



*American Model United Nations*

**Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific**

**Report to the Economic and Social  
Council on Poverty and Development:  
Housing for the Urban Poor**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific presents the report on the topic of Housing for the Urban Poor and is satisfied with the approval of the report with a few exceptions. First and foremost, the commission asserts that this topic is primarily a humanitarian issue which needs to be addressed without discrimination. The working papers that have been submitted reflect this, and the fact that the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) feels strongly for this topic and believes in multiple solutions to solve the problem of housing the urban poor.

The first chapter includes the agreements and concerns expressed by the body on similar issues and methods of implementation regarding the needs of poor persons. The commission agreed upon the attainment of the self-sustainability of the nations seeking support and aid.

The second chapter includes the stance of each Member State, as well as the working papers that have been submitted to the commission for approval. The working papers address the importance of eradicating poverty and improving the lives of slum dwellers, as outlined in the Millennium Development Goals. The working papers also includes the need for international cooperation, especially between developed and developing nations.

The third chapter states that this report was adopted by consensus.

This commission thanks the Economic and Social Council for considering this report, as well as the Member States for submitting their input.

## **CHAPTER I**

### **Matters calling for action by the Economic and Social Council or brought to its attention**

#### **A. Consensus for suggested actions**

The body agreed on the general need for the provision of basic services for the poor within the urban environment. These services should be provided without discrimination based on ethnicity, gender, race, and religion.

Representatives agreed that all aid should have the eventual goal of self-sustainability for the recipients. Several methods were proposed including, but not limited to: microfinance, the use of the Asian Development Bank, and bilateral and multilateral agreements. In all cases, representatives agreed that there should be a level of local control over urban housing.

Representatives also expressed a concern for areas affected by severe climate issues and frequent natural disasters which disproportionately affect the poor.

The body recommends review of the attached resolutions. At this point, the committee recognizes that this is an ongoing process and encourages any improvements or additions in the report.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **Consideration of Poverty and Development: Housing for the Urban Poor**

At its 18th meeting, from 17-20 November 2007, the Commission considered agenda item I, Poverty and Development: Housing for the Urban Poor.

A brief outline of the Commission's deliberations follow. At this time, the Commission is unable to make a full recommendation to the Economic and Social Council; however, two working papers are included for consideration.

#### **A. Deliberations**

The representative from Iran emphasized the importance of local authorities and services such as education and health services. Iran also supported the activities of cooperatives and public and private companies in housing construction.

The representative from Georgia emphasized the use of appropriate materials and structure that can withstand local calamities and the cost-efficiency of housing. Georgia also supported the provision of land sharing and community mortgages in housing.

The representative from the United States of America called for sustainable economic development and research to ultimately solve the problem of poverty through free market forces and encouraged local financing at the microfinance level and improvements to public infrastructure and sanitation.

The representative from the United Kingdom supported both bilateral and multilateral aid to countries in need of housing assistance for impoverished people.

The representative from The People's Republic of China reemphasized the Millennium Development Goals; encouraged localized control of renovation and creation of housing; and acknowledgment of the role of Non-Governmental Organizations. China believed that individual countries have the primary responsibility for their domestic social development.

The representative from Uzbekistan noted the successes of the Asian Development Bank and the development of the private sector in rural communities.

The representative from Armenia supported programs expanding new technologies and industries for long-term economic growth, particularly in the former Soviet bloc.

The representative from the Russian Federation believed that high poverty rates have been caused by the switch from communist to market economies and believed that countries should look to the United Nations for aid.

The representative from Singapore believed that in addressing these issues, methods such as sharing information expertise via information technology and advisory agreements,

transitioning from rental to home ownership, and good governance are important for alleviating urban housing issues.

The representative from Japan affirmed the benefits of technological innovation, which should be shared broadly among all nations. Japan requested a halt to forced eviction and destruction of slums and shantytowns and noted a need for low-cost shelter, public housing and upgrading slums.

The representative from Nepal encouraged the development of rural areas through the provision of a decent level of living, including basic services such as water, electricity, social security, and low-cost housing. Nepal supported continued funds to ensure the success of policies whose purpose is to reduce poverty in urban housing.

The representatives from the Republic of Turkey believed in the inclusion of microfinance programs and affordable housing as crucial means to address the issue of urban housing.

