



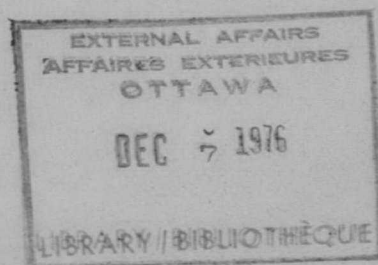
CANADA

COMMUNIQUÉ

No. 114

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Oct. 25, 1976.



NOTES FOR A
STATEMENT BY THE HONOURABLE BARNEY DANSON,
MINISTER OF STATE FOR URBAN AFFAIRS
AND ACTING MINISTER OF DEFENCE,
TO THE SECOND ECONOMIC COMMITTEE OF THE
XXXI SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY,
NEW YORK, OCTOBER 25, 1976

"HABITAT"

DEPARTMENT OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
MINISTÈRE DES AFFAIRES EXTÉRIEURES

Mr. President, Distinguished delegates,

It was a privilege for me as Canada's Minister of State for Urban Affairs to have served as President of the Habitat Conference in Vancouver. I am pleased to be here to participate in the work of this committee. Before I begin the substance of my remarks, however, I would like to pay tribute to Senor Enrique Penalosa and his colleagues, who have been the major support and guiding spirits of Habitat. Their devotion to the improvement of the human condition is well known by those in this chamber. Senor Penalosa's return to his own country marks the end of a distinct and distinguished period in the social development of our world community.

I should also like to express my personal regrets to the family and friends of Duccio Turin who died tragically in an auto accident last July. On behalf of the Canadian Government and the people of Canada I extend our profound sympathy.

Distinguished delegates, before you now rest the resolutions passed by the Habitat-UN Conference on Human Settlements - important resolutions - that commit to paper principles dealing with human settlements. The fact that these resolutions were worked out in my country - Canada - is a source of pride to me and to all Canadians. As you know, we are a country in change. We are a young country in terms of rapid urban growth and are currently struggling to digest the social and economic upheaval that is partner and mate to urbanization.

At the same time we are an ancient land, drawing our roots from native civilizations that settled and prospered in the dim memory of time. Because of the disparity and diversity of races and cultures within the vastness of Canada, the inaccessibility of northern reaches and the adversity of climate, we are often brothers with the third world nations in terms of human settlements.

Habitat has been a stimulating experience for Canadians - stimulating because many of the problems discussed affect us in the broadest sense.

We are, after all, not only producers of technology affecting human settlements but also both beneficiary and victim. Where once the word ecology was known only by academics and where, in times past, the social implications of our common tenancy of this world were of little concern to the vast majority

of its people, we are now awakening to our shared responsibility.

But recognizing a moral obligation and letting our actions be guided by that obligation are elements as different as oil and water. It is my hope that the path identified by Habitat will be followed, that we take those first steps that mark the beginning of this long journey and that we will not falter nor be deterred.

Habitat, because of its focus, has become a crucial element in terms of human settlements and when I speak of human settlements I mean that in the broadest sense.

The fact that the nations of the world should agree to turn their collective attention to the conditions of human settlements is a watershed in the history of our life on this earth. It is my belief that shelter is a collective responsibility: collective in terms of the relationships between government and man, government and government and man and man. No single partner bears the full weight. Each has his own share of responsibility.

As I see it - as I define the delicate partnership between government and the individual - governments, both singly and collectively, must strive to provide the elements that promote adequate shelter. It is our job to create the elements of tenure for the individual - and those elements will differ from nation to nation, from place to place. In some nations this will mean the simple basics of human settlement; first water, a cornerstone of life in any community, and then an adequate system for the disposal of wastes. As simple as those two goals may seem to some individuals and, even to some governments, they are of critical importance to many of us.

It is difficult for citizens of industrialized nations to envision settlements without water supply or sewage disposal systems. It is a thought as foreign to them as the experience of true poverty. If Habitat achieved any single function, I believe that it served to enlighten the world about the true condition of human settlement on this planet.

Habitat was a catalyst for discussion and decision-making on both an international and national level. It followed in the best traditions of this body and dealt with an area of basic concern to every member of this United Nations. Now, however, we are faced with the problem of how best to implement and utilize the benefits of Habitat. It is my earnest wish that the advances we have made should not be left to wither on the vines of indifference.

