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**REPORT OF THE FIFTH REGIONAL MEETING OF MINISTERS AND HIGH-LEVEL
AUTHORITIES OF THE HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT
SECTOR IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

(Kingston, Jamaica, 12-15 November 1996)

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I. MINISTERIAL STAGE

A. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

1. Background

At the fourth Regional Meeting of Ministers and High-Level Authorities of the Housing and Urban Development Sector in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Santiago, Chile, on 16 and 17 November 1995, the participants unanimously agreed to accept the offer extended by Mr. Easton Douglas, Minister of Environment and Housing of Jamaica, to host the fifth Regional Meeting in Kingston, Jamaica, in November 1996.

2. Place and date of the meeting

The ministerial stage of the fifth Regional Meeting of Ministers and High-Level Authorities of the Housing and Urban Development Sector in Latin America and the Caribbean was held on 14 and 15 November 1996 at The Conference Center in Kingston, Jamaica.

3. Attendance

The meeting was attended by representatives of the following countries: Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, and Venezuela.

The following associate members of the Commission were also represented at the meeting: Anguilla, Aruba, British Virgin Islands and Montserrat.

A representative of the Turks and Caicos Islands attended as an observer.

The meeting was also attended by representatives of the following United Nations organizations: United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS-Habitat) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The following intergovernmental organizations were represented at the meeting: Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and World Bank.

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) was represented in its capacity as a governmental agency.

The following non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were represented: the Foundation for Education, the Environment, Development and Health (FEMADS), the Inter-American Housing Union (UNIAPRAVI) and the Habitat International Coalition (HIC), which holds consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

4. Election of officers

The fifth Regional Meeting of Ministers and High-Level Authorities of the Housing and Urban Development Sector in Latin America and the Caribbean elected the following officers:

<u>Chairman:</u>	Jamaica
<u>Vice-chairmen:</u>	Bolivia
	Guatemala
<u>Rapporteur:</u>	Argentina

5. Agenda

The following agenda was adopted:

1. Election of officers and adoption of the agenda.
2. Report of activities undertaken during the 1995-1996 inter-sessional period of the Regional Meeting of Ministers and High-Level Authorities of the Housing and Urban Development Sector in Latin America and the Caribbean and the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) by the interim secretariat (Ecuador) and the technical secretariat.
3. Measures to be taken by the Regional Meeting as follow-up to the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Plan of Action on Human Settlements.
4. Discussion and agreements on the responsibilities of the countries and agencies providing cooperation and support in the region.
5. Provisional calendar for activities to be conducted by the Regional Meeting in 1996-1997.
6. Consideration of agreements reached at the technical and ministerial stages of the Regional Meeting.
7. Decision as to the date and location of the sixth Regional Meeting of Ministers and High-Level Authorities of the Housing and Urban Development Sector in Latin America and the Caribbean and transfer of the interim secretariat to Jamaica.

6. Opening meeting

The ministerial stage of the fifth Regional Meeting of Ministers and High-Level Authorities of the Housing and Urban Development Sector in Latin America and the Caribbean was opened by the Minister of Environment and Housing of Jamaica, Mr. Easton Douglas, who welcomed the delegations and discussed the future challenges to be met by the Regional Meeting of Ministers and High-Level Authorities of the Housing and Urban Development Sector in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Assistant Secretary for Urban Development and Housing of Ecuador, Mr. Juan Ordóñez, reported on the activities carried out by the interim secretariat since the fourth Regional Meeting. He thanked the Government of Jamaica for its hospitality and wished the new interim secretariat every success.

The representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) said that housing served as an important symbol in any society because it stood for the standard of living necessary to make a full and active form of participation possible. The approach taken to the subject should give priority to the poor, the unemployed and, in particular, women. In recent years, many high-level meetings had examined the subject of living conditions from a number of different angles, including those of education, sustainable development and the dimension of demographic developments.

On behalf of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Director of the ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean thanked the Government of Jamaica and expressed his pleasure about the fact that for the first time the Regional Meeting was being held in a Caribbean country. He went on to underscore the importance of the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Plan of Action that was adopted in Santiago in 1995 and the significance of State and private-sector participation in the effort to upgrade existing housing stocks.

The representative of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) read a statement prepared by the Under-Secretary-General of UNCHS in which he reaffirmed the basic significance of the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Plan of Action presented at the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), whose principles and proposals would surely play a fundamental role in surmounting the serious shortcomings and inequalities that still affected all of the region's societies. Those proposals could be put into effect through national programmes of action. The UNCHS office which had recently opened in Rio de Janeiro would be an increasingly important source of assistance for the countries engaged in such efforts.

