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COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND LAND MANAGEMENT

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Item 3 of the provisional agenda

**IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HUMAN SETTLEMENTS SUBPROGRAMME,
2004–2005: REVIEW AND EVALUATION***

Note by the secretariat

1. Prior to 2004–2005 a strategic framework was agreed for the work under the Human Settlements subprogramme during that biennium. The strategic framework included an objective, three “expected accomplishments” and four “indicators of achievement”.
2. At the end of 2005, using the data it had collected for the indicators of achievement, the secretariat wrote accomplishment accounts that evaluate how well the subprogramme’s objectives were met and what could be done better in the future. This document contains the following expected accomplishments: (a) implementation of UNECE policy guidelines and recommendations on reforms in the housing sector, as well as in regard to the aging population and increased awareness of gender perspectives; (b) further development and reforms in land administration; and (c) improved policy formulation and governance for housing and land administration in member countries, including the promotion of a better-defined role for municipalities.
3. The subprogramme delivery was evaluated on the basis of legislative review by intergovernmental bodies, external evaluation by independent experts, and internal evaluation of selected subprogramme elements, as agreed upon prior to the biennium. References to these evaluations are contained in the annex to this note.

* In April 2006 the subprogramme was renamed the Housing and Land Management subprogramme.
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ACCOMPLISHMENT ACCOUNTS

I. Implementation of UNECE policy guidelines and recommendations on reforms in the housing sector, as well as in regard to the aging population and increased awareness of gender perspectives

Performance indicated by: the steps taken to implement the recommendations on reforming the housing sector, including those with a gender dimension.

4. Addressing the concerns of the UNECE member states in the Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA) region and in South-Eastern Europe, the Committee on Human Settlements gave high priority to assisting these countries in the implementation of recommendations developed in the various guidelines on housing and land administration and in the country housing profile studies. To that end, the Committee organized three workshops (round-table discussions) in the reviewed countries, as well as a number of in-depth discussions during the Committee's sessions on the basis of countries' reporting on the implementation of recommendations.

5. These follow-up activities were organized in the period 2004–2005 in Albania, Armenia and the Russian Federation. Participants in the round-tables included the international teams of experts who had prepared the recommendations, representatives of the secretariat, local experts, representatives of national ministries and representatives of national housing institutions and non-governmental organizations. The aims of these discussions were to assess developments in the housing sector during the last two years, evaluate the implementation of the recommendations made by the experts, discuss future strategies for the housing sector and assess the significance of the housing sector for the national economy.

6. The three Governments under review (Albania, Armenia and the Russian Federation) have made substantial progress in a total of nine policy areas. Albania has made progress particularly in social housing, management of the multi-unit housing stock and housing finance; Armenia especially in the development of an overall strategic framework and with regard to housing condominiums and social housing; and the Russian Federation in particular with regard to the national project "Affordable Housing for All" (with special reference to old people and gender issues) and the legal and institutional frameworks.

Lessons learned / areas needing improvement / comments

7. The Committee on Human Settlements recommended the following improvements to the country profile studies:

- To shift from a detailed informative presentation towards analytical assessment and policy recommendations;
- To include chapters on more nationally specific issues;
- To improve the dissemination of the results of the country profiles, in particular their conclusions and recommendations, to all stakeholders, and to hold launch events and ensure publication of each study in the national language.

II. Further development and reforms in land administration

Performance indicated by: the steps taken to implement recommendations on modernization and improvements in land administration systems adopted by countries.

8. In 2005, the Committee published the study *Land Administration in the UNECE Region* (ECE/HBP/140), which takes into account recent developments in land administration in the region and reflects the lessons learned and documented in the land administration reviews undertaken in Armenia, Georgia, Lithuania and the Russian Federation.

9. In recent years Lithuania has made significant progress in developing information technologies and e-government. There is a clear vision at the government level, and the principle of one-stop shopping is gradually being introduced. The real property cadastre and register system is fully based on the cost-recovery principle, which allows income to be generated to improve its products, advance its activities and ensure a better response to customer needs.

10. In Armenia, the successful implementation of the recommendations made in the UNECE Land Administration Review on Armenia and other measures taken by the State Cadastre Committee have led to visible progress in the following areas: (a) The unified cadastre was set up effectively and can serve as a good example for other countries. (b) Good coordination among donors and international assistance agencies has prevented duplication of international efforts and projects. (c) There are a clear vision and understanding of future steps needed and the effective leadership of land administration activities.

11. The institutional structure of state land administration in the Russian Federation was characterized by ambiguous departmental responsibilities, deep conflicts of interests among various agencies and wide dispersion of decision-making authority. As a result, decision-making required numerous inter-agency consultations, which delayed decisions on major economic issues and created confusion among other partners and citizens dealing with the land administration authorities. As a result of the recommendations of the UNECE Land Administration Review, a single agency in charge of all land (real property) administration policy and issues – the Federal Agency for Immovable Property Cadastre – was established within the federal government.

Lessons learned / areas needing improvement / comments

12. The following areas were identified as needing action: (a) Attention should be given to developing a uniform public register. (b) National strategies on land consolidation should be developed and adopted. (c) Practical measures to facilitate territorial planning, especially at the regional and municipal levels, should be developed. (d) Secured lending mechanisms should be promoted to enable citizens and businesses to make full use of their capital assets and generate more wealth.

