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COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND LAND MANAGEMENT

Seventieth session
Geneva, 23–25 September 2009

**REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND LAND MANAGEMENT
ON ITS SEVENTIETH SESSION**

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Committee on Housing and Land Management held its seventieth session from 23 to 25 September 2009 in Geneva. The session featured a seminar titled “Climate Neutral Cities” on 23 September (see chapter IV).

A. Attendance

2. Representatives of the following countries participated: Albania, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Kyrgyzstan, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and United States of America.

3. Representatives of the following intergovernmental organizations attended the session: the Centre for European Nuclear Research (CERN), the European Environmental Agency (EEA), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and the World Health Organization (WHO). Representatives of the following civil society and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) attended: Bread for All, Eco-Securities, the European Foundation for Sustainable Development of the Regions (FEDRE), the European Liaison Committee for Social Housing (CECODHAS), Fédération International pour l'Habitation, l'Urbanisme et l'Aménagement du Territoire (FIHUAT), the Habitat League of Romania, the Huairou Commission, International Council of Women (ICW), the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), International Real Estate Federation (FIABCI), the International Society of City and Regional Planners (ISOCARP), the International Union of Architects (UIA), International Union of Tenants (IUT), Misereor, Network of Associations of Local Authorities in South-East Europe (NALAS), Prioterre, Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC-CEE), Swiss Resource Centre and Consultancies for Development (SKAT), Villes en Transition (V.e.T), World Fire Statistics and Zoi Environment. A number of private sector representatives and academics from various European universities and research institutions also participated.

4. Members of the Committee's Housing and Urban Management Advisory Network and the Real Estate Market Advisory Group also attended the session.

B. Organizational matters

5. The Chairperson of the Committee, Ms. Doris Andoni (Albania), opened the session on 23 September and chaired the session the following two days.

6. The annotated provisional agenda (ECE/HBP/151) was adopted without amendment.

II. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE SIXTY-THIRD SESSION OF THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

7. The secretariat reported on the outcomes of the sixty-third session of the Economic Commission for Europe (Geneva, 30 March–1 April 2009). The Commission had acknowledged the need and opportunities for reducing energy consumption in buildings and had welcomed the idea of developing an action plan on energy efficiency in housing. The session had comprised two thematic sessions covering the issue of economic integration within the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) region, one on the financial crisis and the other on the issue of climate change mitigation and adaptation. Regarding the first topic, an expert reported on the impact of the current crisis on the real estate market and implications for land administration authorities. Regarding climate change, the representative of Austria briefed the Committee session on different activities initiated by the Committee related to energy efficiency in housing and on the upcoming international forum on this topic to be held in Vienna. The Vienna forum would offer an opportunity to develop the elements of the action plan (see para. 35).

8. The Committee welcomed the Commission's decision to develop an action plan, and took note of the information provided on the upcoming forum in Vienna.

III. REPORT ON THE WORK OF THE BUREAU AND THE REPORT OF THE HOUSING AND URBAN MANAGEMENT ADVISORY NETWORK

9. The Chairperson of the Bureau reported on the Bureau's work and the main decisions taken since the Committee's previous session.

10. The Chairperson of the Housing and Urban Management Advisory Network (HUMAN) reported on that group's activities since September 2008, as they related to the work of the Committee. She also reported on the change in its membership. It was agreed that the group would present a proposal for its programme of work for the upcoming year, to be considered by the Committee's Bureau at its next meeting.

11. The Committee took note of the work of the Bureau and of HUMAN. It agreed to review the proposal for the programme of work of HUMAN at its next meeting.

IV. SEMINAR ON "CLIMATE NEUTRAL CITIES"

12. A seminar on "Climate Neutral Cities" was held on 23 September 2009 in conjunction with the Committee session. Among its aims were to explore the overlap between energy efficiency in buildings, spatial planning and urban transport to provide Member States with policy guidelines on these issues. Participants included national and regional government representatives, business practitioners, academic experts and other professionals.

13. The first session of the seminar discussed city planning and land use management from the perspective of both the public and private sector, with a focus on policies at the local level. The second session focused on the built environment, including measures being undertaken to improve

energy efficiency and to remove bureaucratic barriers to effective policies and practices. The presentations provided a basis for discussions.

