

Professionals Role in Implementation the Habitat Agenda and Agenda 21 – Habitat Professionals Forum

**Dr. Irene WIESE-VON OFEN, President of the International Federation of Housing
and Planning (IFHP) and Chair of the Habitat Professionals Forum, Germany**

Key words: Agenda 21, HABITAT-Agenda, HABITAT Professionals Forum, UNCHS.

ABSTRACT

Ideas and expectations of international professional NGO's to help implementing the HABITAT Agenda by co-operation and mutual support and expertise.

CONTACT

Dr.-Ing. Irene Wiese-von Ofen
President of the **International Federation for Housing and Planning**
43 Wassenaarseweg
The Hague
THE NETHERLANDS
Tel. + 31 70 324 4557
Fax + 31 70 328 2085
E-mail: IFHP.NL@inter.NL.net
Home address :
Am Siepenhang 14
D-45136 Essen
GERMANY
Tel. + 49 201 261 649
Fax + 49 201 256 323
E-mail: bbass@t-online.de

Professionals Role in Implementation the Habitat Agenda and Agenda 21 – Habitat Professionals Forum

**Dr. Irene WIESE-VON OFEN, President of the International Federation of Housing
and Planning (IFHP) and Chair of the Habitat Professionals Forum, Germany**

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for the honorable invitation to speak to you on behalf of my organization, the International Federation for Housing and Planning (IFHP), a non-governmental organization with individual and corporate members in 48 countries, founded in 1913 by Sir Ebenezer Howard as Garden City Society. The ideal of giving people an owned home in a secure and healthy environment has its actuality since fairly one hundred years. IFHP offers annual congresses with outstanding performances, new insights and experimental discoveries brought to a broad audience. IFHP offers international working parties and is organizing every two years a student's competition, student's summer schools and a seminar meeting for seniors.

The other reason to thank for the opportunity to speak to you arises from the fact that I've the honor to chair the Steering Committee of the UN-Habitat Professionals Forum.

We all know that the global changes are being enormous challenges for our profession as urban planners, architects, engineers, surveyors, economists and constructors dealing with the urban issues. Economic and demographic change poses in our times challenges on urban planning and management of urban processes and governance, on housing and education.

1. THE UN-CONFERENCES

At the Rio-Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 a fragile consensus was reached about the main goals of the Agenda 21:

- Reduction of the carbon diocese emissions by the year 2010
- Reaching this aim by improving the housing stock
- Protection of water and soil
- Begin a dialogue with social and other groups of public concern, NGO's and CBO's
- To get committed through global and local Agenda 21-Processes to a more sustainable development.

At the "World City Summit" – so called by Dr. Toepfer, Executive Director of Habitat and UNEP, on the UN-Conference on Human settlements in Istanbul 1996 – and Istanbul +5 in the year 2001 in New York, there was a nationwide agreement on the main commitments of

- Adequate shelter for all
- Sustainable human settlements
- Enabling strategies and participation

- Financing shelter and human settlements
- International co-operation
- Assessing progress.

There are close connections between these two Agendas, Agenda 21 of the Rio Conference and the HABITAT Agenda of the Istanbul-Conference. To the developing countries' mind Agenda 21 suffered at the beginning too much from emphasis for environment and not enough from development, where else the HABITAT Agenda was seen more than a document for the need of the developing world. On the other hand the developed countries learned to place a greater emphasis on the social and economic aspects regarding the environment and poverty reduction, so that the more global momentum towards sustainable development and the more local need of shelter, infrastructure, gender equality and education are getting the more and more included in the concept of an "enabling approach" integrating Agenda 21 as well as the HABITAT Agenda.

2. THE PROFESSIONALS FORUM

One of the strategies for implementation of the HABITAT Agenda and the Agenda 21 is to encourage the civil society and the private sector to develop planning and policy making procedures that facilitate partnerships and co-operation between governments and civil society on all levels. Propositional NGO's as a very strong part of the civil society begin to be more and more aware of their responsibility in the field of co-operation. The internationally operating organizations of UIA, FIG, IsoCaRP and IFHP came in 1999 to an understanding to organize a Professionals Forum:

- In Nairobi 1999 at the Preparing Committee Session
- In Berlin 2000 at the Urban 21 Congress
- In New York 2001 at the Istanbul+5 UNGASS.

A Professional Forum offers a platform of exchanging experience and learning from one another, is giving possibilities of discussion about methods, best practices and indicators for planning approach and participation, processes in the different fields of urban planning on regional and local level in different countries of the world. The idea behind is, that professional organizations could offer

- Knowledge about environmentally sound and efficient construction methods and technologies (pt.40/(f) of the HA)
- Enabling local leaderships through training, dialogues, field visits (pt.45/(a) of the HA)
- Promoting responsive international co-operation (pt. 50/(c) of the HA)
- Giving platforms for discussion about enablement, transparency and participation (pt.59/(a)-(e) of the HA)
- Helping for renewing and adjusting legally and regulatory framework (nationally and internationally) (pt. 79/(f),(i), of the HA).

We must be aware, that whereas sustainability cannot be ordered the idea of sustainability as well as the implementation is a process of learning on different levels. To implement this ongoing process of learning, you need reliable structures for the different active persons and

institutions as well as organizations. These are on the one hand the governments. On the other hand there is the civil society, which has always played and will play a more important role in this process of transforming our way of life from today to a more lasting lifestyle and sustainability offering future. Mediator in these processes are the non-governmental organizations acting at the point of intersection and offering their talents and experience. The Professional Forum's Organizations like the International Federation for Housing and Planning (IFHP), the leading international network in the field of housing and planning, the Union Internationale des Architectes (UIA), the hosting FIG, as a big organization of surveyors – worldwide recognized and appreciated – stand for co-operation in the field of assess to land in general, planning and architecture as the key elements of urban design.

