

# URBAN MILLENNIUM

Special Session of the General Assembly  
for an Overall Review and Appraisal of the  
Implementation of the Habitat Agenda

NEW YORK, 6 - 8 JUNE 2001



## Istanbul + 5: An observer's guide to the negotiations

### Declaration on cities and other human settlements in the new millennium

AT HABITAT II, THE ISTANBUL DECLARATION and the Habitat Agenda adopted by 171 Governments committed them to innovative ways of working to improve the urban environment. Before endorsing either of these documents, Government representatives were careful to assess and analyse the full implications of each commitment. Much of this negotiation was carried out during the preparatory process. Even so, before the documents were unanimously accepted at Habitat II, last minute details were discussed until the early hours of the morning.

At Istanbul + 5, Governments will negotiate and endorse a 'Declaration on cities and other human settlements in the new millennium'. This Declaration as it was drafted during the preparatory process is divided into 4 sections. The first renews commitments to the Habitat Agenda; the second commends progress made in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda; the third recognizes gaps and obstacles to its implementation; and the fourth sets out forward-looking strategies and commitments.

Much of the text of the draft Declaration has been negotiated during the preparatory process. Some elements of it, now found in brackets,

remain to be agreed upon during the Special Session in New York. Some of the more contentious issues that remain to be resolved are:

### Right to adequate shelter

Housing rights was a controversial issue at Habitat II. Strongly supported by members of civil society participating in the conference, the right to housing faced objections from many Governments who were particularly concerned about the legal implications of such a commitment within their national contexts. In view of their concerns, 'the right to adequate shelter' was the formulation that was finally accepted. This language, contained in paragraphs 26, 39 and 61 of the Habitat Agenda, among others, was based on earlier conventions and declarations. Though the Habitat Agenda will not be subject to negotiations at Istanbul + 5, reference to the right to adequate housing in the draft Declaration is still controversial.

### Local self-governance and decentralization

The Habitat Agenda recognizes the importance of decentralization and the delegation of power to local authorities. This was also very controversial at Habitat II. It is expected that some delegations may again object to the inclusion of local self-governance in the final version of the Declaration.



UNITED  
NATIONS



UNCHS  
(HABITAT)



### **Women's right to inherit**

The equal right of women to inherit and own property has been controversial since the negotiations for the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action. Even though the Habitat Agenda recognizes the principle of gender equality, clauses in the draft Declaration about women's security of tenure and their right to own property are still in brackets. This could be a contentious issue during Istanbul + 5.

### **International cooperation**

In common with many UN documents, the draft Declaration calls for developed countries to honour their earlier commitment to target 0.7 per cent of their gross national product for development assistance. This clause is also in brackets.