A. Main policy issues

14. Seminar participants noted that policies to reduce energy use and emissions of greenhouse gases usually focused on the building, transport, industrial and power sectors. Cities encompassed all of these sectors, as they are affected by spatial planning strategies. The seminar sought to approach climate change mitigation and adaptation from a city perspective. It found that most policy initiatives were in their embryonic phase and affected only a limited number of countries (e.g. the C40 mayor's programme, the European City Energy Label and the European Union-backed Covenant of Mayors). Nonetheless, UNECE member States had a key role to play in advancing climate neutrality in cities. On the one hand, there was the need to substantially reduce emissions in a region that already had a large housing stock. On the other, the member States had a long history of spatial planning that could positively influence policy, in addition to the fact that many member States were also signatories of Annex B of the Kyoto Protocol of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

15. Experience had shown that in order to promote climate neutrality in cities the public sector must take the lead. National authorities must have the clear political will to provide the necessary resources and infrastructures to cities. In cities, local authorities should introduce changes in sectors such as the transport system, social housing and construction and renovation, including both technical and financial means to foster energy efficiency. Local authorities must provide land use plans and adopt policies and laws that provide the legal and regulatory frameworks in which the private sector can operate. Similarly, they could mandate increased urban forestry, recreation spaces or the use of underground infrastructure, all of which could help achieve social and environmental sustainability as cities adapt to climate change.

16. The achievement of a green economy required a national commitment to substantial change in patterns of production and consumption by all sectors of society. Climate neutrality in cities was an important chapter in this agenda. National authorities should therefore act as facilitators of dialogue between the various stakeholders important at the urban level, including planners, investors, mayors, banks, architects, residents' associations and energy providers. Such a multi-stakeholder dialogue was crucial to making the green economy happen.

17. Due to different political, cultural and economic realities across the UNECE region, a single universal approach to climate neutrality was not recommended. Certain pressing issues affected mainly countries in transition. Most local authorities in these countries had no physical or spatial plans. Where plans did exist, many were outdated and lacked a strategy for urban development. The existing housing stock was also in very urgent need of repair as a consequence of flawed legislation (e.g. on condominiums); this hindered proper management and operation. In addition, problems related to fragmented and spontaneous decision-making processes, without appropriate administrative, technical and financial backing at the local level, also needed to be urgently addressed.

18. The seminar also discussed the need to keep citizens in the city, mentioned as a priority in the road towards climate neutrality (e.g. Frankfurt's 2020 action plan – *Frankfurt für alle!*). Sustainable settlement began with the spatial layout presented in a city's master plan and with the allocation of functions within a given area. A prerequisite for these plans was an infrastructure that favoured low-carbon intensity modes of travel between nodes (i.e. a city of short distances). A study of transport systems in cities in Europe and the United States had concluded that currently the most significant problem was traffic demand management, which, if properly addressed, could significantly reduce emissions, as the necessary technology was already available.

19. A readymade blueprint for European cities and municipalities to address energy issues was implicit in the European Energy Label¹. This label was awarded to cities that manage to meet energy-related benchmarks in six areas of municipal organization: planning, facilities, waste, mobility, internal organization and external communication.

20. Overall, the public sector did not possess sufficient resources to extend refurbishment programmes to public hospitals, schools and other branches of the service sector. To facilitate refurbishment programmes, private sector investments should be encouraged. An efficient way to organize this was through performance contracting by energy services companies (for example, the Greater London Authority tenders contracts to energy services companies for the refurbishment of hospitals and industrial plants).

21. In many transition countries, significant portions of the building stock were in poor states of repair or had been constructed from materials that did not lend themselves to energy efficiency measures. Also, some buildings had historic and cultural value (or had been built for other purposes in the past) and required specific refurbishment measures. At the household level, energy-efficient products were usually more expensive or required special knowledge that the general public currently lacked. Large-scale infrastructural change of such buildings was often not feasible, and their renovation frequently involved re-lamping and closing windows. It was thus very important for people who used these buildings to become directly involved in the process. The landlord-tenant relationship and the tenant-employer relationship must be examined to see what role each actor could play in reducing energy use. Participation of future tenants in the building design phase was desirable to foster a sense of ownership and to increase social cohesion in an area. This was particularly important for marginalized communities.

22. Participants noted that energy-saving technologies for buildings depended on their use and whether they were newly built or renovated. For new dwellings and for some cases of renovation, much attention had been given to the concept of the "passive house," whereby a highly insulated house not needing a heating system was constructed. Four essential features of passive houses were that they had high levels of insulation, avoided thermal bridges in the walls, used net positive windows and utilized a heat recovery system to heat incoming air. A cost-benefit analysis of the passive house option should take into account the full life cycle of the project.