The representative from New Zealand encouraged broad participation in economic growth including openness of trade and investment, encouraged universal access to health and education, and promoted gender equality in rural and urban areas.

The representative from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is of the position that lower cost of materials are secondary only to the recognition of the honored worker as the ultimate solution to housing for the urban poor.

The representative from Malaysia believed that unity is of great importance to public housing. Malaysia recognized that the higher cost of living found in urban areas is detrimental to the poor. Malaysia supported policies which raise income levels at faster rates than the cost of living.

The representative from France encouraged cooperation among nations and believed that housing is an important part of forming any civil society and aid for this issue will help countries establish political and economic independence. France also saw stable and predictable aid as crucial to solving this issue.

The representative from French Polynesia believed in the importance of a United Nations initiated program centered around research and housing that will be specific to every country within Asia and the Pacific. French Polynesia noted the French Polynesian Subsidized Housing Program as a model that is cost effective, indestructible and efficiently built.

The representative from Azerbaijan reinforced belief in housing built for communities in tsunami-threatened areas, adequate funding for individual projects, and sustainable housing leading to better health care and an improved economy.

The representative from Macao reiterated the need to help the urban poor find adequate

housing and encouraged all aid to have the ultimate goal of self-sustainability in the receiving countries.

The representative from Kazakhstan believed in the importance of helping small to mid-size businesses prosper and encouraging education to benefit the States' individual needs.

The representative from Philippines noted continuing Asian and Pacific efforts and programs such as those of Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and UN-HABITAT and emphasized a necessity to provide assistance in relocating poor urban residents from unsafe areas.

The representative from Mongolia called for bilateral and multilateral aid to rural and urban areas and called attention to the issue of mining, agriculture, and slums.

The representative from Palau believed that the issues to be addressed include slums and squatters and the need for a master development plan for the allocation of housing in harmony with the environment. Palau requested financial aid for sustainable housing projects and technical expertise on the development of a master plan.

The representative from Pakistan encouraged funding for post-natural disaster urban housing construction in order to aid countries which suffer urban damage in natural disasters.

The representative from Thailand believed it is crucial to address this issue in a holistic manner, not only for securing the physical needs of the poor, but also the emotional and spiritual needs. Thailand noted its successful urban development program in the Baan Mankong Program which is a collaboration between central government, local government, NGOs, professional universities and the people.

The representative from Afghanistan believed that there should be immediate initiatives to have a short term solution of the problem of housing, possibly by microfinance programs. Furthermore, Afghanistan believed a long term solution can be attained with the participation of Official Development Assistance such as the Asian Development Bank in developing organized urban housing.

The representative from Myanmar held sustainable economic growth to be paramount to any implementation programs for the issue of housing for the urban poor.

The representative from India reminded all delegates that when deciding on natural resources for the purpose of building infrastructure that nations keep in mind the ecological repercussions of increased consumption of land and natural resources in the face of global warming.

The representative from Turkmenistan noted its own success in urbanization and believed that its model can serve as an example to the many states with a growing population of urban poor.

## **B. Working Papers suggested for consideration**

### **Working paper I**

*The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific*

*Reaffirming* the initiative of the UN-HABITAT in its mandate of sustainable settlements,

*Recognizing* the fact that Asia and the Pacific are expected to gain over 1.3 billion urban residents in the next 30 years,

*Recalling* the Millennium Development Goal of achieving significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by the year 2020,

*Deeply concerned* by the fact that 2.66 billion people, more than half the world's urban population, reside in Asia and the Pacific,

*Bearing in mind* General Assembly Resolution A/RES/61/213-Implementation of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty,

*Recognizing* the devastating effects of war and natural disasters and the need for effective rehabilitation and reconstruction,

*Taking into consideration* the need for preservation of natural resources and agricultural lands,

*Emphasizing* General Assembly Resolution A/RES/61/214-Role of micro credit and microfinance in the eradication of poverty,

1. *Urges* local government officials, community based organizations and civil society organizations including local government training and research institutes to take action to help the urban poor;

2. *Endorses* the continued use of micro-finance programs as an effective short-term method for small scale lending such as;

- (a) Indian Alliance of Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child;
- (b) Cities Alliance of the Shelter Finance for the Poor Initiative;
- (c) National Slum Dwellers Federation;

