

UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC COMMISSION
FOR LATIN AMERICA
AND THE CARIBBEAN - ECLAC



Distr.
LIMITED
LC/L.915(Conf.85/2)
2 October 1995
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: SPANISH

Latin American and Caribbean Regional Meeting
Preparatory to the United Nations Conference
on Human Settlements (Habitat II)

Santiago, Chile, 13-17 November 1995

ANNOTATED PROVISIONAL AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION
OF THE MEETING

- I. Organization of the meeting
- II. Provisional agenda
- III. Annotations to the provisional agenda

I. ORGANIZATION OF THE LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN REGIONAL MEETING PREPARATORY TO THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS (HABITAT II)

The Latin American and Caribbean Regional Meeting will take place at the headquarters of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) from 13 to 17 November 1995 and will serve as the meeting preparatory to the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) to be held in Istanbul from 3 to 14 June 1996.

The mandate for the meeting derives from General Assembly resolution 47/180 of 22 December 1992, in which the Assembly recommends "that regional and subregional preparatory meetings should be held in conjunction with meetings of subregional and regional intergovernmental bodies, wherever possible".

Moreover, the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), at its first substantive session held at the United Nations Office at Geneva from 11 to 22 April 1994, observed that:

"The United Nations regional commissions have a central role to play at the regional level in the preparatory process, the Conference itself and beyond. This role should include, among other matters:

- a) Coordinating and facilitating regional activities, including regional meetings, through a work programme over the next two years;
- b) Enabling Member States with limited institutional and financial capacity to participate effectively in the preparatory process and in the Conference;
- c) Liaison and preparation of a regional report on the state of human settlements, highlighting cross-sectoral and cross-country concerns".

The purpose of the meeting is to evaluate and examine systematically the trends in human settlements in the region, looking at urbanization tendencies, the housing situation in Latin American and Caribbean countries and the changes that have come about over the past few decades in both the perception of the problems and the solutions proposed.

The meeting will draw up a number of proposals and recommendations for promoting progress in human settlements in the region to serve as inputs to the global plan of action to be adopted at the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) the following June.

In order to accomplish these tasks and to ensure proper participation by all countries in drawing up the proposals, the secretariat suggests that work should begin with plenary meetings on Monday and on Tuesday morning to consider items 1 to 3 of the provisional agenda. From Tuesday afternoon to noon on Thursday, two working groups could meet to consider the trends revealed by the diagnostic analysis provided and to draw up the region's proposals and recommendations for the global plan of action pursuant to items 4 and 5 of the provisional agenda. To ensure that the various issues that have a bearing on progress in human settlements are adequately addressed, it is suggested that one of the working groups should discuss topics related to the productivity and sustainability of human settlements, while the other considers questions that have to do with equity, governability and efficiency in the urban and housing fields. On Thursday afternoon and on Friday, there could again be plenary meetings to complete work on item 5 and to consider item 6 of the provisional agenda. The working document will be "Human settlements: Shelter for development" (LC/L.906(Conf.85/3)).

II. PROVISIONAL AGENDA

1. Adoption of the provisional agenda
2. Consideration of developments relating to human settlements since the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm, 1972) and Habitat: United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Vancouver, 1976) within the context of economic and social development in Latin America and the Caribbean
3. Diagnosis and analysis of the current situation
 - 3.1 Demographic and geographic trends in relation to regional social and economic development
 - 3.2 Current policies on human settlements in Latin America and the Caribbean
 - 3.3 Housing policies in the region
4. Projections of trends in the area of human settlements in the region based on the diagnostic data
5. Proposals and recommendations from Latin America and the Caribbean for the global plan of action
6. Other matters.

III. ANNOTATIONS TO THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA

1. Approval of the provisional agenda

Pursuant to ECLAC rules of procedure, the meeting shall elect a set of officers consisting of a Chairman, two or more Vice-Chairmen and a Rapporteur.

The representatives will have before them the provisional agenda (LC/L.897(Conf.85/1)) for their consideration and approval. Representatives may make any observations or changes they deem appropriate.