¹ <http://www.european-energy-award.org/>

23. Use of locally available materials and labour helped reduce costs and it might be considered advantageous also from an environmental and social perspective. Country experiences had shown that improvements could occur through the maximization of day-lighting and the use of wood chips and recycled paper for insulation. Also, lightweight construction materials could remove the need for a tower crane and expedite construction time. The health aspect of air quality was generally assured in buildings either through natural or mechanical ventilation. In the latter case, it was important that the option of opening windows be available and that contingency measures be in place to provide ventilation during power failures.

24. Some projects in the UNECE region had involved the retrofit of prefabricated multifamily dwellings to improve comfort and reduce energy costs. Participants acknowledged, however, that these projects had highlighted that there were legal, financial and organizational barriers to change, including a lack of experience in the construction sector and an over-reliance on the State to take the initiative. Even where pilot projects had been successful, their high costs had meant that replication had been impeded.

B. Recommendations

25. The Committee discussed specific issues stemming from the background paper (ECE/HBP/2009/2) and the outcomes of presentations as summarized by the rapporteur (the representative of Finland). It also addressed how best to reflect the outcomes and recommendations of the seminar in the Committee's programme of work.

26. A discussion amongst the country delegations followed. The proposal was made to develop guidance on mitigation and adaptation strategies for cities, and delegations suggested that this include guidelines on energy efficient technology in small constructions, as better energy performance and increased comfort for self-made homes was an urgent matter affecting the region. Delegations emphasized how important the building sector was to the reduction of carbon emissions, which merited inclusion in national plans. The representative of EEA informed the session that although its action plan incorporated 95 per cent of the reductions in the housing sector, it was very difficult to redefine the building directives of the sector at the national level. For this reason, countries tended to focus on reductions achieved in new buildings only, leaving aside reforms to existing housing stock. EEA also recommended setting appropriate standards for different geographical locations.

27. Delegations emphasized the importance of adequate urban design and that linkages of the energy efficiency agenda with the work performed by the European Union (EU) should be made. The importance of energy savings for the well-being of families was underlined, as was the relevance of experimental buildings in various countries in the EU, as such buildings could offer lessons for the future.

28. Delegations made the following recommendations with regard to the way forward:

(a) There is need for a clear political determination by national authorities to embark on a climate neutral cities agenda. Only after this decision is made can the legal, financial and technical frameworks be adapted for local authorities to implement specific policies;

(b) An integrated cross-sectoral approach to urban development should be adopted that includes transport, energy, employment, recreation, health, pollution and environmental management with clearly assigned responsibilities for the different agencies or ministries involved;

(c) The development of specific information that maps out city renewable energy endowments and the continuous updating of standards for building energy use for both existing and newly constructed dwellings and commercial premises should be promoted;

(d) Measures need to be adopted to introduce demand management of traffic to alleviate congestion and improve safety and air quality, and to reduce carbon emissions;

(e) A commitment to multi-stakeholder involvement in the decision-making process, clearly involving civil society, should be promoted. Forums should be encouraged that facilitate citizen participation in spatial planning and which focus attention on women's, employees', immigrants' and children's rights and needs. These forums will also contribute by generating awareness among citizens of their role in the green economy and among the business community of their duty to comply with new regulatory frameworks;

(f) Pilot projects on refurbishment and energy efficiency of existing housing stock must be conceived in such a way that they are cost-effective and replicable.

C. Next steps

29. The Committee agreed to include climate neutrality in the programme of work under the item of urban environmental performance. It also agreed to develop a study taking into account work already developed by the Committee on the topic of energy efficiency in housing, identifying means and tools for adaptation and mitigation of climate change in cities. The study should also develop recommendations and guidelines addressed to policymakers, practitioners and the general public on how to implement and promote these measures. It should cover the whole topic of "urban systems", including housing, buildings and land use management, but should also touch upon transportation, waste management and green areas.

V. REVIEW OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR 2008–2009 AND DRAFT PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR 2010–2011

30. The Committee reviewed the programme of work for 2008–2009 (ECE/HBP/2009/1) and the draft programme of work for 2010–2011 (annex). It assessed the progress made and offered advice on future activities.

