



DECLARATION OF THE HAGUE

“STRONG AND PLEASANT PLACES”

Fifth Regional Forum of the Global Parliamentarians on Habitat for the European Continent
in close co-operation with other Habitat stakeholders

The Hague, The Netherlands
12-13 May 2006

PREAMBLE

We, the Global Parliamentarians on Habitat for Europe, held our fifth European Forum in The Hague, the Netherlands on May 12-13 2006 to evaluate 10 years of Habitat Agenda and to look forward to the coming challenges. In doing so, we build further upon previous Global Fora (Istanbul, Turkey in 1996, Cancun, Mexico in 1998, Manila, Philippines in 2000, Berlin, Germany in 2003 and Rabat, Maroc in 2005) and the European Fora (Bonn, Germany 1997, Zagreb, Croatia 1999, Helsinki, Finland 2000 and Berlin, Germany 2003).

We are convinced that a multi-stakeholder approach is needed to implement the Habitat Agenda. Therefore, we invited co-organisers from NGOs and invited NGOs in the field of sustainable urban development to participate in our fifth European Forum.

Our objective, as in the previous Fora, is to streamline our efforts aimed at the (legislative) implementation of the universal objectives of sustainable development, human settlements and adequate housing for all in order to achieve good governance for sustainable cities in a world going through a process of urbanisation. We hereby focus on the implementation of the United Nations Habitat Agenda as adopted in 1996 by 171 countries containing over 100 commitments and 600 recommendations on human settlements issues and the United Nations Millennium Declaration adopted in 2000 adopted by 189 countries with 8 Millennium Development Goals and 18 targets.

As such, we have resolved to adopt the following:

PRINCIPLES

1. Need to put human beings central

Reiterating the purpose of placing human beings at the core of our efforts in order to attain sustainable development, access to adequate housing for all and improved quality

of life and human conditions in an atmosphere of political and social co-responsibility, equality, freedom, peace and respect to diversity and beliefs, with an emphasis on vulnerable groups of society. Gendermainstreaming is central in this process.

2. The urgency of tackling urbanisation

Acknowledging the urgency of the problems of rapid urbanisation and the urbanisation of poverty all over the world. Nowadays over 52% of the world population lives in cities and towns, in 2025 this will increase to over 60%. If urgent action is not taken 1.4 billion will live in slums by 2030. Human settlements and urban poverty issues are not being given the attention they deserve in international development cooperation.

Cities and towns only take 2% of the world surface but they use more than 75% of natural resources and produce over 75% of the waste. Cities and towns not only cause problems, they also provide opportunities: economic productivity and growth, economies of scale in service delivery and opportunities for personal development and emancipation.

3. The role of the United Nations (UN) and UN Habitat

Reaffirming the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and its relation to the topics and commitments derived from the previous Global and European Fora.

Acknowledging the urgent need to implement the commitments of the Habitat Agenda and the Millennium Development Goals.

We call for renewed commitment to implementing the Habitat Agenda in our own countries and internationally. This commitment includes not only improving the lives of hundred million slum dwellers, but providing adequate alternatives to new slum formation.

4. The role of parliamentarians

Expressing that the strengthening and continuous consolidation of the Global Group of Parliamentarians on Habitat has been an efficient and adequate conduit for fostering international cooperation and coordination with other global organisations which share similar and compatible interests to our organisation in favour of human settlements and adequate housing for all.

Conscious of the need for countries to adopt and enforce human settlements related laws such as on physical planning, public health, sanitation and building and access to land and housing which incorporate public participation and best practices that have proven viable in similar conditions.

Reaffirming the conviction that the concept of governance is directly associated with that of sustainable cities and adequate housing for all and that with social participation we can attain greater and better governance.

5. The role of other stakeholders and a multi-stakeholder approach

Recognising the importance of a multi-stakeholder and multi-sector approach and the role of other stakeholders in the field of sustainable urban development. Other stakeholders are among others citizens, NGOs, local governments, grassroots organisations, (social) housing companies, welfare organisations and businesses.

Confirming the complementary role of parliamentarians who adopt and enforce human settlements related laws and non-parliamentarians who are implementing the human settlements related laws in the field of sustainable urban development.

6. The need for an integrated approach

Recognising that Habitat and sustainable urban development need an integrated approach to balance social, physical/ecological and economic aspects, the so called 'City Wide Approach'.

COMMITMENTS

FIRST – We, both parliamentarians and non-parliamentarians are now even more committed to the promotion and dissemination of the Habitat Agenda and the Millennium Development Goals.

SECOND – We, both parliamentarians and non-parliamentarians commit ourselves to use a multi-stakeholder approach and involve various stakeholders during the process of sustainable urban development.

THIRD – We, both parliamentarians and non-parliamentarians commit ourselves to use an integrated approach to balance social, gender, physical/ecological and economic aspects.

FOURTH – We, parliamentarians, commit ourselves to promote the adoption and enforcement of national legislation derived from the Habitat Agenda and the Millennium Development Goals and to intensify communication and support among members of parliament so as to share and exchange experience and knowledge in these areas.

FIFTH – We, non-parliamentarians, commit ourselves as complementary partners to the parliamentarians to implement national legislation derived from the Habitat Agenda and the Millennium Development Goals and monitoring the progress.

SIXTH – We, both parliamentarians and non-parliamentarians commit ourselves to make an extra effort to have all (potential) citizens involved in the process of sustainable urban development.

We commit ourselves to:

- enable the involvement of minority groups to increase their capacities and reduce poverty;
- enable all stakeholders to be involved from the early beginning of programmes and projects on improving their living conditions;
- strengthen the awareness the fact that our world is a global village;
- give a right to all groups in society to organise themselves and establish (inter)national networks to exchange experiences;
- promote the right to consultation with governments at all levels of civil society in cities on issues that affect it.

SEVENTH – We, both parliamentarians and non-parliamentarians commit ourselves to a sustainable development of urban areas with healthy, environmentally friendly and durable houses and housing environments.

We commit ourselves to:

- enable programmes to integrate ecological social and economical developments to realise adequate housing and sustainable human settlements to secure further use of natural resources and enhance the sustainability of cities and their infrastructure;
- promote the creation of an international guarantee fund for housing;
- affirm the right to secure tenure and the need to achieve slum upgrading at levels in excess of MDG7 target 11 in order to address the needs of slum dwellers;
- make an effort to remove legal barriers which prevent a sustainable urban development;
- contribute to the development and transparent implementation of pro-poor land tenure and administration systems.

EIGHTH – We, both parliamentarians and non-parliamentarians commit ourselves to equal chances of emancipation and earning a decent income by establishing basic education for all and conditions to enable citizens to have an income.

We commit ourselves to:

- enable urban entrepreneurship by providing access to education and fair loans;
- put the urban issue (urban economy and urban poor) higher on the political agenda;
- establish platforms to enable international co-operation and exchange of experiences (e.g. Habitat Platform and Netherlands Water Partnership);
- fight corruption to enable a fair urban market economy.

The Hague, the Netherlands

May 13, 2006