3. *Welcomes* non-governmental organizations and humanitarian groups in the education and continued support provided to rural areas to increase the availability of basic human needs in these rural areas such as;

- (a) Local availability and affordability of hand pump irrigation systems;

4. *Emphasizes* the importance of housing affordability through the availability of



income opportunity and through the sustainable selection of low cost housing materials;

5. *Emphasizes* the need for social housing for low income groups and the implementation of rental housing;

6. *Supports* the activities of cooperatives, public and private companies in housing construction activities;

7. *Strengthens* the management capacities of local authorities;

8. *Draws* attention to the fact that poor sanitation and overcrowding in urban areas leads to disease and contributes to infant mortality;

9. *Endorses* pollution control in cities for urban cleanliness;

10. *Requests* the prevention of conversion of agricultural lands to other uses;

11. *Recommends* the construction of mass housing for the urban poor which will withstand natural hazards;

12. *Calls for* further attention to socially vulnerable groups such as youth and women in developing countries in the areas of employment opportunities and technical education and vocational training;

13. *Affirms* implementation of the right to decent, sustainable housing for the urban poor without discrimination;

14. *Urges* the end of forced evictions and the destruction of popular neighborhoods and shantytowns;

15. *Invites* countries in the Asia-Pacific region to further assistance on technology and finance on the issue of rehabilitation of natural disaster regions;

16. *Draws* attention to pavement dwellers continuously living below average living standards and seeks ways to alleviate the situation of such people through the cooperation of governments worldwide.

## **Working paper II**

### *The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific*

*Noting* the first meeting on Pacific urban management held in 2003, where a Pacific Urban Agenda was formulated to review progress of the implementation of and refine priorities for urban management consistent with the mandate of the Pacific plan,

*Further noting* that the Second Pacific Regional Workshop on Urban Management conducted by the Pacific urban management practitioners and experts found that financing for low cost housing and secure tenure for urban residents would help improve the current state of the urban poor,

*Expecting* the consensus reached in Mauritius Strategy, the key United Nations framework for making progress in achieving sustainable development in region of Asia and Pacific region,

*Affirming* that benefits conferred by rapid globalization and technological revolution should be shared broadly among all people,

*Noting* with deep concern that ownership and tenure of land affected urbanization in most Asia-Pacific countries,

*Noting* also that broadening inequality in wealth is a concern in many countries,

*Believing* that urban poverty can be improved through better access to land, housing, water, sanitation, health and education inter alia the access to productive work and adequate income by examining the current situation of the labor market and proposing innovative solutions,

*Further believing* that well-managed migration is mutually beneficial and has great potential for development of destination, transit and origin countries, believing also the rights of migrants should be strongly considered,

*Stressing* that human rights should be enhanced through adequate employment,

1. *Encourages* countries in the Asia-Pacific region to assist other nations in the same region and to provide assistance in the form of experts, technology and finance emphasizing the key issue of rehabilitation of natural disaster-ravaged regions;

2. *Draws attention to* persons who continuously live below standard living conditions and seeks ways to alleviate the situation of such persons through the cooperation of governments worldwide;

3. *Recommends* implementation of the right to decent, sustainable housing for the urban poor without social, ethnic or religious discrimination;

4. *Urges* the end of forced evictions and the destruction of popular neighborhoods and shantytowns;

5. *Recommends* sustainable cities, where key factors are appropriately available such as low income housing, water, sanitation, and waste water management;

6. *Requests* that the multitude of urgent issues in urban areas be addressed:

- (a) Growing need for low-cost shelter and public housing;
- (b) Supplement of slum upgrading;

7. *Urges* that these issues be implemented by programs that reduce the cost of housing construction and increase the participation of governments, communities and private enterprise to improve the living conditions of urban citizens;

8. *Calls for* further attention to socially vulnerable groups such as youth and women in developing countries for the purpose of increasing employment opportunities and providing technical education and vocational training;

9. *Further invites* the programs aiming at improving urban conditions in developing countries to continue better allocating resources, create job opportunities, and aid economic growth through the function of UN agencies, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and related donor countries.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **Adoption of the Report**

On 19 November 2007, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific considered this report and adopted the report by consensus.