31. The secretariat presented the strategic framework for 2012–2013, as approved by the Bureau.

32. The Committee took note of the information provided and approved the strategic framework for 2012–2013.

A. Country profiles on the housing sector

33. Information was provided on progress achieved with the country profiles of Georgia, Azerbaijan, Belarus and Kyrgyzstan.
34. The representative of Georgia reported on the launching event of the country profile on the housing sector in the country (ECE/HBP/143). The event had taken place two years after the fact-finding mission, and it was therefore possible to evaluate the impact of recommendations contained in the study and the status of implementation.
35. The representative of Azerbaijan provided information on the fact-finding mission (2–10 May 2009) and was looking forward to the results, especially regarding the problem of informal settlements and building safety in the country.
36. The delegation of Belarus commented on the country profile (ECE/HBP/150) and informed the session about plans for implementing the profile's recommendations as well as about the launching event (December 2009). The country profile's recommendations would be taken into account when drafting a national concept paper on affordable housing. The delegation of Belarus also announced that a conference on the implementation of national housing policies in Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries was scheduled to be held in Minsk in September 2010.
37. The delegation of Kyrgyzstan provided information on the finalization of the country profile (ECE/HBP/157). Some of the recommendations had already been put in practice, e.g. the facilitation of registration procedures for property was implemented in cooperation with banks. A unified policy for land management and resources had also been initiated. The Kyrgyz Government would disseminate the results of the country profile to all stakeholders, and was looking forward to its publication.
38. The representative of Tajikistan informed the Committee about its interest in having a country profile review undertaken. The Tajik representative mentioned the country's need to increase housing construction, ensure building safety, reduce the incidence of informal settlements, and in particular assist the needs of the young. He also mentioned the need to improve the legal framework, so as to foster affordable housing and the availability of credit. The country had specific natural conditions that required special attention, including seismic activities, erosions and landslides.
39. The secretariat presented a proposal for a modular approach to future country profile studies (ECE/HBP/2009/5), developed at the request of the Committee to better meet the needs of the country under review when preparing country profiles and land administration reviews. The Chairperson of the Committee emphasized the importance of incorporating land administration issues in country profiles, as suggested by the proposal. The document has also been agreed by the Working Party on Land Administration at its sixth session (18–19 June 2009).
40. In the discussion that followed, various suggestions were made regarding the list of issues to be covered by the country profiles.

41. The Committee took note of the information on the country profiles and decided:

(a) To undertake a country profile on the housing sector of Tajikistan, which would also include land administration issues;

(b) To adopt the modular approach for future country profile studies and land administration reviews.

B. Improvement of urban environmental performance

42. The Chairperson briefed the Committee on the launching of the publication, *Self-made cities: in search of sustainable solutions for informal settlements in the UNECE region* (ECE/HBP/155). The publication contained analysis and guidance for member States about informal settlements, and had been jointly developed by the Committee and the Working Party. The Chairperson emphasized that the problem of informal settlements affected all countries in the UNECE region.

43. The secretariat mentioned that the Working Party on Land Administration would organize a workshop in Antalya, Turkey, in autumn 2010 on the theme of security of tenure, and that this theme could be linked to the topic of spatial planning.

44. The delegation of the Czech Republic offered to organize a workshop (May 2010) on spatial planning, with a special focus on urban sprawl. This theme would be linked to the issue of climate neutrality in cities, with the aim of stimulating synergies with the current work of the EU and UNECE.

C. Land registration and land markets

45. The Chairperson of the Working Party on Land Administration reported on the Working Party's sixth session (Geneva, 18–19 June 2009), noting the following:

(a) A study with guidance on the application of fees and charges for cadastre and registration services (ECE/HBP/WP.7/2009/4) had been issued;

(b) An in-depth discussion was held on the question of fraud in land administration and on a questionnaire about practices of monitoring and prevention; a decision had been made to prepare a study on this topic. The United Kingdom had offered staff resources to prepare the study based on the results of the questionnaire;

(c) The land administration review of Bulgaria had been issued. The next such review would be on Tajikistan, in conjunction with the country profile on the housing sector;

(d) Workshops had been held in Bergen, Norway, on the legal empowerment of the poor (ECE/HBP/2009/9); in Cavtat, Croatia, on the influence of land administration on people and business (ECE/HBP/WP.7/2009/6); and in Sofia, on data management (ECE/HBP/2009/8);

(e) Upcoming workshops would be held in Baku (4–5 March 2010) on transparency and public access to information on land and real estate; in Minsk (spring 2010) on e-government; and in Antalya, Turkey (autumn 2010) on security of tenure (see para. 29);

(f) A presentation was made of the results of a self-evaluation of workshops organized by the Working Party (ECE/HBP/WP.7/2009/8).

