



## Open Gates Cooperation Circles

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[Human Settlements](#) | [Sustainable Development](#) | [Water](#) | [Education](#) | [Culture of Peace](#) | [Index](#)

**From the report of Habitat:  
United Nations Conference on Human Settlements  
Vancouver, Canada, 31 May to 11 June 1976**

### **The Vancouver Declaration on Human Settlements**

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### **The Vancouver Declaration On Human Settlements**

*HABITAT: United Nations Conference on Human Settlements,*

*Aware* that the Conference was convened following recommendation of the [United Nations Conference on the Human Environment](#) and subsequent resolutions of the General Assembly, particularly [resolution 3128 \(XXVIII\)](#) by which the nations of the world expressed their concern over the extremely serious condition of human settlements, particularly that which prevails in developing countries,

*Recognizing* that international co-operation, based on the principles of the [United Nations Charter](#), has to be developed and strengthened in order to provide solutions for world problems and to create an international community based on equity, justice and solidarity.

*Recalling* the decisions of the [United Nations Conference on the Human Environment](#), as well as the recommendations of the World Population Conference, the United Nations World Food Conference, the Second General Conference of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the World Conference of the International Women's Year; the [Declaration](#) and [Programme of Action](#) adopted by the sixth special session of the General Assembly of the United Nations and the [Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States](#) that establish the basis of the New International Economic Order,

*Noting* that the condition of human settlements largely determines the quality of life, the improvement of which is a prerequisite for the full satisfaction of basic needs, such as employment, housing, health services, education and recreation,

*Recognizing* that the problems of human settlements are not isolated

from the social and economic development of countries and that they cannot be set apart from existing unjust international economic relations,

*Being deeply concerned* with the increasing difficulties facing the world in satisfying the basic needs and aspirations of peoples consistent with principles of human dignity,

*Recognizing* that the circumstances of life for vast numbers of people in human settlements are unacceptable, particularly in developing countries, and that, unless positive and concrete action is taken at national and international levels to find and implement solutions, these conditions are likely to be further aggravated, as a result of:

- *Inequitable economic growth*, reflected in the wide disparities in wealth which now exist between countries and between human beings and which condemn millions of people to a life of poverty, without satisfying the basic requirements for food, education, health services, shelter, environmental hygiene, water and energy;
- *Social, economic, ecological and environmental deterioration* which are exemplified at the national and international levels by inequalities in living conditions, social segregation, racial discrimination, acute unemployment, illiteracy, disease and poverty, the breakdown of social relationships and traditional cultural values and the increasing degradation of life-supporting resources of air, water and land;
- *World population growth* trends which indicate that numbers of mankind in the next 25 years would double, thereby more than doubling the need for food, shelter and all other requirements for life and human dignity which are at the present inadequately met;
- *Uncontrolled urbanization* and consequent conditions of overcrowding, pollution, deterioration and psychological tensions in metropolitan regions;
- *Rural backwardness* which compels a large majority of mankind to live at the lowest standards of living and contribute to uncontrolled urban growth;
- *Rural dispersion* exemplified by small scattered settlements and isolated homesteads which inhibit the provision of infrastructure and services, particularly those relating to water, health and education;
- *Involuntary migration*, politically, racially, and economically motivated, relocation and expulsion of people from their national homeland.

**Recognizing also that the establishment of a just and equitable world economic order through necessary changes in the areas of international trade, monetary**

**systems, industrialization, transfer of resources, transfer of technology, and the consumption of world resources, is essential for socio-economic development and improvement of human settlement, particularly in developing countries,**

***Recognizing further that these problems pose a formidable challenge to human understanding, imagination, ingenuity and resolve, and that new priorities to promote the qualitative dimensions to economic development, as well as a new political commitment to find solutions resulting in the practical implementation of the New International Economic Order, become imperative:***

## **I. Opportunities and Solutions**

1. Mankind must not be daunted by the scale of the task ahead. There is need for awareness of and responsibility for increased activity of the national Governments and international community, aimed at mobilization of economic resources, institutional changes and **international solidarity** by:

- a. Adopting bold, meaningful and effective human settlement policies and spatial planning strategies realistically adapted to local conditions;
- b. Creating more livable, attractive and efficient settlements which recognize human scale, the heritage and culture of people and the special needs of disadvantaged groups especially children, women and the infirm in order to ensure the provision of health, services, education, food and employment within a framework of social justice;
- c. Creating possibilities for effective participation by all people in the planning, building and management of their human settlements;
- d. Developing innovative approaches in formulating and implementing settlement programmes through more appropriate use of science and technology and adequate national and international financing;
- e. Utilizing the most effective means of communications for the exchange of knowledge and experience in the field of human settlements;
- f. Strengthening bonds of international co-operation both regionally and globally;
- g. Creating economic opportunities conducive to full employment

where, under healthy, safe conditions, women and men will be fairly compensated for their labour in monetary, health and other personal benefits.

2. In meeting this challenge, human settlements must be seen as an instrument and object of development. The goals of settlement policies are inseparable from the goals of every sector of social and economic life. **The solutions to the problems of human settlements must therefore be conceived as an integral part of the development process of individual nations and the world community.**

3. With these opportunities and considerations in mind, and being agreed on the necessity of finding common principles that will guide Governments and the world community in solving the problems of human settlements, **the Conference proclaims the following general principles and guidelines for action.**

## **II. General Principles**

1. The improvement of the quality of life of human beings is the first and most important objective of every human settlement policy. These policies must facilitate the rapid and continuous improvement in the quality of life of all people, beginning with the satisfaction of the basic needs of food, shelter, clean water, employment, health, education, training, social security without any discrimination as to race, colour, sex, language, religion, ideology, national or social origin or other cause, in a frame of freedom, dignity and social justice.

2. In striving to achieve this objective, priority must be given to the needs of the most disadvantaged people.

3. Economic development should lead to the satisfaction of human needs and is a necessary means towards achieving a better quality of life, provided that it contributes to a more equitable distribution of its benefits among people and nations. In this context particular attention should be paid to the accelerated transition in developing countries from primary development to secondary development activities, and particularly to industrial development.

4. Human dignity and the exercise of free choice consistent with over-all public welfare are basic rights which must be assured in every society. It is therefore the duty of all people and Governments to join the struggle against any form of colonialism, foreign aggression and occupation, domination, apartheid and all forms of racism and racial discrimination referred to in the resolutions as adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations.

5. The establishment of settlements in territories occupied by force is illegal. It is condemned by the international community. However,

action still remains to be taken against the establishment of such settlements.

6. The right of free movement and the right of each individual to choose the place of settlement within the domain of his own country should be recognized and safeguarded.

7. Every State has the sovereign and inalienable right to choose its economic system, as well as its political, social and cultural system, in accordance with the will of its people, without interference, coercion or external threat of any kind.

8. Every State has the right to exercise full and permanent sovereignty over its wealth, natural resources and economic activities, adopting the necessary measures for the planning and management of its resources, providing for the protection, preservation and enhancement of the environment.

9. Every country should have the right to be a sovereign inheritor of its own cultural values created throughout its history, and has the duty to preserve them as an integral part of the cultural heritage of mankind.

10. **Land is one of the fundamental elements in human settlements. Every State has the right to take the necessary steps to maintain under public control the use, possession, disposal and reservation of land.**

Every State has the right to plan and regulate use of land, which is one of its most important resources, in such a way that the growth of population centres both urban and rural are based on a comprehensive land use plan. Such measures must assure the attainment of basic goals of social and economic reform for every country, in conformity with its national and land tenure system and legislation.

11. **The nations must avoid the pollution of the biosphere and the oceans and should join in the effort to end irrational exploitation of all environmental resources, whether non-renewable or renewable in the long term. The environment is the common heritage of mankind** and its protection is the responsibility of the whole international community.

All acts by nations and people should therefore be inspired by a deep respect for the protection of the environmental resources upon which life itself depends.

12. The waste and misuse of resources in war and armaments should be prevented. All countries should make a firm commitment to promote general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control, in particular in the field of nuclear disarmament. Part of the resources thus released should be utilized so as to achieve a better quality of life for humanity and particularly the peoples of developing countries.

13. All persons have the right and the duty to participate, individually and collectively in the elaboration and implementation of policies and programmes of their human settlements.

