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COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND LAND MANAGEMENT

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Item 7 of the provisional agenda

OUTREACH, COMMUNICATIONS AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Note by the secretariat

Summary

At the Bureau meeting on 9 May 2008, the secretariat introduced a short note on how to improve outreach and communications on the work of the Committee on Housing and Land Management, both internally and outside of the United Nations system. It was agreed to forward a more detailed note containing proposed initiatives to the Committee at sixty-ninth session for its consideration. (ECE/HBP/2008/10).

In response to that request, this note elaborates on how outreach, communications and knowledge management on housing and land management could be enhanced.

Introduction

1. The Committee on Housing and Land Management (CHLM), together with its Working Party on Land Administration (WPLA), have ambitious agendas and programmes of work responding to the current needs and challenges in the housing and land management and administration sectors in UNECE countries. CHLM and the WPLA play a key role within the United Nations system, as they create a bridge between the decisions and agendas agreed at the global level by other United Nations agencies directly or indirectly affecting the sector (e.g. the Commission on Sustainable Development and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)) and their implementation and translation into regional realities and guidance.
2. However, CHLM and WPLA work is not yet as well known or fully appreciated as it could be by all those affected by it or interested in it. There is a need not only to increase the use and appreciation of CHLM guidance and tools, but also to better involve stakeholders in its work at all levels of government in member countries. In this context, and within the limited budget and resources available to the secretariat, certain activities could be developed to increase the Committee's communications and outreach with regard to member States, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other relevant actors, including academia.
3. Moreover, despite the quantity and diversity of guidance and advice developed through the Committee's work, limitations remain in terms of dissemination and the use of guidance by member States, in particular local authorities and other stakeholders at the community level. Materials developed by the Committee could be better known and easier to access. Information is generally provided only through the UNECE website and is issued in a format not immediately and easily usable by level operators in different local realities. In brief, there is a gap between the high level of information produced and available to the Committee and its ability to permeate and assist the work of those it is meant to reach (e.g. local developers, local governments, urban planners, decision makers at the local and national levels, officers in ministries, NGOs, local associations).

I. HOUSING AND LAND NEWSLETTER

4. To increase the Committee's outreach capabilities, the specific work of its members at the national level, and its ability to address the main issues affecting countries in the UNECE region, it is proposed that a brief newsletter (of 2 to 4 pages) be prepared and issued by the secretariat on a quarterly basis, or more frequently if possible, featuring:
 - (a) An article by an expert (in particular, by CHLM and WPLA members) on an issue of particular relevance for the region;
 - (b) Updates on the work of member States regarding implementation of the programme of work;
 - (c) Special highlights on housing, planning and land management from the international press;
 - (d) Informal notifications or communications to Committee members;

- (e) News from the secretariat;
- (f) Interviews.

5. It is expected that such publication would: (a) increase subscribers' knowledge of the activities, roles and members of the Committee; (b) allow for an exchange of information among Committee members on the main issues and challenges facing their countries as well as local realities; (c) provide a regular update of the work of the secretariat; and (d) spread the word about important advancements in the sector. Member countries might also suggest a list of individuals and institutions with whom the newsletter could be shared.

II. INVOLVEMENT OF THE HOUSING AND URBAN MANAGEMENT ADVISORY NETWORK AND THE REAL ESTATE MARKET ADVISORY GROUP: AWARDING ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

6. The main universities in the UNECE region dealing with urban planning undertake research and policy reviews of many of the issues addressed by the Committee. Universities are an important source of information, data, innovative solutions and expertise. It is thus crucial for the Committee to benefit from relevant work undertaken by academia in this area.

7. The presence of the academia could be stimulated in particular by the Housing and Urban Management Advisory Network (HUMAN), which comprises experts from the private sector, NGOs, professional associations, research institutions and local authorities, as well as the newly established Real Estate Market Advisory Group (REM).

8. In particular, to make the work of CHLM, WPLA, HUMAN and REM relevant to academia, HUMAN and REM could establish a dedicated thesis award, to be granted at the PhD level to researchers in the region covering issues of relevance to the Committee's work. This award could consist of: (a) a formal recognition by the Committee, HUMAN and REM; (b) a monetary prize (up to €10,000); and (c) a certificate. Moreover, the winner could present the main features and results of the thesis at the annual meeting of the Committee, where awards would be issued.

9. The secretariat, together with HUMAN and REM, should identify a sponsor for the prize, possibly from the private sector. The selection of the winner would be organized by the secretariat in cooperation with the sponsoring organizations and the relevant advisory body. Pre-selections would be based on summaries of the thesis, with the final selection based on submission of the full text of the thesis and conducted by the panel electronically.

10. This prize, which would be well advertised on the UNECE website and other relevant websites through the HUMAN and REM networks, would increase the visibility of the work of the Committee vis-à-vis academia and would attract the attention of young researchers, ultimately establishing close links between the academic community and UNECE work on housing and land management.

III. STRATEGIC REDESIGN OF THE WEBSITE FOR BETTER KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

11. The UNECE secretariat is undertaking a redesign of the entire UNECE website. This exercise will offer an opportunity to restructure the housing and land management-related pages to:

- (a) Increase their readability;
- (b) Facilitate access to information;
- (c) Logically reorganize current pages.

12. The redesigned webpages, presented in a more logical manner, should become an important knowledge management and archive tool containing relevant information on the guidelines developed by CHLM and WPLA as well as relevant meetings and their outcomes. This would allow the website become also a highly valuable source providing information in support of capacity-building workshops in countries.

13. At its sixty-ninth session, the Committee may wish to:

- (a) Review, comment and agree on the proposal above;**
- (b) Discuss and provide additional ideas for the strengthening its outreach, capacity-building and knowledge management activities of the secretariat, as well as of the Committee at the national and subregional levels on housing, land management and administration matters.**
