable with similar social strata in the countries exporting capital and technology, which are only a small minority in Latin America compared with the great mass of the population whose cultural and economic characteristics are very different. This situation finds expression in two types of technology: a "modern", exogenous and institutionalized type which is contracted in the market and has auxiliary credit and marketing mechanisms; and a "traditional" type which takes care of the needs of the lower strata through special mechanisms improvised by the sector itself, and which involves empirical and usually outmoded techniques, for want of new scientific approaches, resulting from lengthy processes of trial and error.

It is a question not so much of choosing between these two types of technology, but of investigating and developing suitable technologies in keeping with the cultural, economic and ecological circumstances of the different types of human settlements existing in the region. Since these circumstances vary and there are no exogenous technologies that could be directly applied, the best course would be to make a co-ordinated effort to take advantage of the total capacity existing in all the countries of the region in order to achieve the necessary scale for undertaking research on and perfecting new technologies.

Thus, consideration might be given, as stated in the Caracas Declaration, to a system of research centres differentiated according to ecological regions and types of human settlements to carry out supplementary activities. For example, this could envisage centres specializing in applied technology designed to solve the problems found in the tropics, temperate areas and mountain climates, and in metropolitan areas, medium-sized towns and rural areas.

/(iii) Human

(iii) Human resources training. One of the most serious shortcomings found in the region is the shortage of qualified human resources not only for research but also for planning and administering human settlements. Taken separately, the resources and capacity of the various countries are apparently insufficient to meet their own needs, but it would be possible to increase substantially the capacity of the region as a whole.

The present demand for human resources for the sector has grown noticeably in the region, as borne out by the fact that the course of specialized training in urban and regional development which were offered in a few university centres have increased in the last decade to over 15 post-graduate courses, and that the first university course on the design of human settlements has recently been created. This trend has, however, brought into focus the serious difficulties experienced by the countries owing to the lack of teaching staff and necessary teaching material.

It seems obvious that, in view of the language, cultural and ecological similarities characterizing the region, consideration should be given to an integrated system of training centres supported by a regional nucleus with the capacity to meet requirements in terms of the training of teaching personnel and the preparation of teaching material for all these centres. Through a system of exchange of teaching personnel and training fellowships the region's hitherto visible dependence on other countries could be avoided.

It is also logical to consider co-ordinating the regional systems of training and research, and the possibility of making more efficient use of international co-operation. In fact, the capacity for this form of co-operation in the sector's activities has increased in recent years, as shown by the number of courses and seminars promoted by various agencies of the United Nations and the Organization of American States. However, overlapping and gaps on the one hand and the lack of resources on the other have limited the expansion of existing training programmes and have even led to some curtailment of these activities.

/The recent.

The recent establishment of the International Centre for Training in Environmental Sciences (Centro Internacional de Formación en Ciencias Ambientales - CIFCA), sponsored by UNDP and the Government of Spain, is designed to strengthen international co-operation in the area of human settlements, and this form of co-operation could be used effectively in the region.

(b) Forms of co-operation

The following among other forms of regional co-operation in connexion with human settlements may be distinguished:

- (i) inter-Latin American or "horizontal" co-operation;
- (ii) regional and sub-regional programmes;
- (iii) advisory and technical assistance.

(i) Inter-Latin American or "horizontal" co-operation. Some Latin American countries have reached more advanced stages within the general process of urbanization in the region, while others, owing to the size of their urban agglomerations, have had to find solutions to some of their more urgent problems and concentrate a comparatively large number of technical experts in fields connected with human settlements. These reserves of experience and knowledge seem more important for Latin America than the theoretical availability of knowledge and experience outside the region.

In practice, the transfer of knowledge about human settlements encounters an insurmountable obstacle in that the transmissible experience relates to societies which are very far removed in terms of economic and social structure, general culture and ecological environment. In fact, the imported theoretical concepts, forms of organization and technologies bear little relation to the needs and possibilities of the less developed countries.

The direct exchange of experiences and experts, the reciprocal granting of fellowships between countries, the joint study of common problems and the provision of equipment on special terms are some forms of inter-Latin American co-operation which could be encouraged if the necessary machinery which does not exist at present were available.

/(ii) Regional

(ii) Regional and sub-regional programmes. The Latin American countries could also reach agreement regarding the preparation and execution of a number of regional and sub-regional projects of common interest through which external aid could be utilized more efficiently.