46. The Chairperson of the Real Estate Market Advisory Group reported on the Advisory Group's activities and future plans. The Chairperson informed the Committee that the Advisory Group had started its work one year ago. Since then, it had held a seminar in New York on "The real estate and the financial crisis: causes, impacts and effects on development", which had been opened by the United Nations Deputy-Secretary-General. In 2009, the Advisory Group had held a forum on "Rethinking the real estate market: sound rules towards social and economic benefits" (Rome, 3–4 June 2009), which had discussed a document containing a framework for a more stable real estate economy to reduce the impact of the present and future economic crises. A final document was being elaborated on the basis of experts' inputs. Future activities of the Advisory Group included the organization of a workshop on greening the real estate markets and a study on rating and risk assessment of financial products backed with real estate as collateral.

47. The Committee took note of the information provided.

D. Housing modernization and management

48. The representative of Norway reported on the results of the workshop on the topic of homelessness (Oslo, 18–19 May 2009), as well as on the results of a related questionnaire distributed to Committee members on this subject (see ECE/HBP/2009/9). The workshop had concluded that, while addressing homelessness, the focus should be on prevention and the avoidance of relapse of affected individuals. The workshop had also concluded that UNECE should continue cooperation on this topic with other organizations, including UN-Habitat, FEANTSA (European Federation of National Organizations Working with the Homeless) and CECODHAS, as the topic was also linked to the Committee's work on informal settlements.

49. Energy efficiency in housing. The outcome of the first workshop on energy efficiency (Sofia, 21–22 April 2009) was presented (ECE/HBP/2009/6). The workshop had examined the institutional, financial, legal, managerial and technical challenges of the problem of energy efficiency in housing in the UNECE region. The workshop's background information and results were reflected in a publication *Green homes* (ECE/HBP/159)². The representative of Austria informed the Committee that an international forum on this topic would be held in Vienna (23–25 November 2009), focusing on policy solutions and implementation. The Vienna forum would build upon the outcomes of the Sofia workshop. Discussions during the event would contribute to the development of the Action Plan on Energy Efficiency in Housing for the UNECE region, to be presented to the Committee's seventy-first session in 2010 for adoption. The representative of Austria also stressed the importance of the Committee's work in the context of the post-Kyoto negotiations and the fifteenth Conference of the Parties (COP 15) of the United Nations Conference on Climate Change (Copenhagen, 7–18 December 2009).

² <http://www.unece.org/hlm/sessions/docs2009/GreenHomes.pdf>

50. Multifamily housing. A member of HUMAN presented a revised project proposal on multifamily housing management (ECE/HBP/2009/7), reflecting lessons learned from the Slovak case and its importance in terms of replicability for other countries. The representative of Slovakia emphasized the importance of housing management in this country, where around 50 per cent of the population lives in multifamily housing. After privatization in the 1990s, people had become owners of dilapidated housing stock, without having acquired the necessary technical knowledge about housing management and maintenance. The project outcomes should lead to the development of very concrete policy recommendations regarding housing management and to the improvement of management skills through training of stakeholders.

51. A discussion followed in which other countries stressed the importance of improving housing management in their own national contexts. The representative of Slovakia proposed organizing a workshop in spring 2010 on the topic, in order to bring together interested parties involved in housing management.

52. The Committee took note of the results of the workshop in Sofia and:

(a) Agreed to develop an Action Plan for Energy Efficiency in Housing, taking into consideration the results of the forum in Vienna;

(b) Welcomed the offer of Slovakia to hold a workshop on multifamily housing management in spring 2010.

E. Monitoring of implementation

53. To ensure that guidance from the Committee was effectively implemented by member States and to learn about challenges encountered as well as success stories, the Bureau suggested that the Committee invite countries, through flexible reporting mechanisms, to showcase progress made in implementing such policies, and also to describe the challenges faced.

54. The Chairperson opened the discussion with a presentation on progress made in Albania since the country profile of that country (2002). Reforms on the housing sector had started and an action plan had been approved. Since then, two workshops had been held (in 2003 and 2007) to discuss policy reforms. Also of relevance were the approval of a new law on programmes for housing, the application for a Council for Europe Development Bank loan, the initiation of a social housing project, the approval of mortgage subsidy programmes and the reform of condominium legislation. During this process, the recommendations contained in the country profile, in addition to respective guidelines issued by the Committee and successive workshops, were found to be highly useful by government authorities. In particular, the social housing project was highlighted, as it had made possible, through the financing of loans, the provision of 10,000 housing units in eight different municipalities. This endeavour had started as a pilot project to be replicated in other municipalities without the need of foreign loans. Lessons learned included the improved communication between national and local authorities and the setting of standards for reporting on the status of implementation of the loan. Among future challenges, the setting of directives for the allocation of housing units as well as decisions on rent levels and the nature and extent of subsidies were mentioned as being the most relevant.