The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Jamaica, Mr. Seymour Mullings, welcomed all the participants. Regional meetings of ministers and high-level authorities of the housing and urban development sector in Latin America and the Caribbean had been initiated in 1992 for the purpose of joining forces within the region at the sectoral level in order to pool existing knowledge and experience with respect to human settlements. While previous meetings had helped the countries of the region to prepare for the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), the mission of the present meeting was to focus on the follow-up to the Conference and on the progress being made in implementing the strategies adopted at that forum. To that end, the Governments, the private sector, local authorities and non-governmental organizations needed to coordinate their efforts so as to harmonize their positions, achieve a fuller form of integration in the field of human settlements and afford their peoples a better quality of life. He concluded his statement with an outline of initiatives in that area undertaken in Jamaica.

7. Closing meeting

At the closing meeting, the Interim Secretary and Minister of Environment and Housing of Jamaica, Mr. Easton Douglas, thanked the representatives for their active participation and stressed that the establishment of a standing committee made up of the officers of the meeting and representatives of other countries could serve as a source of substantive support for future action.

The representatives thanked the Interim Secretary and the people of Jamaica for their warm hospitality and effective cooperation in ensuring the success of the fifth Regional Meeting of Ministers and High-Level Authorities of the Housing and Urban Development Sector in Latin America and the Caribbean.

B. SUMMARY OF THE DEBATES

The Minister of Environment and Housing of Jamaica opened the ministerial stage of the meeting. He drew attention to the challenges to be met by the sector in the future, the importance of joint efforts to improve human settlements as part of the global development process and the role in that regard which a forum such as the Regional Meeting could play. All national housing and urban development offices in the region needed to work together to fine-tune their ideas and devise solutions for the problems facing its human settlements. The Regional Plan of Action would provide the framework for efforts to move in the right direction, but the pace of such advances would depend upon the decisions reached by the Governments of the region.

The Assistant Secretary for Urban Development and Housing of Ecuador presented the report of the interim secretariat on the Regional Meeting's activities during the preceding year and highlighted the dedication displayed by the sector in its preparations for Habitat II. He underscored the collaboration that had taken place between the two secretariats during that period and provided an overview of the expected outputs of the tasks that had been undertaken.

The representative of the technical secretariat reviewed the activities and results of the preceding four ministerial meetings (held in Santiago, Chile; Cartagena de Indias; Quito; and again in Santiago) and discussed the ways in which subject priorities had changed. In 1994-1995, a great deal of time had been devoted to the preparations for Habitat II. Those preparations had included the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Meeting Preparatory to the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), held in Santiago, Chile. The efforts made by the countries of the region had permitted the adoption at that preparatory meeting of the Regional Plan of Action which was subsequently presented at Habitat II (Istanbul, June 1996) and which had been the only such plan to be brought to the world conference.

The debates held on 12 and 13 November had been devoted to determining how the proposed subjects tied in with the outputs requested by the participating delegations at the fourth Meeting of Ministers and High-Level Authorities within the context of the Regional Plan of Action. Obviously, the decisions adopted on the present occasion would help to consolidate the utility and continuity of the Regional Meeting of Ministers and High-Level Authorities of the Housing and Urban Development Sector in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The representatives discussed what type of role the Regional Meeting should play in a post-summit environment and in relation to the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Plan of Action on Human Settlements; they also identified which aspects of the priority subjects could best be addressed through regional cooperation.

The participants analysed the question of what sorts of institutional support were required in order for the Regional Meeting to fulfil its role, particularly in terms of the kinds of assistance that could be provided by its technical secretariat and the new Habitat office in Rio de Janeiro.

The representatives were in agreement as to the importance of the Regional Meeting of Ministers and High-Level Authorities as a political rather than an operational body and believed that it could serve as a facilitator and mobilizing force for other forums and institutions in the field. Some participants felt that the Regional Meeting could help to channel resources towards horizontal cooperation and stimulate the exchange of experiences in relevant subject areas. It could also monitor the implementation of the Plan of Action in the countries and take note of their needs in that connection.

There was consensus as to the need to draw up a calendar of activities for the Regional Meeting so that it might address relevant issues in greater depth and do a better job of assigning the tasks to be undertaken.

The representatives then exchanged information regarding the countries' experiences in connection with urban, housing and human settlements policies.

The agreements reached during the ministerial stage are set forth in section C of this report.

At the request of the attending delegations, the representatives of the various organizations then presented an overview of their activities in the field of housing and urban development with a view to facilitating future contacts for purposes of coordination.

The representative of the USAID Regional Office for Housing and Urban Development in South America voiced the agency's keen interest in the Regional Meeting's preservation and development as a body devoted to consultation and the exchange of experiences. The USAID Regional Office lent support in the form of technical assistance, primarily in the following areas: overhauling existing housing systems based on criteria of sustainability; reforming and creating mortgage-backed securities markets as the most suitable means of sustaining funding mechanisms for housing over the long term; providing low-income families with access to housing; furnishing support for the establishment of direct yet diversified demand subsidy systems targeting the poorest strata of the population; promoting the participation of the private sector in the financing of housing through support for governmental policy reforms which would encourage the provision and funding of housing by private agents; and promoting local management. In addition, loan programmes were in place through which credits backed by the United States Government were made available to countries interested in carrying out a comprehensive reform of their housing management and financing systems.

