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THE INFORMATION PROGRAMME

Report of the Secretary-General

A. Conceptual framework

1. The HABITAT information programme is designed to support conference objectives and to publicize conference-related activities of both an official and unofficial nature. The programme will cover three phases: pre-Conference, Conference and post-Conference. The main goals of the campaign will be:

   (a) To stimulate active participation in conference activities and planning by Member States and by professionals in human settlement fields both in and out of government;

   (b) To increase world-wide public awareness of the crucial nature of the problems which the Conference will address and the urgency of finding solutions to them.

2. The secretariat views these goals as complementary. The focus on Conference preparation will stress national action, such as national reports, formation of national committees, the choosing of demonstration projects, regional meetings, etc., while the public campaign will encourage popular participation, community self-help and support for future government initiatives.

3. The two goals are also seen to be compatible in terms of programme timing. In the coming months, primary emphasis will be on stimulation of Conference activities by Governments. Most of these activities should be completed or well advanced by the middle of 1975. The public campaign is designed to gather momentum in the second half of 1975 and throughout the months of 1976 leading to the opening of the Conference in Vancouver in May.
B. Information channels

4. The secretariat has attempted to define target audience groups for different information techniques and concentration of effort. Despite some overlap, the main target audiences chosen for the information campaign are:

(a) Professionals in human settlement fields;
(b) Opinion moulders in education and the media;
(c) Decision-makers and other persons of influence in their societies;
(d) The general public, including subdivisions of women and youth.

5. The secretariat also believes that, owing to the concentration of media in the developed countries, the information programme should place its first priority in developing-country activities. This emphasis was stressed at a consultation of journalists convened by the secretariat in Geneva in August 1974, when a study also was made of the most useful media and information approaches in various regions of the world.

6. To reach these audiences, the information programme will utilize all possible vehicles of communication but the main thrusts will be through the United Nations information network, world-wide mass media, non-governmental organizations and special HABITAT information projects and programmes. This will be organized in the following way:

(a) The United Nations network: Co-operation between the secretariat and the United Nations information network will be organized through a joint-agency information working group co-ordinated by the Centre for Economic and Social Information (CESI) with the HABITAT secretariat providing substantive inputs. The first meeting of this working group is to be in February of 1975 in Geneva. The secretariat also will work closely with other divisions of the Office of Public Information (OPI) and in particular will rely on the distribution facilities of these divisions to assist in the dissemination of HABITAT information material.

(b) World-wide mass media: World radio, television and print media will be serviced by the secretariat, and also through the joint-agency working group where indicated, with a steady flow of material on the Conference programme and also with features on human settlement subjects and other news items. Special attention will be given to the needs of professional journals in fields related to human settlement issues. Because of the impact of radio in developing countries, priority will be given to radio outlets in these areas.

(c) Non-governmental organizations: Because of the interest in human settlements by a very wide range of non-governmental organizations, a special effort will be made by the secretariat to provide the publications and programmes of these organizations with HABITAT material. This will include news and features especially oriented to the concerns of these organizations and also substantive material and documents wherever appropriate for use in meetings, seminars and other activities.

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C. Development of information material

7. From its own information resources and wherever possible, with the assistance of OPI and other United Nations and non-governmental organizations, the secretariat will develop a broad range of information material. This will include:

(a) Films: The secretariat is now holding discussions with film-makers and writers on the possible production of a special film on human settlements for presentation before, during and after the Conference. It is also envisaged that the national demonstration projects will form the raw material for several United Nations educational and technical films to be shown around the world after the Conference. Under study are other shorter film projects in conjunction with outside organizations, including a short educational film to be supplemented with printed teaching aids on human settlement problems. The Office of Public Information also is planning a film on the HABITAT theme as part of its programme in support of the Conference.

(b) Radio: Because of its broad impact in the developing as well as developed countries, the secretariat is planning a major programme of radio material covering Conference preparatory events as they develop, general human settlement themes, interviews with experts and prominent figures on human settlement issues and short, commercial-type messages about the Conference. For this programme, the secretariat will count on the assistance and co-operation of OPI both for production and distribution.

(c) Television: To the fullest extent possible, filmed materials will be distributed to public and private television outlets around the world. The secretariat also will develop short, commercial-type television film clips for Conference publicity, asking world television outlets to show these short films.

(d) Print media: Articles, reports and special features for world newspapers and magazines will be prepared by the secretariat information staff and disseminated at regular intervals throughout 1975 and the first months of 1976. The secretariat also will endeavour to secure second rights to such material it finds of particular relevance to Conference themes for translation and world-wide distribution. Through these efforts, the information programme can serve a substantive role of transfer of technology.

(e) Secretariat publications: The secretariat will publish its own newsletters and special reports for mailing to selected target audiences. Also envisaged are several special supplements in the CESI publication Development Forum, with overruns of these supplements for special secretariat mailings.

D. Publicity for special events

8. Within its objective of building interest in the Conference and in human settlement themes generally, the information programme will lay special stress on publicizing important official and parallel events concerning HABITAT throughout the preparatory process.
9. Among the official events worthy of special attention will be the coverage of national reports, the regional meetings, the HABITAT seminar, completion of the demonstration projects and the meetings of the Preparatory Committee. Other events which will receive special attention (see report on parallel activities A/CONF.70/PC/9) are the student conference, publications of the Barbara Ward book, the Geneva Graduate Study Programme, the CESI Journalist Encounter Meeting, the world photography contest and World Development Day.

E. Demonstration projects

10. The Secretariat considers the preparation of the national audiovisual demonstration projects a unique and very important source of information and Conference promotion material.

11. All Governments preparing demonstration projects will be asked to provide written texts summarizing these projects, with photographs where possible, to be packaged by the secretariat in journalistic feature form for distribution to appropriate media well in advance of the Conference itself. Media attention to such material will serve the double purpose of heightening interest in the Conference and also in the human settlement solutions portrayed in the demonstration projects themselves.

F. Publicity at Vancouver

12. Media relations and publicity at the Conference will be the joint responsibility of the secretariat and OPI. The Office of Public Information will supply a team to handle daily press and non-governmental briefings and other activities. The Canadian host government will make available physical facilities including radio and television studies.

13. The secretariat envisages the publication of a Conference newspaper, such as the Planet, published at the Population Conference. It is also envisaged that there will be extensive television and radio coverage of the Conference, and it is possible owing to longitudinal time bands, that television and radio coverage may be beamed directly to countries of the western hemisphere.

G. After the conference

14. Information activities after Vancouver will be primarily to publicize Conference results. All possible media will be employed for this purpose. The secretariat will seek to interest world publishing houses in a book project that would summarize the entire Conference process, the issues raised by the future challenge of human settlements, and world reaction.