14. To achieve universal progress in the quality of life, **a fair and balanced structure of the economic relations between States has to be promoted. It is therefore essential to implement urgently the New International Economic Order**, based on the [Declaration and Programme of Action](#) approved by the General Assembly in its sixth special session, and on the [Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States](#).

15. The highest priority should be placed on the rehabilitation of expelled and homeless people who have been displaced by natural or man-made catastrophes, and especially by the act of foreign aggression. In the latter case, all countries have the duty to fully co-operate in order to guarantee that the parties involved allow the return of displaced persons to their homes and to give them the right to possess and enjoy their properties and belongings without interference.

16. Historical settlements, monuments and other items of national heritage, including religious heritage, should be safeguarded against any acts of aggression or abuse by the occupying Power.

17. Every State has the sovereign right to rule and exercise effective control over foreign investments, including the transnational corporations - within its national jurisdiction, which affect directly or indirectly the human settlements programmes.

18. All countries, particularly developing countries, must create conditions which make possible the full integration of women and youth in political, economic and social activities, particularly in the planning and implementation of human settlement proposals and in all the associated activities, on the basis of equal rights, in order to achieve an efficient and full utilization of available human resources, bearing in mind that women constitute half of the world population;

19. International co-operation is an objective and a common duty of all

States, and necessary efforts must therefore be made to accelerate the social and economic development of developing countries, within the framework of favourable external conditions, which are compatible with their needs and aspirations and which contains the due respect for the sovereign equality of all States.

### **III. Guidelines for Action**

1. It is recommended that Governments and international organizations should make every effort to take urgent action as set out in the following Guidelines:

2. **It is the responsibility of Governments to prepare spatial strategy plans and adopt human settlement policies to guide the socio-economic development efforts. Such policies must be an essential component of an over-all development strategy, linking and harmonizing them with policies on industrialization, agriculture, social welfare, and environmental and cultural preservation** so that each supports the other in a progressive improvement in well-being of all mankind.

3. A human settlement policy must seek harmonious integration or co-ordination of a wide variety of components, including, for example, population growth and distribution, employment, shelter, land use, infrastructure and services. Governments must create mechanisms and institutions to develop and implement such a policy.

4. **It is of paramount importance that national and international efforts give priority to improving the rural habitat.** In this context, efforts should be made towards the reduction of disparities between rural and urban areas, as needed between regions and within urban areas themselves, for a harmonious development of human settlements.

5. The demographic, natural and economic characteristics of many countries, require policies on growth and distribution of population, land tenure and localization of productive activities to ensure orderly processes of urbanization and arrange for rational occupation of rural space.

6. Human settlement policies and programmes should define and strive for progressive minimum standards for an acceptable quality of life. These standards will vary within and between countries, as well as over periods of time, and therefore must be subject to change in accordance with conditions and possibilities. Some standards are most appropriately defined in quantitative terms, thus providing precisely defined targets at the local and national levels. Others must be qualitative, with their achievement subject to felt need. At the same

time, **social justice and a fair sharing of resources demand the discouragement of excessive consumption.**

7. Attention must also be drawn to the detrimental effects of transposing standards and criteria that can only be adopted by minorities and could heighten inequalities, the misuse of resources and the social, cultural and ecological deterioration of the developing countries.

8. **Adequate shelter and services are a basic human right** which places an obligation on Governments to ensure their attainment by all people, beginning with direct assistance to the least advantaged through guided programmes of self-help and community action. Governments should endeavour to remove all impediments hindering attainments of these goals. or special importance is the elimination of social and racial segregation, *inter alia*, through the creation of better balanced communities, which blend different social groups, occupation, housing and amenities.

9. **Health is an essential element in the development of the individual and one of the goals of human settlement policies should be to improve environmental health conditions and basic health services.**

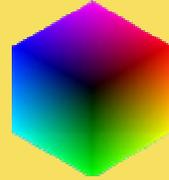
10. Basic human dignity is the right of people, individually and collectively, to participate directly in shaping the policies and programmes affecting their lives. The process of choosing and carrying out a given course of action for human settlement improvement should be designed expressly to fulfil that right. Effective human settlement policies require a continuous co-operative relationship between a Government and its people at all levels. It is recommended that national Governments promote programmes that will encourage and assist local authorities to participate to a greater extent in national development.