The representative of the Inter-American Housing Union (UNIAPRAVI) expressed his gratitude for the host country's hospitality and advised the Governments that UNIAPRAVI was placing the capabilities of the Latin American Centre for Housing Statistics (CELEH) at their service. CELEH would soon begin work on the compilation of a legal manual covering existing projects and laws and the results of their implementation in such fields as housing subsidies, pension funds, mortgage securitization and

residential leasing arrangements. In addition, the Union believed that, thanks to the agreement recently signed with the MBA Mortgage Banking Association, medium-term capital needed for the sector's development would be forthcoming, provided that each country introduced legal reforms designed to furnish a safe environment for national and foreign investors.

The representative of UNCHS-Habitat reported on the activities being carried out in the region in support of local and central governments. The activities of UNCHS revolved around the identification of sectoral priorities in conjunction with national institutions, the formulation of programme initiatives and the mobilization of multilateral, bilateral or national funding for their implementation. Some of the main such pre-projects dealt with urban management, housing strategy formulation, the urban environment, the strengthening of municipal capabilities, resettlement of refugees and construction technology.

The representative of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) said that the success of the Regional Meeting as a regional clearinghouse for information in the field was of great interest to IDB as a possible model for other sectors. He went on to note that the definition of possible follow-up activities to Habitat II was of particular interest to his organization at the present meeting and, along those lines, took advantage of the occasion to invite the Ministers of the region to a symposium on cities in Latin America and the Caribbean which was to be held in Barcelona on 13-15 March 1997 on the occasion of the annual meeting of the IDB Board of Governors. The symposium would focus on the dynamic urban-sector initiatives being undertaken in the region in such areas as municipal and metropolitan governance, social service delivery at the local level, environmental clean-up and management, local economic development, the redevelopment of historic districts and municipal infrastructure finance. Initiatives in all of those areas could gain access to IDB loans.

The representative of the World Bank gave a detailed account of activities in support of countries in the region being carried forward by the Bank in the field of human settlements and housing. She also provided the representatives with information regarding new programmes and ways of achieving more effective forms of interaction.

C. AGREEMENTS

The following agreements were reached during the fifth Regional Meeting of Ministers and High-Level Authorities of the Housing and Urban Development Sector in Latin America and the Caribbean:

1. The representatives agreed that the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Plan of Action on Human Settlements¹ served as a framework and that its implementation was primarily the responsibility of the countries.
2. It was agreed that the Regional Meeting of Ministers and High-Level Authorities of the Housing and Urban Development Sector in Latin America and the Caribbean should act as a facilitator to help the

¹ ECLAC, Latin American and Caribbean Regional Plan of Action on Human Settlements (LC/G.1912), Santiago, Chile, 1996.

countries with those tasks. To that end, an effort would be made to mobilize resources for horizontal cooperation, to take an inventory of advances made by the countries and to promote an exchange of information on the countries' experiences in connection with high-priority subjects.

3. It was recommended that the national committees or groups formed in the course of the preparations for Habitat II should be reactivated or maintained, or that groups of that nature should be created in those cases where they did not already exist, for the purpose of implementing and monitoring the countries' national plans of action with a view to promoting the introduction of urban and housing policies.

4. The representatives agreed to authorize the interim secretariat to contact all organizations pursuing activities in fields related to housing, urban development and human settlements for the purpose of exploring opportunities for cooperation.

5. The representatives welcomed the proposal put forward by the Interim Secretary to establish an executive committee composed of the officers of the fifth Regional Meeting (representatives of Jamaica, Guatemala, Bolivia and Argentina) and representatives of other countries (Chile, Colombia) to assist it in its work.

6. The representatives unanimously agreed to accept the invitation extended by the Government of Costa Rica to host the sixth Regional Meeting in San Jose, Costa Rica, in November 1997.

7. Provisional approval was given for the topics recommended by the participants in the technical stage of the fifth Regional Meeting of Ministers and High-Level Authorities of the Housing and Urban Development Sector in Latin America and the Caribbean.

II. TECHNICAL STAGE

A. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

1. Background

During the fourth Regional Meeting of Ministers and High-Level Authorities of the Housing and Urban Development Sector in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Santiago, Chile, on 16 and 17 November 1995, it had been unanimously agreed to accept the offer extended by Easton Douglas, Minister of Environment and Housing of Jamaica, to host the fifth Regional Meeting in Jamaica in November 1996.

