PROPOSALS FOR INTERNATIONAL ACTION

I. BACKGROUND

1. The purpose of this paper is to set out and elaborate some of the future programmes which would be necessary for an effective use of international co-operation in the field of human settlements.

2. The main thrust of the preparatory process has been to facilitate a solution-oriented exchange of human settlement experiences. It is expected that this central theme will continue to be emphasized at the Conference itself as well as during the post-Conference period, since many countries, especially in the developing world, are confronting critical human settlement issues which must be tackled on an urgent basis.

3. It is clear that decisions on over-all arrangements and implementation of institutional changes will take a long time. Likewise, the implementation of long-term comprehensive programmes will take time. Meanwhile, considerable public awareness of and support for human settlement issues has been created and, in many countries, public expectations for concrete results have been aroused. The preparatory process has also created a considerable momentum, especially at the country level, for immediate action:

   (a) In 125 countries official contacts have been designated and in many cases national committees established for the first time to examine the human settlement situation in a comprehensive manner;

   (b) Nearly 100 countries have submitted national reports on their human settlement situation, outlining their major problems and issues in this field;
(c) In 30 countries specific national meetings have been held or are planned to focus attention on human settlements:

(d) The production of over 200 audio-visual demonstrations in 120 countries has generated national interest and mobilized local resources for the preparation of audio-visual demonstration projects, which would be shown not only internationally and regionally but also in the countries concerned;

(e) Channels of communication have been opened at the regional and international levels through the regional preparatory conferences, meetings of expert groups and as a result of the public information and promotional activities of the Habitat secretariat.

4. In order to maintain and exploit this momentum, many countries feel that, regardless of the ultimate programmes and institutional machinery which might emerge from the Habitat Conference, it is vital that some concrete programmes, however limited, should start immediately after the Conference.

II. GUIDELINES

5. A framework for international co-operation was set out in document A/CONF.70/WG/2 and further developed at the meeting of the ad hoc intergovernmental working groups at Geneva from 22 to 25 September 1975 (see document A/CONF.70/WG/20). On the basis of this framework, the following programmes are proposed for immediate action:

(a) Human settlement regional training institutes;
(b) Human settlement regional research centres;
(c) Human settlement information programmes;
(d) Human settlement advisory teams;
(e) Human settlement recruitment units.

6. Because of their interim nature, these limited programmes would have to rely on existing projects and programmes, using mainly the present institutional arrangements. Their design should be flexible enough to allow for their absorption into the over-all institutional arrangements for human settlements which may be finally agreed upon. In the first instance, their objective would have to be to strengthen the capacity of each country to deal effectively with its human settlement problems and issues.

7. As a general rule, the financing of the limited programmes would be through a consortium type approach with participating donors and recipient countries meeting together annually. The administration and management of the programmes would be decentralized to the maximum extent possible to the countries and regions in accordance with relevant United Nations precedents and practice in similar programmes and projects.
8. International inputs, designed to stimulate national action, would mainly consist of short-term advisers, if not available locally, institutional support, short-term fellowships, supplies and equipment (including services and facilities) not available locally, documents and publications, pre-investment studies, financial follow-up investment and subcontractors not available locally. Participating countries' inputs would consist of the local currency component of the programme activities carried out within each country, secondment of local staff to other participating countries, provision of information (including audio-visual demonstrations and publications), designation of in situ projects and provision of host facilities for visitors from other countries. The host country (being used as a "base" for the programme activities which would be carried out mainly in the individual participating countries) would also provide premises and facilities, local staff and services, equipment and local transport. Institutional, administrative and financial arrangements would be negotiated among the participating countries concerned and stated in an agreement. Further details would be elaborated, in due course, in individual project documents to be prepared for each project.

9. The time-table envisaged for the proposed limited programmes is as follows:

(a) January 1976 (second session of the Preparatory Committee): informal consultations;

(b) February to May 1976: elaboration of programmes and detailed consultations with and among Governments;

(c) June 1976 (Habitat Conference): agreement in principle on specific programmes;

(d) January 1977: signing of formal agreements, start of preliminary activities and formulation of detailed project documents;

(e) January 1978 (or earlier if the long-term institutional arrangements have been agreed upon): a review of the programmes.