11. Since a genuine human settlement policy requires the effective participation of the entire population, recourse must therefore be made at all times to technical arrangements permitting the use of all human resources, both skilled and unskilled. The equal participation of women must be guaranteed. These goals must be associated with a global training programme to facilitate the introduction and use of technologies that maximize productive employment.

### **The Vancouver Action Plan**



## Seasons of Peace Cooperation Circles



<http://habitat.igc.org/open-gates/van-plan.htm>

### **The Vancouver Action Plan**

#### **64 Recommendations for National Action**

Approved at Habitat: United Nations Conference  
on Human Settlements, Vancouver, Canada

31 May to 11 June 1976

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#### **A. Settlement policies and strategies**

Preamble

A.1 A national settlement policy

A.2 Human settlements and development

A.3 Content of national human settlement policy

A.4 More equitable distribution

A.5 Settlement development strategies:

A.6 Allocation of resources

A.7 Constant review

## **B. Settlement planning**

Preamble

- B.1 Settlement planning in national context
- B.2 Indigenous planning models
- B.3 Availability of resources
- B.4 Scope of national settlement planning
- B.5 Regional planning for rural areas
- B.6 Regional planning for metropolitan areas
- B.7 Scope of local planning
- B.8 Improving existing settlements
- B.9 Urban expansion
- B.10 New settlements
- B.11 Individual rural settlements
- B.12 Neighbourhood planning
- B.13 Temporary settlements
- B.14 Planning for disasters
- B.15 Settlement concerns of mobile groups
- B.16 Planning processes

## **C. Shelter, infrastructure and services**

**Preamble**

- C.1 Comprehensive approach to shelter, infrastructure and services**
- C.2 Shelter, infrastructure and services as tools of development**
- C.3 Standards for shelter, infrastructure and services**
- C.4 Designs and technologies for shelter, infrastructure and services**
- C.5 Energy**
- C.6 Long-term cost of shelter, infrastructure and services**
- C.7 National construction industry**
- C.8 Construction by the informal sector**
- C.9 National housing policies**
- C.10 Aided self-help**
- C.11 Infrastructure policy**
- C.12 Water supply and waste disposal**
- C.13 Waste management and prevention of pollution**
- C.14 Transportation and communication**
- C.15 Social services**
- C.16 Services for rural areas**
- C.17 Reorganization of spontaneous urban settlements**
- C.18 Recreation**

## **Land**

**Preamble**

- D.1 Land resource management**
- D.2 Control of land use changes**
- D.3 Recapturing plus value**
- D.4 Public ownership**
- D.5 Patterns of ownerships**
- D.6 Increase in usable land**

## D.7 Information needs

### D. Public participation

Preamble

E.1 Role of public participation

E.2 Participation in the planning process

E.3 Two-way flow

E.4 Wide involvement

E.5 New forms of participation

E.6 Mobilizing resources

### E. Institutions and management

**Preamble**

**F.1 Settlement institutions**

**F.2 Co-ordination of physical and economic planning institutions**

**F.3 Institutional change**

**F.4 The role of special institutions**

**F.5 Institutional incentives to participation**

**F.6 Management of settlements**

**F.7 Human resources**

**F.8 Financial arrangements**

**F.9 Reaching the people**

**F.10 Settlement laws and regulations**

<http://habitat.igc.org/open-gates/vp-d.htm>

## D. Land

Recommendations from the [Vancouver Plan of Action](#), June 1976

[Preamble](#)

[D.1 Land resource management](#)

[D.2 Control of land use changes](#)

[D.3 Recapturing plus value](#)

[D.4 Public ownership](#)

[D.5 Patterns of ownerships](#)

[D.6 Increase in usable land](#)

[D.7 Information needs](#)

### **Preamble**

1. **Land, because of its unique nature and the crucial role it plays in human settlements, cannot be treated as an ordinary asset, controlled by individuals and subject to the pressures and inefficiencies of the market. Private land ownership**

is also a principal instrument of accumulation and concentration of wealth and therefore ***contributes to social injustice***; if unchecked, it may become a major obstacle in the planning and implementation of development schemes. Social justice, urban renewal and development, the provision of decent dwellings-and healthy conditions for the people can only be achieved if land is used in the interests of society as a whole.

