STATEMENT BY THE ASSOCIATED COUNTRY WOMEN OF THE WORLD **

** Circulated in accordance with Rule 55 of the Provisional Rules of Procedure of the Conference (A/CONF.70/3/Rev.1)

ACWW has 8½ million members in 69 countries and is the only international organization whose prime concern is to raise the standard and quality of life for rural women and homemakers.

Over 60% of the world's population lives in rural areas, frequently without adequate clean water supplies, shelter, sanitation or medical care. Even in the richer countries where rural inhabitants may seem to get a fairer share of the nation's economic wealth per head, that help rarely goes far enough towards the real provision of amenities and services because of lack of concentrated numbers. In the poorer countries the distribution of resources may never reach rural areas, causing the resultant unfortunate migration from country to city, which is happening in both rich and poor nations, with disastrous consequences for both rural and urban areas.

ACWW therefore hopes that the UN Conference on Human Settlements will deal in depth with the problems of the poorer rural areas. We believe the first priority must be to provide the basic requirements for adequate human existence. Otherwise there is a danger that the essential needs for survival of the individual man, woman, and child outside the towns may be submerged and lost in the well-meant but turgid flow of large scale planning.

In line with recent UN global development strategies and decisions taken at the World Conferences on Population, on Food, and on Women, ACWW urges the establishment of national and community development programmes designed to promote the viability of the rural areas and to ensure the full integration of women at all stages of this process.

If this integration is to become a reality, women must be educated on many fronts. There are, however, many women already sufficiently well educated and experienced to warrant consulting them and making better use of their knowledge and their imagination in the planning of settlements, which affects so greatly the quality and standard of family community life - the major preoccupation of most women in their roles as wives, mothers, workers and/or educators of children.

The ultimate aim is that women should take equal part with men in the planning of all human settlements whether urban or rural - and particularly the latter, where their basic knowledge is likely to be greater. Family life and the life of a village have a great deal in common, and therefore a woman successfully running a family does not also have to be a skilled architect, town planner or administrator, in order to have something worthwhile to contribute towards the planning of the smaller settlements.
Bearing these factors in mind ACWW considers that priority should be given to the more equitable distribution of resources between rural and urban areas, especially with regard to the following:

1) Provision of adequate water, shelter and sanitation - as a first requirement.

2) More widely and easily accessible public services, health care facilities, roads and transport.

3) Vastly increased allocation of state assistance to increase literacy and provide out-of-school education and training facilities for both sexes including nutrition, child care and family planning.

4) Support for small and intermediate scale self-help rural community development projects such as water pipes, pumps, and elementary sanitation.

5) Creation of employment opportunities through the establishment of rural co-operatives, cottage industries, marketing and the encouragement of tourism.

6) Provision to ensure that women are consulted about, and involved in, the planning and implementation of all decisions relating to human settlements and the related subjects of home, family and community life.