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**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE**

COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

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**DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AT THE LOCAL LEVEL**

Introduction

1. According to the ECE Strategy for a Sustainable Quality of Life in Human Settlements in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (ECE/HBP/120), the main goal of the ECE Committee on Human Settlements is “to promote the sustainable development of human settlements in the ECE region while fostering economic and social prosperity and supporting democratic governance.” Effective spatial planning is indispensable to avoid unsustainable urban and regional development, to ensure the restoration and safeguarding of the cultural and architectural heritage, to achieve an optimal mixture of living and working areas, to strengthen social cohesion, and to improve the infrastructure. The idea should be to create a more balanced community, as opposed to the dormitory type, with a wide range of job opportunities in local businesses, community services, schools, health care and industry.

2. The 9<sup>th</sup> ECE Conference on Urban and Regional Research “Sustainable and Liveable Cities” (Leeds, United Kingdom, June 2002) stressed the necessity to create a common vision to help overcome the increasing fragmentation among actors in civil society, the market and the public sphere. The common vision should cover all levels of urban life: national, regional, city, municipal and neighbourhood. Communicative planning as commonly conceptualized includes a strong consensual element, which also reflects a current trend in democratic theory, where deliberative and discursive democracy have become the catchwords. A possible role for the planner, in a world where politics seems to become increasingly fragmented, is to act as a mediator between different groups.

3. The ECE Committee on Human Settlements through its activities on the country profiles of the housing sector and the Working Party on Land Administration in the land administration reviews addressed particular needs of countries in Central and Eastern Europe in establishing modern spatial planning systems. The ECE Committee on Environmental Policy in its environmental performance reviews on Albania, Armenia, Georgia, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovenia prepared special chapters on spatial planning. In all these studies the need to reform the spatial planning system (with the focus on the local level) in countries in transition was stressed. Many countries of the ECE region need knowledge about modern methodologies and approaches to be able to modernize their spatial planning systems, prepare and implement master plans, and plan community development.

4. The purpose of this discussion paper is to facilitate the sharing of experience and good practices in local planning among all countries of the ECE region. The discussion should help planners and other actors in urban development understand how to create more effective urban planning systems, which could deliver more sustainable urban development evolving over the time, and a better quality of life through integrated approaches, both across policy sectors and also across levels of administration. The planning system should be seen as a means for integrating policies and decision-making across administrative levels and economic sectors.

5. The Committee may wish to consider the need and possibilities for preparing ECE guidelines on local planning (with special reference to countries in transition) as a follow-up to the discussion, and establish a task force for this activity.

### **Community development planning**

6. In addition to focusing on land and buildings, modern community development planning now also focuses on a broad range of additional issues and factors: social, economic, environmental, financial, etc. It should be participatory and inclusive, flexible and dynamic, sensitive to immediate needs and issues, as well as to long-term goals. Such development planning should be accompanied by short-term action planning. Planning should be a continuous exercise, a learning process, not a "one-off" activity. Below is a general outline for a local development planning framework. At the same time, local planning should be an integral part of strategic national and regional social, environmental and economic planning and development.

7. The delegations are invited to discuss the following issues:

- (a) Distribution of responsibilities between different administrative levels: central, regional and local government;
- (b) Functions of local planning (plan);
- (c) The role of the planner;
- (d) Background studies for local plans;
- (e) Community development tools: master plans, zoning plans, subdivisional controls, urban design plans, cultural and historic preservation regulations, building and other codes, environmental impact assessment regulations, financial instruments (tax and spending powers) and private sector initiatives;
- (f) Particular problems in countries in Central and Eastern Europe.