2. ***Instead, the pattern of land use should be determined by the long-term interests of the community, especially since decisions on location of activities and therefore of specific land uses have a long-lasting effect on the pattern and structure of human settlements.*** Land is also a primary element of the natural and man-made environment and a crucial link in an often delicate balance. ***Public control of land use is therefore indispensable to its protection as an asset and the achievement of the long-term objectives of human settlement policies and strategies.***

3. **To exercise such control effectively, public authorities require detailed knowledge of the current patterns of use and tenure of land; appropriate legislation defining the boundaries of individual rights and public interest; and suitable instruments for assessing the value of land and transferring to the community, inter alia through taxation, the unearned increment resulting from changes in use, or public investment or decisions, or due to the general growth of the community.**

4. Above all, Governments must have the political will to evolve and implement innovative and adequate urban and rural land policies, as a corner-stone of their efforts to improve the quality of life in human settlements.

## **Recommendation D.1 Land resource management**

- a. Land is one of the most valuable natural resources and it must be used rationally.

***Public ownership or effective control of land in the public interest is the single most important means of improving the capacity of human settlements to absorb changes and movements in population, modifying their internal structure and achieving a more equitable distribution of the benefits of development whilst assuring that environmental impacts are considered.***

**b. Land is a scarce resource whose management should be subject to public surveillance or control in the interest of the nation.**

- c. This applies in particular to land required for:
- i. The extension and improvement of existing settlements, the development of new ones and, in general, the achievement of a more efficient network of human settlements;
  - ii. The implementation of programmes of urban renewal and land-assembly, schemes;
  - iii. The provision of public shelter, infrastructure and services;
  - iv. The preservation and improvement of valuable components of the man-made environment, such as historic sites and monuments and other areas of unique and aesthetic social and cultural value;
  - v. The protection and enhancement of the natural environment especially in sensitive areas of special geographic and ecological significance such as coastal regions and other areas subject to the impact of development, recreation and tourism activities.

• Land is a natural resource fundamental to the economic, social and political development of peoples and therefore Governments must maintain full jurisdiction and exercise complete sovereignty over such land with a view to freely planning development of human settlements throughout the whole of the natural territory. This resource must not be the subject of restrictions imposed by foreign nations which enjoy the benefits while preventing its rational use.

- In all occupied territories, changes in the demographic composition, or the transfer or uprooting of the native population, and the destruction of existing human settlements in these lands and/or the establishment of new settlements for intruders, is inadmissible. The heritage and national identity must be protected. Any policies that violate these principles must be condemned.

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Return to [\[Top\]](#) [\[Action Plan\]](#)

## **Recommendation D.2 Control of land use changes**

**a. Agricultural land, particularly on the periphery of urban areas, is an important national resource without public control land is a prey to speculation and urban encroachment.**

**b. Change in the use of land, especially from agricultural to urban, should be subject to public control and regulation.**

c. Such control may be exercised through:

- i. Zoning and land-use planning as a basic instrument of land policy in general and or control of land-use changes in particular;

**ii. Direct intervention, e.g. the creation of land reserves and land banks, purchase, compensated expropriation and/or pre-emption, acquisition of development rights, conditioned leasing of public and communal land, formation of public and mixed development enterprises;**

**iii. Legal controls, e.g. compulsory registration, changes in administrative boundaries, development building and local permits, assembly and replotting:**

#### **iv. Fiscal controls, e.g. property taxes, tax penalties and tax incentives;**

- v. A planned co-ordination between orderly urban development and the promotion and location of new developments, preserving agricultural land.

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Return to [\[Top\]](#) [\[Action Plan\]](#)

#### **Recommendation D.3 Recapturing plus value**

- a. Excessive profits resulting from the increase in land value due to development and change in use are one of the principal causes of the concentration of wealth in private hands. Taxation should not be seen only as a source of revenue for the community but also as a powerful tool to encourage development of desirable locations, to exercise a controlling effect on the land market and to redistribute to the public at large the benefits of the unearned increase in land values.