2. Consideration of developments relating to human settlements since the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm, 1972) and Habitat: United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Vancouver, 1976) within the context of economic and social development in Latin America and the Caribbean

Working document

Human settlements: Shelter for development (LC/L.906(Conf.85/3)), chapter I

It is hoped that discussion on this topic will make it possible to identify and debate the factors that have been found to be critical in limiting or undermining progress in human settlements or that might provide a solution to existing problems. As a result of the intense urbanization experienced in recent decades, the region is becoming one of the most urbanized on the planet. Concomitant social and economic changes, however, have produced a situation in which poverty is greater today than in the 1970s and is primarily concentrated in the cities and towns. Investment and spending on infrastructure, housing and urban services have not kept pace with the growth of the urban population and the increase in poverty, nor have they met the needs of cities to be more competitive and sustainable. None the less, the experience of some countries shows that the economic potential of cities can be an important resource for correcting some of the current negative features of human settlements.

3. Diagnosis and analysis of the current situation

Working document

Human settlements: Shelter for development (LC/L.906(Conf.85/3)), chapters II, III, IV, V and VI

Material on agenda item 3.1 concerning demographic and geographic trends in relation to regional social and economic development can be found in chapter II of the working document. The chapter deals primarily with the problems resulting from the process of urbanization and the growth of large metropolitan areas the region has experienced during the period analysed. Demographic transition has brought about significant change in the form of a sharp drop in the rate of population growth. At the same time, the pace of urbanization and the expansion of metropolitan areas have tended to slow in many countries, a development that could make it easier in the future to manage urban growth and to meet the demand for housing and related services.

In relation to agenda item 3.2 concerning current policies on human settlements in Latin America and the Caribbean and the region's urban system, the secretariat presents chapters III and IV of the working document. The chapters primarily discuss the contributions cities can make to regional development and topics of relevance to urban management, including governability and participation, urban land use, transportation and infrastructure. It is hoped that the countries will contribute their own experiences in urban policy or in specific areas such as financing, land management, productivity enhancement, environmental issues and any other topics they consider to be of interest.

With respect to agenda item 3.3 on housing policy in the region, chapters V and VI of the working document dealing with housing and housing management, offer material for consideration. Working from an estimate presented in the ECLAC document of the magnitude of existing housing problems, the representatives may wish to discuss the actions the region should take in the areas of housing production, maintenance, improvement and sanitation. The broad outlines of a system of housing management might be considered that would enable all households in the region to have an adequate dwelling. Such a system might entail exploring new sources of financing for the sector, modernizing policies to target need more accurately, and developing new housing construction techniques. In this connection, the countries might contribute their own experiences with housing policy past or present.

4. Projections of trends in the area of human settlements in the region based on the diagnostic data

Working document

Human settlements: Shelter for development (LC/L.906(Conf.85/3))

It is hoped that discussion of the previous agenda items together with the information the countries contribute on foreseeable trends in their human settlements will supplement the data contained in the document prepared by ECLAC, which merely points up a few general regional tendencies in this area, such as the gradual demographic and geographic stabilization of the population in the next few years, the disturbing increase in urban poverty and inequality between high- and low-income groups, and the increasing shortage of housing, urban services and infrastructure. Despite these trends, the notion that urbanization is inevitably linked to poverty, environmental degradation and violence is giving way to a more positive vision, one that does not ignore the critical problems that exist but sees in cities a potential for progress that needs to be harnessed.

5. Proposals and recommendations from Latin America and the Caribbean for the global plan of action

Working document

Human settlements: Shelter for development (LC/L.906(Conf.85/3)), chapter VII

For this item of the agenda, the representatives will have chapter VII of the working document as a basis for discussion. The chapter suggests the following as topics to be given high priority in the proposals and recommendations for the global plan of action: productivity and human settlements, including the issue of competitiveness; combatting urban poverty; sustainability in human settlements and a better urban environment; governability, with special emphasis on the participation of all members of society within a democratic framework; and efficient management of human settlements.

6. Other matters

Any other topics representatives wish to raise will be discussed under this agenda item.

Annex

DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE TO PARTICIPANTS

- LC/DEM/G.155 - CELADE, Demographic Bulletin, No. 56
- LC/G.1853-P - ECLAC, Statistical Yearbook for Latin America and the Caribbean, 1994
- LC/G.1701/Rev.1-P - ECLAC, Social Equity and Changing Production Patterns: An Integrated Approach
- LC/G.1601-P - ECLAC, Changing Production Patterns with Social Equity: The Prime Task of Latin American and Caribbean Development in the 1990s