III. PROPOSALS FOR PROGRAMMES

Proposal 1: Human settlement regional training institutes

10. In order to cope with the need for more skilled professional and middle level technicians, it is proposed to establish a number of regional training institutes. The basic aim of these institutes would be to assist national institutions to adapt available skills, ensuring their appropriateness to the task of solving human settlement problems and implementing viable solutions.

11. Their major function would be to provide support in the form of money, personnel, ideas and, where necessary, equipment to national institutes, helping them to introduce new formal courses to foster a comprehensive approach to planning for professionals and stimulate on-the-job training programmes for middle level
technicians. Actual training programmes undertaken by these regional institutes would be limited to those areas of concern not touched upon by individual countries or which have a wider application. These would include human settlement management, land policy and innovative approaches to public participation, through the medium of refresher and mid-career courses, seminars, workshops and conversion courses.

12. The regional training institutes would also undertake studies in curriculum development, the results of which would be tried out in collaboration with national institutions. Courses provided at the regional training institutes would be of short duration, ranging from a few days to a maximum of three months. This would obviate the problem of keeping skilled personnel away from their jobs for long periods of time.

13. This proposal would be developed in two stages:

Stage 1: Five to six such institutes are proposed for developing regions, based upon language and preferably set up within existing national and/or regional institutions.

Stage 2: Subregional centres would be established covering subjects more closely related to the specific needs of countries associated with the subregion. Here too, wherever feasible, national institutions would be encouraged to house these activities. This stage would come about when it was clear what new institutional arrangement for human settlements would be implemented at the global level.

14. Although the initial capital costs involved in setting up these regional training institutes would be comparatively small, involving the engagement of experts from within the region, accommodating them and providing the necessary equipment, the running costs would consume the greater part of the budget, since the primary aim would be to stimulate training programmes within the developing countries.

Proposal 2: Human settlement regional research centres

15. In order to develop a capacity in the major regions of the developing world and consequently within individual countries to undertake research on human settlements, it is proposed to establish regional research centres whose main task would be to provide policy makers and planners in the countries of the region with the knowledge required to fulfil developmental tasks. A great deal of research in this area is being carried out in industrialized countries and the choice of subjects, as well as the results, are not always pertinent to the problems experienced in developing countries.

16. This proposal is seen as a five-stage process:

Stage 1: The establishment of priorities for research within the region. For this purpose a small team of five to seven experts, recruited from within the
region, would be entrusted with the task of drawing up an agenda for research through consultation with Governments of States Members of the United Nations, national research institutes and academic institutions, both national and regional. There would be one such team for each of the four developing regions. Whilst carrying out this study, the roving teams would be expected to develop a network of institutes with the capacity for carrying out research on human settlement issues.

Stage 2: The team would draw up a report on its findings in relation to three key issues: priority areas of research, existing gaps in knowledge and proposals for immediate and mid-term research projects.

Stage 3: The convening of an ad hoc intergovernmental meeting to consider the findings and endorse the fourth stage.

Stage 4: The commissioning of national research institutes to undertake the research projects agreed upon. For this, the network of institutes developed earlier would be invaluable. Research projects would only be contracted out, either due to the volume of work already in hand or to the lack of appropriate skills available in the national institutes.

Stage 5: Regional research centres would be established to undertake research and draw to their ranks specialists in the required subject areas, retaining the original team, in whole or in part, to lend continuity and direction.

17. The regional research centres would also be responsible for monitoring commissioned research; identifying new areas requiring attention; ensuring dissemination of relevant results, either through the mechanism described in proposal 3 or at least initially through the production of regular newsletters, giving information on what was being currently researched and indicating where further and more detailed information could be obtained; the further stimulation of national institutes to undertake additional research work by the injection of money, ideas and, where requested, advice on approach and methodology; training prospective research workers from the region; and orienting outside experts and bringing them up to date about the human settlement needs and problems of the countries of the region.

18. Wherever feasible, these centres would be based on existing national or regional institutes. Their initial size would depend on the results of the earlier stages outlined above and their ultimate size would depend on how successful they were in assisting national institutes to increase their own research capacities. In other words, their success would be manifested by a reduction in their own research activity and a greater emphasis on their other functions.