55. The Chairperson invited other countries to volunteer, during the forthcoming session, to report on progress in the implementation of Committee's recommendations. Slovakia and Serbia agreed to prepare such presentations.

56. Considering the outcomes and decisions on this agenda item and their relevance to its economic, social and environmental agenda, the Committee agreed to organize a ministerial meeting as a high-level segment during its seventy-first session in 2010. The event would allow ministers and high-level officials in the UNECE region to reorient future activities in line with strategies so far adopted in 2000 (ECE/HBP/120) and 2006 (ECE/HBP/120), and also to better respond to current challenges such as climate change and the global financial crisis.

VI. BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION SAFETY

57. The Chairperson introduced the topic of safety in building construction, stating that, in spite of the existence of advanced technologies, in many countries weak institutional, legal, and financial frameworks hindered the correct application of security norms and techniques.

58. The representative of Azerbaijan reminded the audience that an earthquake had damaged over 1,000 buildings in the country in 2000, and that safety in buildings and constructions had become an important issue. The Azerbaijani representative offered to host an international conference to discuss measures to increase building and construction safety in the UNECE region. The conference would be held in Baku during spring 2010.

59. The secretariat maintained that security concerns should also involve prevention measures from other natural disasters that may result of the growing effects of climate change (e.g. floods, wildfires and the melting of permafrost). A discussion followed in which other countries stressed the importance of addressing security in building construction and the need to update legislation in their own national contexts. NGOs pointed out the importance of involving all stakeholders concerned with disaster management, particularly in cases where relocation measures were necessary.

60. The Committee welcomed the offer of the representative of Azerbaijan.

VII. CROSS-SECTORAL ACTIVITIES

61. A number of activities had been undertaken by the Committee in cooperation with other UNECE programmes as well as relevant United Nations agencies.

62. The Chairperson reported on the discussion by the Bureau of how the Committee could fully contribute to and advise the UNECE Timber Committee on work undertaken on green building. The Bureau was concerned that the Timber Committee's approach might be too narrow, as green building was not only a question of construction materials, but a complex issue involving other variables that ensure better energy efficiency and environmental performance. The Bureau had also agreed that a letter expressing these concerns from the Committee's Chairperson should be addressed to the Chair of the Timber Committee.

63. The secretariat reported on current and future joint activities with UN-Habitat and its regional offices in Warsaw and Moscow. The secretariat had attended a UN-Habitat workshop in Dushanbe in May 2009, and UN-Habitat had been invited to the launching event of the country profile of the housing sector of Georgia in July 2009. A joint mission (involving UNECE, UNDP and UN-Habitat) would take place in Uzbekistan in October 2009 to assess the impact of the financial crisis on urban poverty. Also, cooperation with several NGOs (e.g. CECODHAS) had occurred through outreach activities, including *Vital Spaces*, the newsletter of the Committee.

64. The Committee took note of the information provided.

VIII. OTHER BUSINESS

65. The secretariat provided information on the UNECE Trust Fund on Human Settlements and invited delegations to announce their contributions to the Trust Fund for particular programme activities. The secretariat emphasized that the regular budget did not cover any activities, and that the Trust Fund was therefore vital for undertaking any of the activities within the Committee's programme of work. The secretariat thanked countries and organizations that had contributed funds since the previous session, including Switzerland, the Netherlands and FIABCI. It also thanked the Government of Italy for making a substantial contribution for communications activities. The representative of the Czech Republic announced that a contribution to the Trust Fund had also been approved by the Czech Government.

66. The Committee took note of the information provided on the Trust Fund.

IX. ELECTION OF THE BUREAU

67. The Committee elected the Bureau for its seventy-first session, as follows: Mr. Wolfgang Förster (Austria) as Chairperson, and Ms. Doris Andoni (Albania), Mr. Azer Khanlarov (Azerbaijan), Ms. Daniela Grabmüllerová (Czech Republic), Mr. Damir Pahic (Croatia), Mr. Martti Lujanen (Finland), Ms. Natja Jokhadze (Georgia), Ms. Martina Hauser (Italy), Ms. Elena Bejenaru (Republic of Moldova), Mr. Sergey Barinov (Russian Federation), Ms. Svetlana Ristic (Serbia), Ms. Elena Szolgayová (Slovakia) and Mr. Ernst Hauri (Switzerland).