2. Place and date of the meeting

The technical stage of the fifth Regional Meeting of Ministers and High-Level Authorities of the Housing and Urban Development Sector in Latin America and the Caribbean was held on 12 and 13 November 1996 at The Conference Center in Kingston, Jamaica.

3. Attendance

The meeting was attended by representatives of the following countries: Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay and Venezuela.

The following associate members of the Commission were represented as the meeting: Anguilla, Aruba, British Virgin Islands and Montserrat.

A representative of the Turks and Caicos Islands attended in an observer status.

The United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS-Habitat) was represented in its capacity as a United Nations body and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) as a government agency.

The following non-governmental organizations were represented: Foundation for Education, the Environment, Development and Health (FEMADS) and the Habitat International Coalition (HIC), which holds consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

4. Agenda

The work of the meeting was carried out on the basis of the following agenda:

1. Adoption of the agenda.
2. Presentation on issues relating to policy planning and instruments raised by Latin American and Caribbean Governments at the fourth Regional Meeting of Ministers and High-Level Authorities of the Housing and Urban Development Sector in Latin America and the Caribbean as subjects to be considered following the conclusion of Habitat II.
3. Discussion of the world and regional plans of action and their follow-up. Deliberation and agreements on the working topics proposed for the forthcoming inter-sessional period and agreements on the outputs to be produced by the Regional Meeting during that period (1996-1997).
4. Detailed definition of the Regional Meeting tools and outputs proposed by the commissions for 1996-1997 and assignment of responsibilities to be discharged either individually or jointly by the countries, cooperating agencies and the technical secretariat.
5. Discussion and proposals regarding financial or in-kind resources for generating outputs, achieving expected results and meeting estimated deadlines.
6. Presentations by local authorities, representatives of the private sector and non-governmental organizations.

5. Opening meeting

The technical stage of the fifth Regional Meeting of Ministers and High-Level Authorities of the Housing and Urban Development Sector in Latin America and the Caribbean was opened by the Minister of Environment and Housing of Jamaica, Mr. Easton Douglas, who provided the attending representatives with a brief overview of the Regional Meeting's activities and expectations.

He said that the meeting provided a further opportunity to focus on issues of fundamental importance to the region. It would also enable the participants to take another step towards achieving the objectives of the present forum, which had been created in Chile in 1992, and would increase the region's ability to make use of its collective knowledge and experience to upgrade the quality of life in its human settlements and to tackle the problem of indigence and poverty.

It was necessary to devise an imaginative approach in order to come to grips with such issues as tax policy, technical assistance and the improvement of international cooperation mechanisms. Reaching that goal would require research, planning, implementation and management of the region's cities and human settlements based on a systemic approach that coordinated their social, economic and environmental dimensions as a prerequisite for the achievement of a sustainable form of urban development. In closing, he expressed his hope that the technical stage of the meeting would be a successful and productive one.

Mr. Fabio Giraldo, Deputy Minister of Housing, Urban Development and Drinking Water of Colombia, speaking on behalf of the interim secretariat (Ecuador), gave a presentation on the issues relating to the subject of policy planning and instruments which had been proposed and approved at the fourth Regional Meeting as topics of discussion at the fifth Regional Meeting. He then requested that the participants propose an agenda for the follow-up to the regional and world plans of action adopted at Habitat II.

In representation of UNCHS-Habitat, Mr. Roberto Ottolenghi spoke about the Habitat Agenda and the process that led up to Habitat II. He then focused on the main areas in which progress had been made towards achieving the objectives set forth in the Agenda. Those advances reflected the thorough-going changes in trends and perceptions that had taken place since the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements in Vancouver in 1976. In concluding his statement, he underscored the explicit call that was made for a broad partnership among the Governments and all actors in civil society and discussed its implications for future action aimed at implementing the Habitat Agenda.

The technical secretariat of the Regional Meeting presented an overview of the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Plan of Action on Human Settlements, which had been approved by 32 member countries of ECLAC in November 1995. Detailed information on the five priority subject areas covered by the Plan was presented, as were a number of suggestions for the follow-up on both the Regional Plan and the World Plan of Action.

B. SUMMARY OF THE DEBATES DURING THE TECHNICAL STAGE

During the general discussion, it was emphasized that at both the macroeconomic and global management levels, urban and housing policies needed to be taken into account. One representative spoke of the need for a link between economic planning and urban planning. A number of representatives stressed the fact that poverty was the pivotal element in human settlements issues. The need for technical support for the meetings was also pointed out.

One of the proposals made regarding regional cooperation mechanisms called for the establishment of a technical committee that would evaluate the countries' experiences and then make those assessments available to interested Governments as a means, in particular, of assisting them to implement policies for providing low-income sectors with greater access to housing.