19. The initial outlay for this operation would be comparatively small, covering the engagement of the experts, their fee and travel costs. Most of the time of this team would be spent in travelling through the countries of the region, using as their base the secretariat of the relevant regional economic commission and taking advantage of the excellent services provided by the offices of the resident representatives of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for contacting...
the authorities within countries. The first four stages of the operation would have to be conducted as rapidly as possible, so that much needed research could be embarked upon as early as possible. By that time it is expected that institutional arrangements for human settlements, at the global level, would have been decided upon and consequently the Government of the country in question and the secretariat of the regional research centres could be placed within the new framework.

Proposal 3: Human settlement information programmes

20. Of all the proposals set out in this paper, this is perhaps the most important and, as such, the most ambitious. The long-term goal is to establish a human settlement information programme which would provide the main thrust of any new institutional arrangement that may be adopted.

21. Five types of information have been selected for concentrating the effort of international co-operation in the collection, storage, retrieval and dissemination of information. These are:

(a) Basic data concerning countries

22. In the long term this factual statistical information about human settlements, essential to policy makers and planners, would be centrally stored and administered, since the inputs, in terms of equipment and skilled personnel, would be considerable. The medium-term objectives would be to establish regional data banks, so as to systematize the collection of basic data and to facilitate, through the publication of regular human settlement statistical bulletins, the beginning of an exchange of this type of information among countries of the region concerned.

23. If the new institutional arrangements for human settlements have not been implemented at this stage, it would be necessary to create posts within the secretariats of the regional economic commissions which would be responsible for recruiting persons with suitable expertise and supervising their work programme.

24. The immediate action necessary after the Habitat Conference would be the extraction of human settlement information from existing data in the United Nations system. For this purpose, a small team of experts would have to be appointed with a very clear, limited mandate. This team would also be required to establish a framework for the assembly of this information, so as to facilitate subsequent stages.

(b) Experiential exchange

25. One of the most important outcomes of the Vancouver Conference will be that, for the first time, an attempt will have been made to record and exchange, between countries, positive experience of solutions to human settlement problems. In order to maintain and promote the impetus gained, it would be essential to utilize the audio-visual presentations, expected to be in excess of 200, and the travelling exhibit as the basis for a demonstration-projects programme.
26. The long-term goal would be to establish an audio-visual library, centrally located and staffed by human settlement professionals and film technicians. This library would encourage countries to continue to record their experiences, through the provision of money, material in the form of raw film stock and/or technical equipment, as well as technical expertise upon request. Its functions would also include the establishment of an ongoing system of updating the presentations, together with mechanisms for their efficient distribution to Member States and others who would benefit from this type of experiential exchange.

27. An enterprise of this type would require a considerable financial input both for its inception and running costs. It would have to operate within whatever new organizational structure is adopted for dealing with human settlement problems at the global level. Its mid-term objectives would be the consolidation of the nucleus of existing material, the finalization of details of the structure of the library, the initiation of steps for funding and the preparation of teaching packages.

28. As soon after the Conference as possible, a campaign would be started to promote the concept of human settlement problems as a priority issue among States Members of the United Nations. The audio-visual material at present under preparation is organized either in the form of slide/tapes, 16 mm sound film or video cassettes. These exist in a number of languages, and, with minor technical adjustments, could become available for showing on national television networks for public education or in Government departments and academic institutions for human settlement administrators and professionals. The United Nations exhibition, which has been designed for this particular purpose, would be an extremely useful addition to the promotional programme.

29. The outlay for these immediate steps would be modest, and, in essence, would consist of the engagement of a limited number of film technicians, and provision of their accommodation and equipment. Some travelling may be necessary and arrangements for delivery of the audio-visual material should be taken into account.

(a) Intelligence

30. A great deal of information about countries is at present available in the form of national reports and background papers prepared in connexion with the preparatory process for the Conference. These would form the basis of an intelligence network about human settlement issues and problems.

31. For this, as for basic data, an efficient collection, storage, retrieval and dissemination system would need to be instituted, centrally located and using sophisticated equipment. It would have to be established within the framework of the new institutional structure and its implementation would therefore be a long-term goal.

32. Immediately after the Vancouver Conference, steps could be taken to establish
a total of five regional intelligence units for human settlements, based in the secretariats of the regional economic commissions. Posts would need to be created for professionals, whose primary task would be to travel in the countries of the region, collecting information on problems, policies, strategies and plans and feeding this information back to the regional headquarters for processing. A major source for this type of information would of course be the advisory teams (see proposal 4), through regular debriefing.

