

# **ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

(7 April 1984 - 25 April 1986)

**REPORT**

**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL**

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**UNITED NATIONS**

**Santiago, Chile, 1986**

485 (XXI) ACTIVITIES OF THE SECRETARIAT IN THE FIELD OF HUMAN SETTLEMENTS  
DURING THE PERIOD 1988-1989 AND DURING THE INTERNATIONAL  
YEAR OF SHELTER FOR THE HOMELESS \*/

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean,

Bearing in mind the economic crisis currently affecting the countries of the region, its social effects, and structural difficulties, which have reduced the real level of the population's income and brought about a significant decline in the levels of well-being of some social sectors as regards infrastructure, services and housing,

Likewise bearing in mind the various activities which the countries of the region are pursuing in order to formulate and carry out policies and projects in the field of human settlements, particularly as regards satisfying the needs for housing, services and community facilities for the lowest income groups and as regards the processes of population distribution and urban development,

Taking account of the fact that most of the governments of the region have been obliged to considerably reduce the budget for social programmes --especially in the area of human settlements-- in view of the deterioration of the economic situation and the lack of available resources in the region,

Considering that the crisis through which the region is passing, together with the negative effects of some structural conditions, have heightened the awareness of society regarding the distortions which exist in human settlements development models, as reflected in centralism in most of the countries of the region, and that the present situation provides an opportunity for change and for improving the territorial distribution of the population and of economic activities,

Also considering that the population of Latin America and the Caribbean has on occasions been the victim of disasters which have made necessary the mobilization of large human and financial resources for the work of reconstruction,

1. Reaffirms the need for the governments of the region to promote new mechanisms and standards which recognize the progressive nature of the solution of the population's needs as regards land, infrastructure, urban facilities and housing, in order to raise levels of well-being in the region in a context of scarce resources;

2. Recognizes that the policies pursued by governments must take account of the fundamental importance of local authorities and the participation of public and private middle-level bodies in the definition of projects, their development, control over their execution, and the operation and maintenance of the infrastructural, services and housing components of human settlements;

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\*/ Operative paragraph 4 of this resolution was adopted by 24 votes in favour and 2 against. The rest of the resolution was adopted by consensus.

3. Reaffirms that, in order to achieve a considerable reduction in the cost of urban development for the sectors most seriously affected by the economic crisis, measures must be taken to facilitate the access of the entire population, and especially the most under-privileged sectors, to the infrastructural, services and housing components, and in particular steps must be taken to ensure the timely availability of urban building land at a cost within the reach of the population;
4. Recognizes with concern the special situation in which some member countries find themselves because of special circumstances which hamper the efforts made by their governments to deal with the problems of housing and human settlements and, at the same time, expresses its hope that such circumstances will disappear as soon as possible;
5. Reaffirms that it is imperative that, in the decentralization policies adopted by some governments, special importance should be attached to urban and rural development planning processes, as a mechanism for taking into account the interests of the entire population;
6. Emphasizes the need to increase support for programmes aimed at helping to improve the quality of life in rural settlements, and especially such support as can be given to the efforts of governmental and non-governmental bodies which are seeking solutions in this high-priority area;
7. Stresses that, given the impact of the crisis on human settlements, as reflected in serious financial constraints which affect the social well-being of the population, in spite of the efforts which the countries have been making in the area of resource allocation, international co-operation must be increased and ways must be sought of increasing the flow of concessionary external resources earmarked for solving the human settlements problems of the region, as well as of mobilizing additional domestic resources;
8. Takes note with satisfaction of the activities carried out by the ECLAC Secretariat in the area of human settlements, and especially of the agreement between ECLAC and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements, under which the Joint ECLAC/UNCHS Human Settlements Unit was created;
9. Reaffirms the objectives of the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless and gives its support to the activities to be carried out in the region in the context of that Year;
10. Takes note of the content and orientation of the programme of work to be carried out by the ECLAC system during the period 1988-1989 in the area of human settlements;
11. Instructs the Secretariat to assign adequate priority in the ECLAC work programme to activities in the area of human settlements, to support national efforts through the preparation of studies and programmes of regional co-operation consistent with the needs of each country, and to carry out work in the following areas:

- a) Decentralization and strengthening of the management capacity of local governments,
- b) Forms of organization which will guarantee community participation,
- c) Alternative ways of financing housing and the development of urban and rural settlements,
- d) Technology that will make it possible gradually to solve the needs of the population in terms of infrastructure, services and housing;
- e) Urban reconstruction work made necessary by natural disasters.

230th meeting  
25 April 1986