

Statement by Ambassador Bagher Asadi, Chairman of the Group of 77 (Islamic Republic of Iran), at the Second Committee on agenda item 102: Implementation of the Habitat Agenda and outcome of the Special Session of the General Assembly

New York, 20 November 2001

Mr. Chairman,

Speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, let me express, first and foremost, our deep appreciation for the Secretary-General's reports on this agenda item. I should also take the opportunity to register our appreciation to Mrs. Anna K. Tibaijuka, distinguished Executive Director of UNCHS (Habitat) for the introduction of the report of the Secretary-General on options for reviewing and strengthening the mandate and status of the Commission on Human Settlements and the status, role and function of UNCHS. It was also a pleasure for us to hear her briefing on this issue yesterday.

Mr. Chairman,

Last Friday the 25th Annual Meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Group of 77 adopted its Ministerial Declaration, in which it noted, inter alia, the result of the twenty-fifth Special Session of the General Assembly for an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the Habitat Agenda. Our Ministers reaffirmed the importance attached by the international community to the Habitat Agenda, the Istanbul Declaration and Declaration on Cities and Other Human Settlements in the New Millennium, and reiterated the urgency of accelerating the implementation of the provisions of these three instruments.

By the same token, we would like to welcome the efforts to achieve the two most important objectives of the Habitat Agenda: "adequate shelter for all" and "sustainable human settlements development in an urbanizing world". We call for more vigorous action in order to overcome challenges, particularly with regard to the following objectives: wider and more effective involvement of Habitat partners in the implementation of the Habitat work programmes, especially the private and public sectors; better co-ordination between the UNCHS and other relevant UN Agencies; active strategy for financial resource mobilization; greater mobility of the Center to promote more dynamic co-operation, both regional and international; and greater linkages between the normative and operational work of Habitat, leading to pilot projects as necessary.

As everybody remembers, very extensive as well as intensive negotiations went into the preparatory process of the Special Session and the Session itself towards achieving consensus on the final outcome - the Declaration on Cities and other Human Settlements in the New Millennium. This Declaration constitutes an important proclamation by Member States on how to design and improve strategies to achieve the goals of adequate shelter for all and sustainable development of human settlements. To this end, the Group of 77 and China emphasizes that the Commission on Human Settlements and its Secretariat, as the United Nations focal point for the implementation of the Habitat Agenda, have a central role in assisting Member States in monitoring and accelerating, within the United Nations System, the implementation of the Habitat Agenda and the outcome of the twenty-fifth Special Session. Let me add right here that we welcome the establishment of the ACPR and hope it will help the Habitat in its work.

Mr. Chairman,

Now I turn to the report on strengthening the Commission on Human Settlements and Habitat. From our point of view, three major issues are involved; namely, options for the strengthening the mandate and status of the Commission on Human Settlement, option for strengthening the role and function of the United

Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), and the need for Habitat to participate actively in the work of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination which deserve particular attention. These are very important issues and have far-reaching implications.

Among these three issues, I would merely say a brief word the on the latter. As we all know, a resolution was adopted in this regard in the substantive session of ECOSOC back in July. We are of the view that Habitat as the focal point for Human Settlements issues and implementation of the Habitat Agenda is responsible for ensuring the realization of the twin goals of the Agenda: Adequate shelter for all and sustainable human settlements development in an urbanizing world. Moreover, the goals identified in the Millennium Declaration related to Habitat Agenda are also known to all of us. It is from this perspective that we consider the Habitat participation in the work of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination necessary for assisting it in reaching policy coherence and improved coordination of system-wide activities towards achieving the above goals.

Mr. Chairman,

Apart from this brief general comment, I should say, in all frankness, that we are not happy at all to have received the report of the Secretary-General yesterday, only in the form of the approved unedited version, and then only at the briefing held by Mrs. Tibaijuka. I doubt the importance the Group of 77 attaches to this issue as a matter of principle and priority needs to be over-emphasized. We support, unequivocally, the strengthening of the mandate and status of the Commission as well as the Habitat. All colleagues here remember fully well the active engagement of the Group back in June in the negotiations related to paragraph 67 of the Declaration. The report of the Secretary-General before us finds its raison d'être in the adoption of that provision.

It should be made clear, however, that a few working hours last night simply does not suffice for the Group membership, diverse and numerous as we are, to have arrived at a fully considered view. Not even a more detailed statement could be prepared in such a short notice. That is exactly why our members need more time to study and analyze the report, seek instruction from Capitals and engage in internal coordination efforts towards developing a common position. Given the proposed options and their implications for the developing countries, and in particular, where financing for their participation is concerned, more time is needed for sober analysis and consideration. I believe the consolidated positions of the Group of 77 and China will be reflected in the text of the draft resolution(s) we are now in the process of preparing for submission to the Second Committee.

Having said this, Mr. Chairman, I close this brief statement with a specific request. In light of the situation I just outlined, in our view, the deadline for the submission of draft resolutions on this item needs to be extended.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.