(d) Research information

33. This has been described in proposal 2. The long-term programme would be similar but with variants in the method of collection, as is the case for intelligence and basic data.

(e) Pilot demonstration projects

34. This programme of initiating, monitoring, recording, evaluating and feeding back experience through a continuing series of demonstration projects, on a regional basis would, in the long term, require a considerable input of economic and technical assistance as well as a structure of governance and a secretariat to administer the process.

35. In the period following the Conference a programme could be undertaken for the recording of pilot demonstration projects already built. The form of this recording could be either written or audio-visual, using 8 mm film or slides. For this purpose, two teams would need to be established for each region, making a total of 10. Their composition would be largely human settlement professionals and, where necessary, audio-visual experts. They would be based in the secretariats of the regional economic commissions and would come under the direction of the relevant Executive Secretary.

36. It may be seen from the five information activities listed above that in the long term they could conveniently be grouped together in a single institution with two major components viz. the experiential exchange programme comprising both the audio-visual library and the pilot demonstration projects and the information exchange programme consisting of research information, basic data and intelligence.

Proposal 4: Human settlement advisory teams

37. The shortage of expertise in a number of fields concerned with human settlements is being felt in many countries, especially in the developing world. The result of this shortage is reflected in the curtailment of plans for solving human settlement problems, particularly for specific projects. This proposal suggests the formation of human settlement advisory teams, initially one for each of the regions, composed of experts from within the region having specialized knowledge in their own subject areas but maintaining a multidisciplinary approach.

38. These teams would be available to any country requesting such assistance,
either for initiating projects or for evaluating their effectiveness. They would supplement the efforts already being made by the countries themselves as is also done by organizations within the United Nations system. Their major task would be to cross-fertilize, through promoting the exchange of experience and techniques across the countries of the region. In addition they would be expected to add to the store of knowledge of the human settlements information programme by debriefing, on a regular basis, so as to ensure that the intelligence component of that operation was kept up to date. Until decisions concerning the future institutional arrangements for human settlements were finalized, the teams would be based in the secretariats of the regional economic commissions and responsible to them.

39. To institute such a proposal, a limited number of posts would have to be funded, not more than five initially for each team and a budget established for travel and other current costs. Since this is in the way of a new departure, it is suggested that initially a pilot team be established in a single region and its progress monitored and effectiveness evaluated. The team could be established to operate over a period of two years, with a proviso that a thorough evaluation be made at the end of the first year. If the experiment were to prove of value, other teams could be formed in the remaining regions. In the long term the posts thus created could be transferred to the new institutional arrangement.

40. For an extremely modest outlay, this proposal has the potential of being an effective instrument in helping the regions to render on-the-spot service in the human settlement field to States Members of the United Nations.

41. Should the initial programme prove successful, more such teams could be sent into the field to cover the broad subject areas which will emerge as recommendations from the Habitat Conference, but all the time retaining their multidisciplinary character and approach

Proposal 5: Human settlement recruitment units

42. It is apparent that, for some time to come, the movement of experts from one country to another will continue. Experts have always been more readily available from developed countries but there is an evident need for more expertise to be drawn from those developing countries with a surplus.

43. The role of the United Nations has up to now been somewhat limited by the fact that its access to persons with appropriate skills is restricted and by the difficulty of placing them to the satisfaction of the recipient country. If international co-operation is to be more effective in these kinds of personnel transfers, it must be able to promote a much greater degree of movement between developing countries in a way which benefits both donor and recipient.

44. This proposal involves the establishment of recruitment units on a subregional basis, the major objective being to maintain an accurate and up-to-date register of experts, their availability and location.

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45. A secondary objective would be to conduct properly structured orientation seminars for prospective applicants wishing to take up posts in developing countries. One or two persons, depending on the subregion, would be engaged to man these units and to engage seminar leaders when necessary. As a basis they could extract from lists, maintained by resident representatives of UNDP, the names of experts concerned with human settlements. Posts would have to be made available to the resident representative, in whose office the units would be housed and who would be nominally responsible for overseeing the operation.

46. The outlay for this programme would be very modest and it could be quite easily absorbed into any future institutional arrangement. Its advantage is that it could be commenced directly after the Habitat Conference.