The meeting welcomed the suggestion made by a number of representatives to focus on priority issues within the framework of the Regional Plan of Action. It was also decided that the representatives would work together in addressing those topics and the most appropriate mechanisms for implementing the corresponding measures in each of those areas. The participants analysed the five subject areas covered by the Plan and selected those aspects that they felt were of the highest priority and offered the greatest opportunities for regional cooperation.

A number of representatives agreed that the recommendations contained in the Regional Plan of Action needed to be supplemented with guidelines regarding the issue of rural poverty and that a clearer focus was called for in that regard. They also highlighted the specificity of the problems faced by island States.

Information was exchanged regarding the countries' experiences in the areas of finance, social participation and public-private linkages. The discussion also dealt with such topics as fund raising, targeting, direct subsidies, tax reduction, employers' contributions, the availability of below-cost housing stocks, tax concessions and co-mortgage systems.

Experiences relating to land subsidies, own-home construction and land rates were also examined. On the subject of credit systems, various representatives reported on projects undertaken in their countries. One such initiative involved taxing workers as a means of encouraging saving. It was suggested that a compendium of existing financial mechanisms should be compiled.

On the subject of the establishment and reinforcement of statistical systems and indicators, the representative of UNCHS spoke about the importance of capitalizing upon existing United Nations resources and expertise in the region to assist the Regional Meeting in its activities. He stressed the inherent complementarity of the ECLAC and UNCHS mandates and offered his organization's support for initiatives of interest to the Regional Meeting in relation to indicators, follow-up to national plans of action, transnational cooperation and other areas of endeavour.

A number of representatives underlined the importance of having reliable information systems for rural areas and small human settlements, particularly those in island countries.

The participants assigned a high priority to the intensification of technical cooperation among the countries. They engaged in a detailed discussion of the Ibero-American Programme for the Transfer of Expertise and Experiences in Urban and Housing Development (the TRAMUH Programme), which served as an effective mechanism for promoting the dissemination of successful experiences and for strengthening horizontal cooperation.

During the consideration of agenda item 6, the representatives of HIC and USAID reported on the activities being carried out by their organizations in the field of human settlements.

In connection with the same agenda item, the representative of Jamaica gave an extensive presentation on his country's experiences in relation with local authorities, the private sector and NGOs. The presentation covered such subjects as the formulation of a consultative approach to settlement development, the role of NGOs in the field of housing, the stock of low-cost housing, shelter finance in Jamaica, the development of local government in the country, and the experiences of the Jamaica Developers Association.

On the second day of the technical stage, an open-ended drafting committee was convened. The results of its work appear in section C of this report. In addition to the proposed agreements, the drafting committee considered the following initiatives:

1. A technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC) project entitled "Inter-American Housing Technology Network (HABITEC)". The objective of the project, which was proposed during the fourth Regional Meeting, was to permit an exchange of technological information among the countries of the region via an Internet-supported network to be operated by Peru and Argentina (corresponds to recommendation "b" of area III.3).

2. A regional TCDC project on training in urban environmental management in Latin America and the Caribbean (PROLAC), which had been proposed at the ministerial level of the Regional Meeting as

a means of fostering a public awareness and training local government officials in subjects related to the urban environment (corresponds to recommendation "a" of area III.3).

3. A proposal submitted by the University of Chile to offer a course on human settlements in the region (corresponds to recommendation "b" of area III.5).

C. AGREEMENTS REACHED AT THE TECHNICAL STAGE

1. Agreements relating to the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Plan of Action on Human Settlements

During the technical stage of the fifth Regional Meeting of Ministers and High-Level Authorities of the Housing and Urban Development Sector in Latin America and the Caribbean, the participants undertook a detailed examination of the five subject areas² covered by the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Plan of Action on Human Settlements for the purpose of selecting priority activities and topics that could be addressed through regional cooperation. On that basis, the representatives agreed to submit the following recommendations regarding planning and policies for forthcoming inter-sessional periods to the ministers and high-level authorities for their consideration:

Thematic area III.1 Achieving social equity and alleviating urban poverty

It is recommended that priority should be assigned to the following areas:

- a) Linking housing and human settlements policies to social and economic development strategies;
- b) Mobilizing financial resources through the use of (supply or demand) subsidies, saving mechanisms (applying to money or property) and short- and long-term credit and investment;
- c) Increasing the production, upgrading and conservation of housing units; and
- d) Making effective use of social participation mechanisms in housing and urban development programmes.

Proposed action:

Design procedures, collect information and process results with a view to identifying existing best practices. For that purpose, it is recommended that teams composed of technical personnel from member States be set up in coordination with the technical secretariat (ECLAC)³ and UNCHS.

² ECLAC, Latin American and Caribbean..., op. cit., chapter 3.

³ Subject to the availability of funding.