There seem to be excellent possibilities of reaching agreement in this respect in such fields as methodologies for the analysis, planning and administration of human settlements, technological research, measurement of the environmental effects of explosive urban development and of the exploitation of natural resources in rural areas, human resources training, and the design of human settlements and the habitat in accordance with the cultural and ecological characteristics of the region.

A group of programmes of this type, however, calls for agreement regarding relative priorities and effective action with respect to the co-operation of external sources of financing, particularly as regards regional credit institutions.

(iii) Advisory and technical assistance. There is no reason why the establishment of inter-Latin American co-operation machinery and the organization of a joint programme of regional and sub-regional projects should limit the countries' participation in external assistance programmes, both global and regional, or in those established by virtue of bilateral agreements. On the contrary, it is necessary that the countries of the region should multiply their capacity to obtain external resources for expanding their internal programmes, where this is compatible with their external policies.

For this it would be necessary for the region to increase its capacity to receive external aid by assisting the countries in preparing requests for technical and financial assistance. If external assistance to the countries were obtained through regional mechanisms this would have the advantage of greater speed in negotiations and a better understanding of the specific problems and characteristics of the region.

/(c) Regional

(c) Regional priorities

The forthcoming Latin American Regional Meeting on Human Settlements convened by CEPAL in accordance with the recommendations adopted at the Vancouver Conference, will provide an excellent opportunity to define, even if only in a preliminary way, the priorities of a set of regional and sub-regional projects which could be implemented with the aid of external co-operation.

The question of priorities could be dealt with at two levels. Firstly, agreement could be reached on the problems whose solution is considered by the countries of the region to have a relatively high degree of priority. For this, a convenient reference base would be the functional themes adopted at the Vancouver Conference (paragraph 31 of the Annex to resolution 1):

- Identification of problems and solutions;
- Formulation and application of policies;
- Education and training;
- Technology of human settlements;
- Exchange of information;
- Implementation and mechanisms; and
- Mobilization of resources.

Secondly, there could be a discussion of some specific projects which would reflect the general priorities and thus point the way to possible regional and sub-regional projects. For this, the list of priority projects adopted at the Latin American Preparatory Working Meeting for the fourth session of the Governing Council (Caracas, March 1976) could be used as a base by extracting from it the projects relating to the sphere of human settlements. This would give the following scheme:

(i) Regional sphere

- General methodology for evaluating the impact of economic development projects, including those in the field of tourism, on human settlements;
- System for averting the adverse effects of the concentration of new economic activities on human settlements;

- Planning methods applicable to human settlements;
- Regional programme for the training of personnel;
- Appropriate technologies for human settlements (with special reference to rural areas, earthquake-prone zones, and control of the quality of the environment);
- Participation of the community (utilization of the unused capacities of makeshift urban settlements and rural communities);
- Administration of human settlements (mechanisms and institutions).

(ii) Sub-regional sphere

- Experimental application in the Caribbean of the methodology for evaluating environmental repercussions;
- Tropical habitat.

The regional projects would be implemented in the countries most suited to the nature of the project and to the capacity of the available centres or institutions. In this way a flexible network for the decentralized implementation of the projects would be created.

Once the priorities as regards spheres of action and projects have been defined, the scope of the priority projects could be established, the corresponding feasibility studies carried out, and the measures necessary for their implementation adopted.

(d) Financial co-operation at the regional and sub-regional levels

The concept of a new form of regional co-operation presupposes that external financial aid is considered as a complementary factor to the combined efforts of the countries of the region. In this respect it would be necessary to co-ordinate regional co-operation with the credit bodies of the region, especially the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the development corporations and the sub-regional banks. The Latin American Economic System (SELA) would also have an important role to play.

IDB has tried to base its policies on an interpretation of regional priorities and needs, as witnessed by the lead it has taken in broadening the traditional housing and public services policies and by its insistence on the need to incorporate programmes of urban

/investment into

investment into integral strategies for urban development. This policy, which was subsequently followed by the World Bank, has nevertheless come up against some familiar obstacles, since the countries of the region have not always been suitably prepared institutionally and technically for working with this type of financial co-operation.

The new prospects opened up by the Vancouver Conference and the possibility of establishing a system of regional co-operation in the field of human settlements can constitute a stimulus and a way of co-operating with international financial aid.

Consideration can be given to new forms of co-operation with regional and sub-regional credit bodies in the financing of investment projects, especially in the sphere of technology and urban development. A system of consultation needs to be established, however, in order to ensure good co-ordination between the policies and programmes of the various financial bodies of the region.