The nations of the world must individually and collectively develop effective programs to improve the human condition. Like the members of a far flung family we must rally in mutual support, lending each other both the benefits of our individual experiences and the strength that always accompanies the recognition of bonds of the heart.

We can look with satisfaction on the quick response of the regional economic commissions of Europe and Latin America, which have already convened meetings to discuss Habitat follow-up action and have advanced proposals for regional cooperation on human settlement problems. We look forward to similar meetings in the other regions and to other world conferences which will deal with issues raised at Habitat.

The UN World Water Conference to be held in Argentina in March is a prime example. As you know, it will give effective consideration to the problems of potable water. If it can develop an international program ensuring drinkable water in all communities of the world by 1990, it will be an important step in achieving this objective established by governments at Habitat.

There can be no greater goal for mankind than improving the condition of his fellow man and there can be no greater achievement for man than having made a contribution to mankind.

But how best to implement the lessons learned at Habitat?

Shortly, a proposed general resolution on the report of the Habitat Conference will be tabled in this committee. We very much hope that this general resolution will be adopted by member states in the spirit of consensus which we believe is appropriate to a text concerned with human problems of the dimension of those discussed at Habitat. This general resolution has been drafted with such a consensus in mind.

A draft resolution on post-Habitat use of audio-visual material will also be tabled later. As you know, the audio-visual program was a unique and important part of the preparations and proceedings of the Conference. We are indebted to the UN Environment Program for the support it gave to the audio-visual program and indeed for its support for and contribution to the Conference as a whole. At the Conference, all countries agreed that the extensive audio-visual material represented an invaluable resource for education, training and public information

on human settlements, and that steps should be taken to ensure their continued and active use after the Conference. The resolution to be tabled will propose the establishment of a UN audio-visual information centre to serve these purposes.

On the institutional question, as has been the case for previous conferences, the institutional follow-up to Habitat should reasonably be the subject of a separate resolution. There was detailed and thorough discussion at Vancouver on the question of global and regional mechanisms and institutions for human settlements. These discussions yielded a draft resolution which provides in our view an excellent framework for a decision at this session of the General Assembly on the two remaining questions in Section X of the draft, the questions of institutional link and location of the unit. It is important that a decision be taken on these two questions at this session.

The momentum of Habitat must be maintained. It should not be allowed to slow. This resolution provides a way for the UN to respond to these human problems. A decision is also needed to demonstrate to those living in human settlements around the world that we are able and willing to respond quickly and effectively to their needs and concerns. Too often in the past, we have been accused as nations of failing to unite and to respond effectively to urgent needs. In the view of my Government, there is a need now for a strong and representative intergovernmental committee at the global level, served by a small but effective secretariat, and improved intergovernmental and secretariate arrangements at the regional level.

During this session we must demonstrate to those millions of men, women and children whose lives will be dramatically affected by this resolution that we, as a world community, are both able and willing, to respond to their needs, their concerns, their pleas for help. There is nothing lonelier, there is nothing to fire bitterness more or to encourage withdrawal from the common community of man than an ignored call for help. On behalf of those who make this call, I urge you, to act on this resolution and its spirit.

In conclusion, I can only stress once again the importance of the work initiated at Habitat. Human settlements contain not only the problems of the world, often reflected through the magnifying effects of concentrated population, but also the solutions to these problems.

Like a doctor seeking out the causes of disease we must continue to identify the symptoms of human settlement problems in the hope of finding a way to deal with the true cause of our collective maladies. Along the way we will attempt to treat those symptoms, providing temporary relief, but we must never lose sight of our original goal - to cure the illness. The world that we inherited - our sometimes shabby patrimony - is not entirely of our making. It is, however, within our power to change it and change it for the better as a magnificent inheritance for our children and our children's children.

What gift could be greater than an improvement in the condition of their life? Expressions of concern can be acceptable but action, based on that concern, is the only truly admirable course.

We can no longer pretend to be isolated by the islands of self concern. We are a part of every man and every man is truly a part of the main.

Thank you, Mr. President.