X. CLOSING OF THE SEVENTIETH SESSION

68. The Chairperson announced that after the session the secretariat would prepare the report of the seventieth session, circulate it among the participants and post it on the Committee's website³. She then closed the session.

³ <http://www.unece.org/hlm/sessions/70thsession.htm>

Annex

PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR 2010–2011

SUBPROGRAMME 10: HOUSING, LAND MANAGEMENT AND POPULATION

10.1.1 Country profiles on the housing sector

Description: The housing sector plays a critical role in ensuring the success of economic and social development in countries in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) region and the reform process in countries in transition. At the same time, the transition to a market economy has had a profound impact on housing policy implementation and management. This item of the Committee's programme of work enables Governments to analyse their housing policies, strategies, and institutional and financial frameworks for the housing sector and to compare these with progress made internationally. It also aims to provide housing-related information to potential investors. The country profile is an analytical study on the housing sector drafted by international experts. It places much emphasis on the linkages between housing, spatial planning and land administration policies. Recommendations and guidance for improving policies and practices are an essential part of this activity.

Work accomplished: To date, country profiles on the housing sectors of Albania, Armenia, Belarus, Bulgaria, Georgia, Lithuania, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Romania, the Russian Federation, Slovakia, and Serbia and Montenegro have been published. The country profile of Kyrgyzstan is being finalized. As in the case of Belarus, the country profile of Kyrgyzstan contains a chapter on land administration and spatial planning. The fact-finding mission for the review of Azerbaijan took place in May 2009, and the final version of the study is being finalized.

Work to be undertaken: The Committee will continue its activities to prepare country profiles on the housing sector. The launching event of Belarus is expected to be organized in December 2009. The pre-mission for the country profile on housing and land administration of Tajikistan will take place in October 2009. Cooperation with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the European Commission and the World Bank will be maintained and strengthened, in particular vis-à-vis the implementation of recommendations contained in the reviews.

10.1.2 Improvement of urban environmental performance

Description: Cities and towns are efficient starting points for promoting sustainable quality of life and for reducing carbon emissions. Numerous initiatives have already been launched in cities and towns to raise public awareness of the environmental impact of individual consumption behaviours, as well as to promote environmentally sound goods and services and the sustainable use of energy, water, raw materials and land by individuals and communities. The spatial planning process focuses on a broad range of issues and factors, including social, economic, environmental, financial and cultural ones. It is important to develop an effective local planning process as an integral part of strategic national and regional development planning.

Work accomplished:

(a) Spatial planning. The study, *Spatial Planning – Key Instrument for Development and Effective Governance, with Special Reference to Countries in Transition* was published and posted on the UNECE website;

(b) Informal settlements. An analytical study on challenges and policy responses for informal settlements was completed. The book, entitled *Self-made cities: In search of sustainable solutions for informal settlements in the UNECE region* identifies the different characteristics of informal settlements in the UNECE region, analyses the root causes of their formation and development, provides an overview of existing policy responses, gives specific case studies and includes recommendations and guidance to member States on how to address the challenges posed by informal settlements;

(c) Climate neutral cities. A seminar on this topic was held during the seventieth session of the Committee. The seminar presented case studies on how carbon emissions at the city and building level can be reduced, while also increasing the overall sustainability of urban spaces and households.

Work to be undertaken:

(a) Spatial planning. A workshop on spatial planning, to address the problem of urban sprawl and other issues related to climate neutrality in cities will be held in the Czech Republic in spring 2010;

(b) Informal settlements. A workshop on spatial planning as it relates to security of tenure will be held in Antalya, Turkey, as part of the programme of work of the Working Party on Land Administration and in line with the objectives of this programme element;

(c) Climate neutral cities. A study on climate neutral cities will be developed by the Committee in 2010. The study shall identify means and tools for adaptation and mitigation of climate change in cities. It will also develop recommendations and guidance addressed to policymakers, practitioners and the general public on how to implement and promote those measures. The study will cover “urban systems” including housing, buildings and land use management, but will also touch upon transportation, waste management and green areas and take into account energy efficiency in housing.

10.1.3 Land registration and land markets

Description: The Working Party on Land Administration is the subsidiary body of the Committee that specifically addresses land administration issues. Proper land registration is crucial for security of tenure and property rights, effective housing policies and the promotion of reforms in economies in transition, as well as in the context of European integration and the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals. The Working Party’s activities aim to provide assistance to countries in transition in reforming cadastral and land registration systems and in sharing information and experience regarding the modernization of land administration systems in the more advanced economies through education, training, research and development, exchange of experience, transfer of technology and standardization.