Thematic area III.2

The productivity of human settlements for improving the quality of life

It is recommended that priority should be assigned to the following areas:

a) Making use of the possibilities offered by complementarity and specialization to raise the productivity and competitiveness of cities; to this end, procedures will need to be established for the purpose of analysing and assessing their advantages, disadvantages and the impact thereof.

Proposed action:

Organization of a specialized workshop.

b) Strengthening the integration of land and urban management in order to boost the efficiency of land use, improve urban concentration patterns, avert inequalities within the countries, enhance employment and income-earning opportunities within the territory in question and promote the appropriate siting of urban centres and the associated economic activities on an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable basis.

Proposed action:

Design procedures, collect information and process results with a view to identifying existing best practices. To this end, initiatives in the field of integrated land management in Latin America and the Caribbean should be examined and evaluated. A methodology similar to that proposed in connection with thematic area III.1 is recommended for the analysis of the above-mentioned initiatives.

Thematic area III.3

Improving the environment in human settlements

It is recommended that priority should be assigned to the following areas:

a) Creating appropriate and primarily training- and information-based mechanisms to ensure full, effective participation on the part of the community and local authorities in dealing with issues related to the urban environment.

Proposed action:

To move forward in this area while at the same time helping to generate public awareness in this regard and upgrade government expertise, regional training programmes should be designed and implemented in a representative cross-section of cities in order to generate feedback to facilitate their subsequent implementation in other cities of the region by means of inter-city horizontal cooperation.

b) Adapting construction, housing and urban development designs and technologies to climatic, geophysical, economic and cultural conditions in the region to meet its housing needs in ways that are sustainable, environmentally sound and accessible to low-income groups.

Proposed action:

In view of the close relationship between this topic and the issue of information access, in order to move forward in this area it is recommended that the countries should compile, compare and evaluate the various options and design appropriate procedures to facilitate access to the available information using a regional network supported by Internet links. A methodology similar to that proposed in connection with thematic area III.1 is recommended for this purpose.

Thematic area III.4

Governability and participationIt is recommended that priority should be assigned to the following areas:

a) Promoting and backstopping mechanisms of coordination for metropolitan areas, medium-sized and small cities, and towns and villages in urgent need of attention due to their rapid growth rate.

Proposed action:

Procedures should be designed for determining similarities and setting up classification systems as a basis for the subsequent identification of positive experiences. Information on these experiences can then be exchanged within the region and subsequently used as inputs for a cooperation scheme. It is recommended that a methodology similar to that proposed in connection with thematic area III.1 should be employed for this purpose in conjunction with the utilization of inputs from the cities themselves and of procedures already in use in medium-sized cities of the region.

b) Setting up communications channels to provide accurate, timely information on human settlements management so that people may make use of available programmes to meet their actual needs.

c) Promoting partnership arrangements among the public and private sectors, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations in relation to the planning and decision-making, financing, management and maintenance of human settlements facilities and infrastructure.

Proposed action:

A broad-ranging debate needs to be undertaken in order to determine which practices should be recommended. Nonetheless, given the vast experience accumulated in recent years by a large number of countries, it is suggested that TCDC mechanisms should be employed to make use of successful practices as a tool for achieving the implicit objectives in both subject areas.

Thematic area III.5

Policy and management efficiency

It is recommended that priority should be assigned to the following areas:

a) Promoting forums for regional debate and coordination in the areas of population and human settlements, populations shifts between countries and cities and spatial integration in the region within the framework of existing regional and subregional integration mechanisms.⁴

Proposed action:

Organization of a short seminar or workshop under the auspices of the Regional Meeting to be held in 1997 for the purpose of formulating and presenting specific recommendations to the countries and the sixth Regional Meeting.

b) Developing appropriate skills in human settlement planning, construction and maintenance and in investment assessment and management.

Proposed action:

The authorities in this sector have asked local academic centres to design and offer training courses for government officials with the support of other renowned organizations in the field.

c) Developing housing and human settlements indicators with a view to optimizing urban management and planning, benefit allocation and evaluation in this field.⁵

Proposed action

Efforts to move forward in this area could draw upon the regional statistics processed by ECLAC. It is recommended that a methodology similar to that proposed in connection with thematic area III.1 should be used for this purpose.

d) Intensifying "technical cooperation among countries of the region in order to exchange experiences, particularly on best practices, foster the development of technology and technical skills and increase the efficacy of urban and housing policies and management, with the backing of coordinated and complementary support from multilateral and bilateral arrangements."⁶

Proposed action:

Negotiate and implement these TCDC proposals with the support of ECLAC and UNCHS-Habitat. A number of the technical proposals of this type which have been submitted by business firms have

⁴ This proposal mirrors recommendation III.5.i of the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Plan of Action..., op. cit., p. 23.

⁵ This proposal restates recommendation III.5.viii of the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Plan of Action..., op. cit., p. 24.

