

TELEX MESSAGE RECEIVED FROM
DR. ARCOT RAMACHANDRAN

TELEX FROM DR. ARCOT RAMACHANDRAN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
U.N. HABITAT, NAIROBI, TO THE HONOURABLE GRO HARLEM
BRUNDTLAND, CHAIRMAN, WORLD COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENT
AND DEVELOPMENT, CC. J. MACNEILL, SECRETARY, 15 ROUTE
DES MORILLONS, 1211 GENEVA (SWITZERLAND)

RECEIVED On 9/17/1984

1. APPRECIATE VERY MUCH THE INVITATION TO ADDRESS THE
INAUGURAL MEETING OF THE COMMISSION.
2. UNFORTUNATELY I HAVE A PRIOR AND LONG-STANDING
COMMITMENT WITH JAPAN WHICH PREVENTS MY PARTICIPATION
AT THE INAUGURAL MEETING.
3. I WOULD APPRECIATE IT IF YOU WOULD CONVEY THE FOLLOWING
MESSAGE TO THE COMMISSION AT THE INAUGURAL MEETING:
4. I SINCERELY REGRET THAT I AM UNABLE TO JOIN YOU AT
EXTREMELY IMPORTANT INAUGURAL MEETING BECAUSE OF A
PRIOR AND LONG-STANDING COMMITMENT WITH JAPAN.
5. HAD I BEEN THERE, I WOULD HAVE PARTICULARLY EMPHASIZED
THE CLEAR LINKAGES BETWEEN ENVIRONMENT AND HUMAN
SETTLEMENTS. THE MOST PROMINENT AND FUNDAMENTAL LINK
IS THE WORD "HUMAN". WE NOW COMMONLY SPEAK OF THE HUMAN
ENVIRONMENT AND OF HUMAN SETTLEMENTS.

FOR PROBLEMS BOTH OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND OF SETTLEMENTS,
HUMAN BEINGS ARE THE CRITICAL FACTOR AT THE END AND THE
BEGINNING OF THE PROCESS. HUMAN BEINGS ARE AT THE END
BECAUSE PRIORITIES AMONG PROBLEMS ARE LARGELY DETERMINED
ACCORDING TO THE ACTUAL OR THREATENED EFFECTS ON PEOPLE.
HUMAN BEINGS ARE ALSO AT THE BEGINNING, BECAUSE THE
PROBLEMS ARISE IN THE FIRST PLACE LARGELY AS THE
RESULT OF ILL-CONCEIVED OR MISDIRECTED HUMAN ACTIVITIES.

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6. HOWEVER, OUR CONCERN IS MORE THAN FOR HUMAN BEINGS ✓
GENERALLY. IT IS AND MUST BE CONCENTRATED ON THE
POOR. FOR BOTH AREAS OF ENVIRONMENT AND SETTLEMENTS
IT IS THEIR POVERTY WHICH IS BOTH A MAJOR CAUSE AND
EFFECT.
7. IT IS THE POOREST COUNTRIES WHICH MOST LACK THE
TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES TO PROTECT THEIR
ENVIRONMENT AND THEIR FUTURE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. IT
IS THE POOR WITHIN THOSE COUNTRIES WHO CANNOT AFFORD
KEROSENE FOR COOKING AND MUST CUT TREES FOR FIREWOOD
AND IMPROVERISH THEIR OWN AREA AND FUTURE THROUGH
DEFORESTATION AND INCREASED SOIL EROSION, AND IT
IS THE POOR ; COMPELLED BY THEIR OWN POVERTY AND
DIMINISHED PROSPECTS IN RURAL AREAS, WHO ARE STREAMING
IN EVER INCREASING NUMBER INTO SLUMS AND SQUATTER AREAS IN
AND AROUND MAJOR SETTLEMENTS.
8. IT IS IN THESE SLUM AND SQUATTER AREAS WHERE A NEW AND
CRUEL CYCLE OF CAUSE AND EFFECTS OCCUR, WHERE NEW
ENVIRONMENTAL AND SETTLEMENTS PROBLEMS ARE CREATED.
AND, IN ALL CASES, IT IS THE POOR WHO SUFFER THE MOST.
9. WE MUST BREAK THAT CYCLE. PAST POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES
AT THE NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVELS HAVE TOO
OFTEN CONCENTRATED TOO MUCH ON THE SYMPTOMS AND EFFECTS
RATHER THAN ON THE CAUSES, ON CURATIVE ACTIONS RATHER
THAN PREVENTIVE MEASURES.
10. A PRINCIPAL TASK OF THE COMMISSION WILL BE TO HELP
GUIDE ALL OF US, AT THE NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL
LEVELS, TOWARDS POSITIVE AND PRACTICAL POLICIES LEADING
TO MORE SUSTAINABLE FORMS AND PATTERNS OF ECONOMIC AND
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT.
11. I AND MY COLLEAGUES AT THE UN CENTRE FOR HUMAN
SETTLEMENTS OFFER YOU OUR FULL CO-OPERATION. I ADD MY
VERY BEST WISHES FOR SUCCESS AT YOUR INAUGURAL MEETING
AND THE HOPE THAT WE WILL BE ABLE TO HAVE A FULL EXCHANGE
OF VIEWS, YOUR NEXT SESSION.
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