Work accomplished:

- (a) Working Party on Land Administration session. The sixth session of the Working Party was held on 18 and 19 June 2009;
- (b) Land administration reviews. A land administration review of Bulgaria was completed and launched and discussed during the workshop organized in Sofia in April 2009. A land administration review of Kyrgyzstan was developed jointly with the country profile of this country;
- (c) Workshops. In 2008–2009, workshops were held: (a) in April 2008 in Bergen, Norway, on the institutional aspects of land administration (“Legal Empowerment of the Poor”); (b) in October 2008 in Cavtat, Croatia (“Influence of Land Administration on People and Business”); and (c) in April 2009 in Sofia (“Experience with Data Management to Improve Land Administration in ECE Countries”). A self-evaluation exercise for these Working Party workshops was undertaken and presented at the Working Party’s session;
- (d) Real Estate Market Advisory Group. The Real Estate Market Advisory Group (REM) was established at a meeting of the Working Party’s Bureau (Bergen, Norway, 9 April 2008). Since then, two REM/UNECE events have taken place: the first in New York in December 2008 (“The Real Estate and Financial Crisis: Causes, Effects and Impacts on Development”), and the second in Rome in June 2009 (“Rethinking Real Estate Markets: Sound Rules towards Social and Economic Benefits”);
- (e) Fees and charges. A draft study on fees and charges has been finalized and published.

Work to be undertaken:

- (a) Working Party on Land Administration session. The next session of the Working Party will take place in June 2011;
- (b) Land administration reviews: A joint country profile on the housing sector and land administration review will take place in Tajikistan in 2010;
- (c) Workshops. The next Working Party workshops will take place in Baku on 4 and 5 March 2010 addressing issues of transparency and public access to information on land and real estate, and in Minsk in spring 2010 on e-government;
- (d) Real Estate Market Advisory Group. Activities will be developed in cooperation with the Working Party. A workshop on “Greening the Real Estate Market” will be organized in spring 2010;
- (e) Fraud to land management institutions. The Working Party will prepare a study on best practices to monitor and prevent fraudulent activities in land administration after a questionnaire was distributed by the secretariat that will be analysed by expert staff of the United Kingdom;
- (f) Informal settlements. See item 10.1.2.

10.1.4 Housing modernization and management

Description: The main goal of this activity is to identify and provide tools for tackling problems related to housing stock and its management. Housing systems are an important factor with regard to both safeguarding social cohesion in UNECE countries and to responding to environmental challenges. The activity focuses in particular on urban renewal and housing refurbishment policies and on existing and emerging housing problems, especially those connected with housing financing and energy efficiency. As a result of privatization in countries in transition, the proportion of owner-occupied dwellings in multifamily housing is the major form of tenure. It is therefore important to establish property rights, define mixed ownership and establish a legal and institutional framework for operating housing condominiums. Focus will be put on the basic mechanisms for social housing development and for the enhancement of building performance.

Work accomplished:

(a) **Studies and workshops:** A workshop on homelessness was held on 18 and 19 May 2009 in Oslo. The first workshop on energy efficiency in housing was held in Sofia on 21 and 22 April 2009⁴;

(b) **Energy efficiency in housing.** A study addressing the political, institutional, financial, technological and institutional gaps in the UNECE region was prepared (*Green Homes* (ECE/HBP/159)). It contains a series of policy guidelines in this area to overcome challenges and is the basis for future work on this subject (see ECE/HBP/2009/6);

(c) **Building safety.** Building and construction safety and disaster preparedness will be addressed. Despite the existence of advanced technologies in many countries, institutional, legal, financial and awareness issues still hinder the correct application of safe and secure norms and techniques.

Work to be undertaken:

(a) **Energy efficiency in housing.** An international forum on energy efficiency in housing, (“Towards a UNECE Action Plan on Energy Efficiency in Housing”) will be held from 23 to 25 November 2009 in Vienna. The meeting will contribute to the development of the Action Plan on Energy Efficiency in Housing;

(b) **Multifamily housing.** A workshop on multifamily housing stock management will be hosted by Slovakia in late spring 2010 to consider how to apply and extend guidance provided by the Slovak case to other countries in the region;

(c) **Building safety:** An international workshop on building and construction safety is expected to be hosted by Azerbaijan and to take place in Baku in spring 2010.

⁴ See www.ee-housing.com