⁶ Recommendation III.5.ix, Latin American and Caribbean Regional Plan of Action..., op. cit., p. 24.

already been selected as a means of backstopping some of the above-mentioned action proposals. Any new proposals to be presented could be submitted to other specialized agencies for their consideration.

e) Promoting the exchange of information on successful regional and national initiatives in the field of urban management.

Proposed action:

To move forward in this area, steps will have to be taken to carry the debate to a deeper level in order to identify which practices should be recommended. Nonetheless, in view of the great wealth of experience accumulated by a large number of countries in recent years, it is recommended that TCDC mechanisms be utilized for its exchange and dissemination.

f) Formulating or updating regulations governing human settlements in the region, delineating or adapting public policies on urban development and housing, and creating or reorganizing government agencies to implement legislation and promote the participation of society.

Proposed action:

Design procedures for compiling the relevant information so as to facilitate the member countries' access thereto.

2. Other agreements adopted during the technical stage of the Regional Meeting

1. The participants recommended that decisions should be adopted on the financing and means of publishing the studies, publications and reports prepared by the Regional Meeting.

2. In view of the recent relocation to Rio de Janeiro of the UNCHS Technical Cooperation Unit for Latin American and the Caribbean (Unit IV), it was recommended that ECLAC, as the technical secretariat for the Meeting, and UNCHS-Habitat coordinate their efforts, bearing in mind their respective mandates.

3. The technical secretariat (ECLAC) was asked to prepare a calendar of activities specifying the time periods, human resources and funding required to conduct such activities and to outline the responsibilities involved in carrying them out in accordance with the agreements reached at the fifth Regional Meeting of Ministers and High-Level Authorities of the Housing and Urban Development Sector in Latin America and the Caribbean; under those agreements, the above-mentioned calendar was to be forwarded to the interim secretariat before the end of the first quarter of 1997. ECLAC was asked to continue to serve as the technical secretariat for the Regional Meeting, and member Governments were asked to contribute, in accordance with their capabilities, the technical, financial and human resources needed to ensure the effective implementation of the scheduled activities.

Annex

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

I. MINISTERIAL STAGE

A. Member countries

ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

Henderson Simon
Minister of Housing and Urban Renewal

E. Griffith Joseph
Town and Country Planner
Development Control Authority

ARGENTINA

Rogelio Camarasa
Subsecretario de Vivienda

Jorge López Menardi
Secretario de Embajada
Embajada de Argentina en Jamaica

BARBADOS

George Payne
Minister of Public Works, Transport and Housing

Allan Jones
Permanent Secretary
Division of Housing

Dale Marshall
Chairman
National Housing Corporation

Margaret Talma
Chief Housing Planner

BELIZE

Carolyn Trench-Sandiford
Housing and Planning Officer

BOLIVIA

Jorge E. Lorini Sáenz
Presidente
Fondo Nacional de Vivienda Social (FONVIS)

Hernando García Suárez
Director, FONVIS

Luis Alberto Márquez Ostria
Director, FONVIS

CHILE

Edmundo Hermosilla
Ministro de Vivienda y Urbanismo

Ramón Santelices
Asesor del Ministro de Vivienda y Urbanismo

Luis Rodrigo Guzmán-Cáceres
Asesor del Ministro de Vivienda y Urbanismo

COLOMBIA

Fabio Giraldo Isaza
Viceministro de Vivienda, Desarrollo Urbano y Agua Potable

Álvaro Villota Bernal
Director General
Fondo Nacional de Ahorro (FNA)

COSTA RICA

José Conejo
Embajador de Costa Rica en Jamaica

Emilce Balma
Consejero
Embajada de Costa Rica, Jamaica

CUBA

Salvador Gomila González
 Vice Presidente
 Instituto Nacional de la Vivienda

Cirico Cid Sands
 Director de Construcción
 Instituto Nacional de la Vivienda

DOMINICA

Oliver Georges
 Manager
 Housing Division
 Ministry of Communications, Works and Housing

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Joaquín Gerónimo
 Director General
 Instituto Nacional de la Vivienda

Ramón Mena
 Asesor
 Instituto Nacional de la Vivienda

ECUADOR

Juan Ordóñez Cordero
 Subsecretario de Desarrollo Urbano

GRENADA

Crofton Hannibal
 Senior Planning Officer (Ag.)
 Ministry of Finance

GUATEMALA

Ricardo Goubaud
 Viceministro de Vivienda

GUYANA

Henry Jeffrey
 Minister of Labour, Housing, Human Services
 and Social Security

Merna Pitt
Chief Executive Officer
Central Housing and Planning Authority

HAITI

Aviole Telfort
Directeur-General Adjoint
Entreprise Publique Logements Sociaux

JAMAICA

Easton Douglas
Minister of Environment and Housing

Phyllis Mitchell
Parliamentary Secretary
Ministry of Environment and Housing

Leslie Lloyd
Parliamentary Secretary

Thorant Hardware
Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Environment and Housing

