

The United States pointed out that urbanization was a powerful engine for generating national economic prosperity and increasing access to basic health, education and social services. But they recognized that cities have created a host of new and often ill-understood problems such as adverse impacts on air, land and water resources. They called for bilateral and multilateral donors to establish credible targets for programmes to increase the supply of adequate shelter and related infrastructures. They realized that the nature of the problem was complex and solutions would require changes in long-standing national economic and social policies.

The Philippines pointed out in a particularly strong intervention that there was a need for an integration of socio-economic planning not just looking at physical infrastructure. It was essential that the users of this infrastructure be directly and closely involved in programmes. There was a need to look at population as an asset rather than a liability through programmes of education, capacity building and community mobilization. There was also a need to generate employment near housing. Economic development should go beyond production to the provision of services. For rural areas this meant attracting services to human settlements outside of cities both to ease pressure on migration and to provide alternative means of livelihood for forest dependent communities. They proposed the adoption of innovative mechanisms in city planning with the objective of achieving an equitable share of resources in megacities. These could involve policies through which rich districts could help subsidize poorer sections of the city and thus redistribute resources to meet pressing environmental problems. Finally the Philippines delegation made a special plea for disaster prone cities, those subject to flooding, earthquakes etc.

Chile referred to the Vancouver conference of 1977 and asked why so few of the 60 recommendations of that time had not been implemented. Was the reason lack of political will or lack of resources?

OUTCOMES AND ASSESSMENT

This was the first opportunity that the Prepcom had to address the issue of human settlements and it was clearly a priority issue among many delegations from developing and developed countries alike. The future role of UNCHS was mentioned by a couple of delegations notably the European Community but it was not clear from the discussion what role they might play. The Canadian intervention made reference to the two conferences coming up in Canada on cities (one was taking place as the intervention was given) and it would appear that other mechanisms at the municipal level are being put in place to look at urban human settlements on an international basis.