III. Improved policy formulation and governance regarding housing and land administration in countries, including the promotion of a better-defined role for municipalities

Performance indicated by: (a) the number of high-level delegates participating in UNECE meetings in the area of governance and policy development for housing and land administration; and (b) the number and scope of agreed solid policy conclusions reached at the annual sessions of the Committee.

13. At its annual sessions (in September 2004 and September 2005), the Committee assessed the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for a Sustainable Quality of Life in Human Settlements in the Twenty-First Century. Two in-depth discussions (on urban planning, and on social and economic benefits of human settlements development) were organized in the context of the preparations for the third session of the World Urban Forum in Vancouver (Canada) in June 2006.

14. Increased awareness of the importance of human settlements development in the UNECE region was reflected in the increased attendance of the Committee's meetings by high-level officials. The Committee's session of September 2004 was attended by 22 high-level officials, while in September 2005 a total of 25 high-level officials participated. In view of that, the Committee considered the possibility of organizing a high-level meeting to be held in conjunction with the sixty-seventh session of the Committee on 18–20 September 2006 to redefine future policy directions and address specific and concrete topics, taking into account the outcome of the UNECE reform.

15. Three studies with policy conclusions were adopted by the Committee and published as *Guidelines on Social Housing* (ECE/HBP/137), *Housing Finance Systems for Countries in Transition* (ECE/HBP/138) and *Land Administration in the UNECE Region* (ECE/HBP/140). Particular attention was given to the role of governments (with a focus on the municipal level), intergovernmental coordination and public/private partnerships. The Committee highlighted the particular importance of the economic and social benefits of housing and urban development in areas such as job creation, energy efficiency, environment, housing affordability, investments, viable housing financing schemes and crime prevention.

Lessons learned / areas needing improvement / comments

16. The delegations stressed the need for active policy support at the country level to promote good governance, democracy and social, economic and political stability. It was argued that neglecting human settlements development perpetuated market imperfections. Areas singled out for urgent remedial action were the hasty and massive privatization of the housing stock and the lack of its management; the emergence and growth of informal/illegal housing; corruption in the construction and land administration sectors; the lack of viable housing finance systems; and land supply constraints. All of these increase transaction costs and prices for land and housing services.

Annex

REFERENCES TO LEGISLATIVE REVIEW AND EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL EVALUATION

Legislative review: The Committee on Human Settlements reviewed programme performance regularly. At its sixty-fifth annual session, in September 2004, the Committee conducted a preliminary reassessment of its strategic directions and evaluated its core activities: the country profiles programme on the housing sector for countries with economies in transition, the land administration activities, and the policy guidelines on social housing, condominium management and urban planning (ECE/HBP/134). At its sixty-sixth session in September 2005 (ECE/HBP/136), the Committee discussed the UNECE reform process and considered options for reforming the Committee and its activities put forward by its Bureau. Consequently it unanimously agreed to further streamline its activities, emphasizing on high-profile tasks and discontinuing two elements in the programme of work, (a) the development of human settlements statistics and (b) the following of major trends characterizing human settlements development.

External evaluation: The external evaluation report “The State of the UNECE” (June 2005, at http://www.unece.org/commission/2005/UNECE_Evaluation_Report_2005.pdf) stated, “The ECE Committee on Human Settlements seems to address the regional challenges and specificities of the European political, social, economic and cultural context more efficiently than UN-HABITAT. The Committee also embraces a cross-sectoral approach, designed to take the different policy spheres of environment, energy, transport, consumption patterns and social cohesion into account”. According to the assessment of the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe, the political and technical dimensions of the Committee’s work considerably support the reform process in South-Eastern Europe. The International Council of Women stressed the importance of the Committee’s work in the context of the living environment, support to poor families and introducing the gender perspective (ECE/HBP/136, para. 9).

Internal evaluation:

(a) The UNECE Symposium on Social Housing held in Vienna on 28–30 November 2004 considered a draft of what would later become the publication *Guidelines on Social Housing* (ECE/HBP/137) and concluded that the work on the guidelines would be a significant input to addressing the housing needs of socially vulnerable and disadvantaged populations in the UNECE region. The guidelines will contribute to the exchange of information, know-how and practices relating to the provision of social housing. In September 2005 the Committee reviewed the results of the workshop and the content of the final draft of the *Guidelines* and approved the *Guidelines* for publication.

(b) The review of the implementation of the ECE Strategy for a Sustainable Quality of Life in Human Settlements in the Twenty-First Century (ECE/HBP/120) was first done at the first Regional Implementation Forum for Sustainable Development within the UNECE region, which took place in Geneva on 15–16 January 2004 (ECE/AC.25/2004/4, ECE/AC.25/2004/4/Add.1 and ECE/AC.25/2004/4/Add.2). In September 2005, the Committee

continued the review of the implementation process through an in-depth discussion on the role of human settlements development in the socio-economic development context linked to the three Millennium Development Goals: poverty reduction; environmental sustainability; and partnerships for development. In 2005, particular attention was given to the evaluation of the activities of the Working Party on Land Administration (ECE/HBP/WP.7/2005/2), which are related to Challenge 5 of the Strategy, “Improving land and real estate markets and securing private rights in land”. It was noted that the experience of the Working Party had demonstrated that the concept of setting up a regional network of land administration authorities was unique and that such networks were needed in other regions of the world. At its annual session in September 2005, the Committee agreed to organize in 2006 a high-level meeting to be held in conjunction with the sixty-seventh session of the Committee on 18–20 September 2006 to define future policy directions in the context of the Strategy (ECE/HBP/136).