

GPH – HABITAT, NAPLES 09/2012

The GPH is a committed partner and participant in all segments of UN-HABITAT, including the World Urban Campaign, in order to help examine, define and resolve the complexity of the issues tackled by this, perhaps the most important project of the UN in general, based on specific experiences of its member states. In today's world nothing can be just a local problem because the consequences of such problems are global. Last year the 7th GPH Global Forum was held in Zadar, Croatia, and, in addition to the regular and electoral conference dimension, it dealt with very specialized topics of global character, such as sustainable development of coastal cities, specific features of urban development in the European part of the Mediterranean, and potential risks for the closed seas. Quite naturally, Croatia's abundance in potable water was discussed on the margins in the context of the world's potable water needs. The conference adopted a declaration whose theses were almost fully aligned with the intentions of the debated manifesto.

However, in relation to the tasks of the HABITAT Secretariat and all associated partners the GPH also has a special and, I would say, crucial role to this project: implementing what has been agreed and adopted at the HABITAT fora into national legislation in order to fulfil aspirations toward a better future for man through sustainable development as a framework for all of our deliberations. I think that it is redundant to repeat all the identified topics of the global problems facing us at such an event, but perhaps it would be appropriate to point out that even those skeptical towards climate change observed in most recent research have seen for themselves that the negative climate change trend is a consequence of the irresponsible behaviour of the human species. In Shanghai in October 2010 we had a debate on sustainable development as a balance of three of its constituent segments: the development component in terms of economic progress, the component of preserving the natural resource on which development is based, and the component of the concurrent recognised growth of the social standard. After all, the three supporting points are a minimum to achieve balance in anything falling within the natural laws of the Earth.

In addition to this, I would like to mention human health as a topic of special concern to HABITAT which was recognized as such at the Paris meeting. Health is not usually identified as a category of spatial planning and architectural design or an issue of sustainable spatial development; however, at the World Congress of neurosurgeons held in Dubrovnik in 2009 the issue of the quality of space we live in was a matter of debate of thirty world most famous neurosurgeons. The Latin quotation “Mens sana in corpore sano” has significantly lost its well-foundedness because the cause and effect relationship

has almost completely changed. Our state of health and our physical ability are increasingly dependent on the state of our spirit that responds to its own environment. It is therefore not irrelevant what kind of circumstances we live in and how and to what extent we are exposed to stress. Spatial planning becomes a key element of our mental hygiene and thus of our attitude towards everything. This in turn leads us to the paradox of development of major cities which, on the one hand, represent better existential chances for many, while generating increasing environmental problems as a key to sustainable development on the other. Solutions are, of course, in an equilibrium, in an interrelation of measures of conflicting survival elements. The key role of the GPH in this regard is to pass required legislation, but its additionally important role is to help the public recognize global problems and change their behaviour with a view to reducing the negative development trend.

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