

COMMISSION  
OF THE  
EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

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Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In 1948, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted and proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights "as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations". Nearly 30 years later, the gap between reality and aspiration is immense, not least in respect of the right to shelter. If we recall that the population of the world is expected to double within the next 30 years, we can scarcely imagine what sort of world we will leave to our descendants if people and public authorities do not take action now which matches the scale of the demand for shelter and settlements which will result from this doubling of population.

May I therefore congratulate the United Nations on its decision to convene this great gathering of the representatives of mankind and our Canadian hosts on the arrangements they have made to receive us. I am confident that governments and international organisations will respond to the needs and the opportunities presented to us at this Conference, by deciding to take effective action to bring about "the rapid and continuous improvement in the quality of life of all people" which the declaration of principles describes as the foremost goal of human settlements policy.

The states which founded the European Economic Community set themselves the same goal. They determined to lay the foundations of an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe and affirmed as the essential objective of their efforts "the constant improvement of the living and working conditions of their peoples".

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The activities of the Communities related to human settlements cover a wide range, which includes the construction and modernisation of housing for workers, policies and actions concerning social affairs, environment, regional development and transport. The Communities, through the European Development Fund and the European Investment Bank, assist developing countries to equip themselves with essential facilities such as schools, hospitals, water supply systems and roads.

#### Housing construction and modernisation

The European Coal and Steel Community has assisted the construction or modernisation of over 140,000 dwellings. In the experimental modernisation programme, over 800 houses in 9 different places were improved. The programme showed how it is possible to create modern living conditions at 25-40 % of the cost of constructing new dwellings. Following the success of this programme, the Commission emphasizes modernisation within its housing programmes, thus supporting the increased efforts of Member States to safeguard and improve their housing stock wherever possible without resort to wholesale demolition and replacement.

#### Community Policies

The European Coal and Steel Community and the European Economic Community have been immensely successful in removing barriers to trade between the Member States and in promoting the free movement of persons and capital within the Communities. The citizens of the Member States have benefitted by receiving higher incomes and a wider choice of goods. But prosperity has not reached all areas or all social classes nor has it been achieved without damage to the environment.

The need for remedial action became clear. In 1973, the limited actions for the protection of the environment which had been carried out by the ECSC were replaced by a comprehensive Programme of Action on the Environment proposed by the Commission and adopted by the Council of Ministers. This was followed by the Social Action Programme in 1974 and the creation of the Regional Fund and the Regional Policy Committee in 1975.

The Programme of Action on the Environment set out the objectives and principles of environmental policy and described the measures to be taken to reduce pollution and nuisances and to improve the environment. A programme is no more than a statement of good intentions unless it is implemented. I am glad to be able to say that the Commission has proposed and the Council of Ministers has adopted, or is actively considering, legislation to reduce the various forms of water and air pollution and of noise, to control the disposal of wastes and to regulate the composition of certain products and the activities of particular industries. These measures will improve the quality of life for everyone but particularly for urban dwellers, who are now subjected to the dangers and nuisances resulting from the concentration of people and activities in cities. Studies have been made of the causes and effects of the growth of a megalopolis in North-West Europe and of the environmental problems found in city centres and coastal areas. In addition, a European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions has been established in Ireland, to promote research into the factors which influence the quality of the living and working environments. These activities will be continued and extended under the second programme which the Commission has recently proposed.

A society may be judged by the way it treats its weakest members. Housing for two groups of people who are seriously disadvantaged, migrant workers and handicapped persons, is given priority in the Social Action Programme. There are disadvantaged regions also, which are predominantly agricultural or which are affected by industrial change or structural underemployment. 1300 million units of account (about \$ 1625 m) will be available from the European Regional Development Fund, in the period 1975-1977, to assist Member States in their efforts to promote development in disadvantaged areas and so help to rectify imbalances in growth and to reduce the concentration of production and population in highly-developed areas.

As for the impact of road transport on the environment the Communities have already introduced several measures while others

have been proposed by the Commission to the Council of Ministers. The measures already adopted relate to motor vehicle noise levels and air pollution from internal combustion engines. The proposals before the Council of Ministers cover the strengthening of noise level regulations, the regulation of the lead and sulphur content of fuels, and, particularly important, maximum weights and dimensions for lorries.

This sketch of the Communities' policies and actions may have given you the impression that the Communities are almost entirely preoccupied with their internal social, economic and environmental problems. To right the balance, I shall now outline our development aid policy.

#### Development Aid Policy

In 1975, a group of 46 African, Caribbean and Pacific countries concluded negotiations for a new, enlarged and deepened relationship with the Communities. The new ACP-EEC Convention of Lomé, which came into force on 1 April 1976, represents not just an extension of the former association policies but marks a significant step in the rapidly evolving relationship between the developed and developing countries.

A large European Development Fund (the fourth in the series and amounting to 3,500 million u. a. or about \$ 4375 m) will be deployed, as in the past, in the form of non-repayable grants aimed at the development of production, infrastructure, social services, trade promotion, etc. Particular emphasis will be placed on the provision of infrastructure (especially health facilities) in rural areas. In addition, ACP goods, with the exception of that tiny fraction of ACP trade in areas covered by the Community's common agricultural policy -where a preferential arrangement applies) will be accorded free entry into the Community. Innovative features of the Convention include an imaginative scheme to seek to stabilise earnings from exports on which ACP economies are particularly dependent and proposals to establish a centre for industrial development.

I can safely assert, Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen, that the European Communities are outward-looking, in character and practice, as evidenced as the Lomé Convention and by their participation

in the work of the United Nations and its agencies, including especially the U. N. Environment Programme. By contributing their experience and resources, the Communities have demonstrated their willingness to share in the common effort to reduce and eliminate the deficiencies in human settlements and to promote "social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom". It is my duty, and my privilege to assure you, on behalf of the Commission of the European Communities, that we share the concern and the hopes which have brought us all here and that we want the decisions of this Conference to match the needs and the expectations of mankind for adequate shelter in settlements which enhance human life.

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