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**PRELIMINARY REPORT ON THE THEME:
"MANAGEMENT OF URBAN AND RURAL AREAS IN THE
CONTEXT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT"**

Task Manager: Egypt

MANAGEMENT OF URBAN AND RURAL AREAS IN THE CONTEXT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

I. Preamble

Sustainable management of urban/rural development derives its importance from the theme itself since it deals with places, human beings and their interaction with the environment.

The international agenda would not be complete without a response to the real needs of people for suitable, accessible and healthy shelter based upon the right to shelter provided for within the framework of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

As the international community has already agreed upon the main priorities in relation to international cooperation for development of human settlements, it is now the turn of the Mediterranean region, as organized within the MCSD, to draw up its strategy for regional cooperation with a view to improving the Mediterranean environment that has been affected by the unsustainable conduct, policies and activities in rural and urban areas.

The urbanization process in the Mediterranean region is one of the main sources of the environmental problems affecting the Mediterranean Sea, in particular in the southern and eastern Mediterranean. This underlines the need for a sustainable development programme to alleviate the effects of local immigration in cities and urban areas.

Sustainable development policies are also required in order to manage mega-cities and find ways and means to lessen their problems.

The economic, social and environmental problems caused by the concentration of population in large urban centres need to be addressed as the environmental protection and socio-economic factors in the Mediterranean are interdependent.

II. Fields of activity

Management of urban and rural development should address the following issues:

1. How urban and rural areas are managed in the Mediterranean region;
2. The current management strategies at both national and regional levels (where these exist) and aspects of success and failure in application (implementation);
3. Possibility of formulating diagnoses to respond to different types of region;
4. Action to be taken to restore the balance in the regions;
5. Instruments that may be effective in managing urban and rural areas;
6. Partnership for development at national and regional levels (pilot programmes and specific models);
7. Role to be played by partners in urban and rural development:

- (a) governments (national);
 - (b) socio-economic actors and other stakeholders;
 - (c) NGOs;
 - (d) Mediterranean institutions.
8. Harmonization of the urbanization process undertaken at the national level in Mediterranean countries;
 9. Potential for cooperation to establish a Mediterranean strategy on sustainable development activities in urban and rural areas with a view to safeguarding the Mediterranean and reducing pollution;
 10. Sustainable urban development and natural disaster reduction in the Mediterranean;
 11. Long-term proposals on establishing a Mediterranean forum on sustainable urban/rural development management.

III. Method of work

1. Activities should be conducted on three parallel levels:
 - (a) academic studies and research to analyse, compile and reflect on past and present problems and propose ways and means to resolve them;
 - (b) exchange of practical experiences at the national and subregional level;
 - (c) joint meetings between the task managers of this working group and the working groups on sustainable management of coastal zones, information, awareness and participation, and management of water demand.
2. To fulfil the mandate it is proposed:
 - (a) to take into account the outcome of the 2nd United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (HABITAT II, Istanbul, June 1996);
 - (b) to benefit from the decisions and recommendations of the United Nations Commission on Human Settlements (Nairobi, May 1997);
 - (c) to consult national plans of action of member States of MCSD for implementation of the HABITAT agenda;
 - (d) to take into account the relevant chapters of MED 21 and Agenda 21, as well as the outcome of the special session of the United Nations General Assembly on the global review "Rio + 5".
3. Cooperation between the working group and the following is recommended:
 - (a) National committees on human settlements in MCSD member States as appropriate;
 - (b) United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (HABITAT);
 - (c) interested United Nations agencies, in particular FAO, WHO and UNESCO;

- (d) relevant Mediterranean institutions involved in sustainable development;
- (e) task managers of the working groups on sustainable management of coastal zones, management of water demand, and information, awareness and participation.

IV. Proposed Calendar of Activities

1. Preparatory meeting: Nice, end of June/first half of July 1997.
Task manager and Blue Plan/RAC will meet with experts and supporting European institutions to formulate:

- (a) analysis of outcome of ongoing activities;
- (b) main elements for short and long term strategy;
- (c) priorities for future activities;
- (d) proposals for October meeting of the working group

Note: contributions by members of the working group, as well as by all other members of the MCSD, are welcomed and should be sent to the task manager by the second week of June 1997 to be taken into account when formulating draft proposals.

2. October 1997: Meeting of the working group (Marseille, France in parallel with the third meeting of the MCSD, to consider a draft proposal on the terms of reference and the future calendar of activities proposed for the year 1998.

3. April 1998: Workshop - 3 days.

Theme: "Studies, research and information potential related to a Mediterranean strategy for sustainable development in urban and rural areas in the 21st century. Venue and precise date will be decided in close consultation with task manager and MAP Coordinating Unit and communicated to all members.

4. September 1998: Second meeting of the Working Group - venue and precise date to be considered at the working group meeting in October 1997.

This meeting will consider the final report of the working group to be presented to the MCSD and to the Contracting Parties on the fields of activities for implementation of MED 21 in relation to sustainable development of urban and rural areas (policies, programmes and cooperation).

5. 1999: Drawing up of a regional cooperation strategy for sustainable development of urban and rural areas in the Mediterranean in the first decade of the 21st century (meeting of the working group - workshop, as well as follow-up activities to be considered during the April 1998 workshop).