Important prerequisite to achieve the implementation of the Habitat Agenda is for me to be aware of the different quickness

- of the technical and economical structural changes
- of the more indolent, more traditional social - political structures
- of the ecological processes with their own long lasting laws of nature and continued evolution.

An integrated approach is therefore the only chance to succeed. The organizations being a member of the Professionals Forum with their organizational members and individual members, are representing the variety of disciplines which together constitute the field of housing and planning, based on recent improving of land information systems, offers its knowledge and expertise in such an integrated approach in cooperation with governmental organizations and local authorities.

3. OPINION ON THE STATUS OF FOLLOW-UP OF THE HABITAT AGENDA

A variety of the disciplines ought to be involved in the follow-up of the Habitat Agenda with a high standard in education, in architecture, urban and regional planning, traffic and transportation planning, ecology, geography, sociology, political sciences, economy, finance, law, health, statistics, logistics and informatics to work together on this huge task. The higher the knowledge in the relevant disciplines, the better the chance of an impact assessment during the organizing process of the integrated approach. Organizations with a sectional wide horizon may be helpful supplementary to the public sector acting due to different sectorized responsibilities. To accept lifelong learning and to react with knowledge as well as fantasy in a creative manner in the moment of being aware of the ongoing change of technical or economical conditions or lifestyle patterns seems to be another point that NGO's may master easier than governments, although they are dependent on reliable governmental frameworks. Their experience in balancing different interests and in getting people involved in concrete projects and grass roots activities should be used for the benefit of the follow - up process of the Habitat Agenda together with the public and private sectors.

Therefore it is important to make the Habitat agenda more known throughout the different population groups. In the most European countries and most of the cities the efforts of organizing a Local Agenda 21 process are going on. The HABITAT Agenda should be related

to the Local Agenda 21 by the local authorities through organizing special events, developing PR - strategies, enlightening on special topics in housing and planning. On national levels the objectives of the Habitat Agenda should be included into education curricula and especially in research priorities. Financial support may be given to those who are able and willing to act in relation to the governments as well as to the citizens. This is for me the role of the NGO's. They should be accepted as responsible mediators. In any case governments as well as different actors should be involved together with them, because commitments are to be fulfilled only through common efforts.

4. CO-OPERATION WITH UNITED NATIONS CENTER FOR HUMAN SETTLEMENTS (UNCHS)

The four organizations acting as professionals Forum offer their annual congresses such as this FIG Congress here in Washington, the UIA Congress in July 2002 in Berlin and the IFHP Congress in Tianjin/China in September 2002. Each of us is involved in bringing special speakers or results of different reports or researches to the audience. We would think about organizing special regional conferences or seminars on special themes of the Habitat Agenda as we did at the United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) in June 2001 on Istanbul+5 in New York. We offered on three days workshops synchronously to the official sessions during lunch times two hours with good speakers on

- Secure tenure
- Governance
- Financing

Followed by lively discussions. The participants came from all over the world, mainly architects, town planners and representatives of the housing sector. The exchange of experience, the answering of questions and giving mental help and support encouraged the Steering Committee to continue with the organization of Professionals Forum like here in Washington and in July in Berlin together with Dr.Toepfer, Executive Director UNCHS and UNEP.

5. GIVING A PREVIEW

The four organization of the Professionals Forum would like to offer their working parties on the main topics of the UN:

- Secure tenure
- Good governance
- Best practices in architecture, design and construction

and we'll discuss and organize special events on housing topics. At the first step we focus our efforts on UN-Global-Campaign of UNCHS, but we are on the way to develop some initiatives such as the German Federation on Housing and Planning as well as the Finnish Federation on Housing and Planning which are working very closely together with their governments to help Russian cities and other cities in transition and governmental organizations to implement a housing market, to find organizational structures for maintenance etc. Examples like the initiative of the European Union on implementing a

special program in residential areas with problems of unemployment, foreign population and industrial decline show, that the integrated approach of revitalizing brown fields, particular low cost housing, qualification programs for unemployed most young people in special building and construction measures is very successful. These are examples how in concrete terms the high level commitments of the Habitat Conference are being already undertaken at the grass roots in the different European countries and in some cases in partnership with cities and organizations in other continents like South America or Africa. The Professionals Forum wants to support initiatives of the UNCHS, so that we are able to double our efforts for the benefit of Habitat issues. We are open to work together and to share our positive experience.

One of the most important agreements made in Istanbul on the Habitat Agenda as far as I see was the outlining of the importance of participation. Strengthening the role of major groups through broad public participation on the level of cities and quarters must be organized. In case there is no consensus to achieve, democratic decision making authorities are to be integrated in the process. This needs very sensible and knowledgeable as well as competent organizers who know their role as mediators. Professionals as architects and town planners are on the way to integrate experience in local participation processes in their education so that they do not only graduate in the technical field more and more but they get increasing knowledge in dealing with people. This is important to implement enabling strategies for self-improvement in the different countries and is the most important approach to sustainable development of our living situations.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to share some aspects and considerations of helping to implement the HABITAT Agenda worldwide.