Fitzroy Williams
Senior Director of Housing

Paul Buchannan
Coordinator, PRIDE Project

Sonia Jackson
Caribbean Housing Finance Corporation

Minette Mitchell
Director of Physical Planning

Patrick Brown
National Housing Trust

Elizabeth Stair
Commissioner of Lands

Beverline Brown
Physical Planner

Lee Roy Bulgin
Director of Surveys

Andrea Francis
National Housing Trust

Floyd Graham
Director of Technical Services
National Housing Corporation

Kevin Guscott
Executive Assistant to the Honourable Minister

Clive Laidley
Settlement Development Consultant

Richard Lumsden
Managing Director, PDSA

June Lyon
Mortgage Manager
Eagle Permanent Building Society

Pauline McHardy
Planning Consultant

Colin Powell
Town Planning Department, Ministry of Environment and Housing

Gladstone Solomon
Ministry of Local Government and Works

Audrey Thomas
University of Technology, Jamaica

Hope Thompson
Administrative Assistant to the Minister

Michael Vacciana
Chairman
Caribbean Housing Finance Corporation

MEXICO

Jorge Lepe
Subsecretario de Desarrollo Urbano y Vivienda

PARAGUAY

Aníbal Ferreira Menchaca
Presidente del Consejo Nacional de la Vivienda

PERU

William Belevan-McBride
Embajador de Perú en Jamaica

Julio E. Romero
Primer Secretario y Cónsul de Perú
Embajada de Perú en Jamaica

SAINT KITTS AND NEVIS

J.E. Fidel O'Flaherty
Technical Service Manager
National Housing Corporation

Tressetta I. Liburd
Assistant Secretary

SPAIN

Fernando de la Serna Inciarte
Embajador de España en Jamaica

Rodolfo Segura Sanz
Subdirector General de Urbanismo
Ministerio de Fomento

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Satnarine Balkaransingh
Director
Economic Research and Planning
Ministry of Housing and Settlements

VENEZUELA

Miguel Rojas Naranjo
Presidente del Consejo Nacional de la Vivienda (CONAVI)

B. Associate members

ANGUILLA

Orris Proctor
Head of Delegation

ARUBA

Elton L. Lioe-A-Tjam
Director, Ministry of Transport and Communications

Edwin Jacobs
Ministry of Transport and Communications

BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS

Louis Potter
Chief Physical Planning Officer

MONTserrat

Alan Gunne-Jones
Chief Physical Planner
Physical Planning Unit

C. Observers

TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS

Staven Rigby
Ministry of National Resources

Grantley Hinds
Assistant Director of Planning

D. United Nations bodies

United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS-Habitat)

Roberto Ottolenghi
Director, Technical Cooperation Unit for Latin America and the Caribbean, Brazil

James Armstrong
Programme Coordinator, UNCHS-Habitat, Barbados

Faye Lumsdem
Senior Urban Planner/Housing Specialist, UNCHS-Habitat, Barbados

Verónica Maynard
Project Secretary, UNCHS-Habitat, Barbados

Lionel Nurse
Chief Town Planner, UNCHS-Habitat, Barbados

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Joachim von Braunmuhl
Resident Representative, Jamaica

E. Intergovernmental organizations

Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)

Robert Daughters
IDB, Washington

United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

Renán Larrea
Project Development Manager
USAID, Ecuador

Eric Richardson
Housing and Urban Development Officer
USAID, Jamaica

International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank)

Gloria Knight
Expert

F. Non-governmental organizations**Foundation for Education, the Environment, Development and Health (FEMADS)**

Milton Matter, Jr.
Director, FEMADS, USA

Ligia Matter
Subdirector, FEMADS, Ecuador

Habitat International Coalition (HIC)

Ana Elizabeth Basurto Quijada
Mexico

Unión Interamericana para la Vivienda (UNIAPRAVI)

Homero González Barillas
Presidente

G. ECLAC**United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean**

Daniel S. Blanchard
Director, ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean

Miriam Krawczyk
Assistant Secretary of the Commission

Peter Jensen
Senior Officer on Human Settlements Matters
Joint ECLAC/Habitat Unit

Cecilia Guarachi
Conference Officer

II. TECHNICAL STAGE

A. Member countries

ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

E. Griffith Joseph
Town and Country Planner
Development Control Authority

BARBADOS

Allan Jones
Permanent Secretary
Division of Housing

Dale Marshall, Chairman
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Oliver Georges
Manager
Housing Division
Ministry of Communications, Works and Housing

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Project Secretary
UNCHS-Habitat, Barbados

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UNCHS-Habitat, Barbados

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