**b. The unearned increment resulting from the rise in land values resulting from change in use of land, from public investment or decision or due to the general growth of the community must be subject to appropriate recapture by public bodies (the community), unless the situation calls for other additional measures such as new patterns of ownership, the general acquisition of land by public bodies.**

- c. Specific ways and means include:
  - i. Levying of appropriate taxes, e.g. capital gains taxes, land taxes and betterment charges, and particularly taxes on unused or under-utilized land;
  - ii. Periodic and frequent assessment of land values in and around cities, and determination of the rise in such values relative to the general level of prices;
  - iii. Instituting development charges or permit fees and specifying the time-limit within which construction must start;

#### **iv. Adopting pricing and compensation policies relating**

***to value of land prevailing at a specified time rather than its commercial value at the time of acquisition by public authorities;***

- v. Leasing of publicly owned land in such a way that future increment which is not due to the efforts by the new user is kept by the community;
- vi. Assessment of land suitable for agricultural use which is in proximity of cities mainly at agricultural values.

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Return to [\[Top\]](#) [\[Action Plan\]](#)

#### **Recommendation D.4 Public ownership**

- a. Public ownership of land cannot be an end in itself; it is justified in so far as it is exercised in favour of the common good rather than to protect the interests of the already privileged.
- b. Public ownership, transitional or permanent, should be used, wherever appropriate, to secure and control areas of urban expansion and protection; and to implement urban and rural land reform processes, and supply serviced land at price levels which can secure socially acceptable patterns of development.**
- c. Special consideration should be given to:
  - i. Measures outlined in Recommendations D.2 and D.3 above;
  - ii. Active public participation in land development;
  - iii. Rational distribution of powers among various levels of government, including communal and local authorities, and an adequate system of financial support for land policy.

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Return to [\[Top\]](#) [\[Action Plan\]](#)

#### **Recommendation D.5 Patterns of ownerships**

- a. Many countries are undergoing a process of profound social transformation; a review and restructuring of the entire system of ownership rights is, in the majority of cases, essential to the accomplishment of new national objectives.
- b. Past patterns of ownership rights should be transform 3 to match the**

## **changing needs of society and be collectively beneficial.**

- c. Special attention should be paid to:
  - i. Redefinition of legal ownership including the rights of women and disadvantaged groups and usage rights for a variety of purposes;
  - ii. Promoting land reform measures to bring ownership rights into conformity with the present and future needs of society;
  - iii. Clear definition of public objectives and private ownership rights and duties which may vary with time and place;
  - iv. **Transitional arrangements to change ownership from traditional and customary patterns to new systems, especially in connexion with communal lands, whenever such patterns are no longer appropriate;**
  - v. Methods for the separation of land ownership rights from development rights, the latter to be entrusted to a public authority;
  - vi. Adoption of policies for long-term leasing of land;
  - vii. The land rights of indigenous peoples so that their cultural and historical heritage is preserved.

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Return to [\[Top\]](#) [\[Action Plan\]](#)

### **Recommendation D.6 Increase in usable land**

- a. In view of the limited availability of land for human settlements and the need to prevent the continuing loss of valuable natural areas due to erosion, urban encroachment and other causes, efforts to conserve and reclaim land for both agriculture and settlements without upsetting the ecological balance are imperative.
- b. The supply of usable land should be maintained by all appropriate methods including soil conservation, control of desertification and salination, prevention of pollution, and use of land capability analysis and increased by long-term programmes of land reclamation and preservation.**
- c. Special attention should be paid to:
  - i. Land-fill, especially by using solid wastes in close proximity to human settlements, but without detriment to environment and geological conditions;
  - ii. Control of soil erosion, e.g. through reforestation, flood control, flood plain management, changes in cultivation patterns and methods, and controls on indiscriminate grazing;
  - iii. Control and reversal of desertification and salinization, and recuperation of fertile land from contamination by endemic disease;
  - iv. Reclamation of water-logged areas in a manner that minimizes adverse environmental effects
  - v. Application of new technologies such as those related to flood control, soil conservation and stabilization and irrigation;
  - vi. Prevention of pollution as well as**

**restoration of derelict or damaged land, control of fire and *preservation of the environment from natural and man-made hazards;***

- vii. Economizing land by fixing appropriate densities in areas where land is scarce or rich in agricultural value;
- viii. Proper land capability assessment programmes should be introduced at the local, regional and national levels so that land use allocation will most benefit the community: and areas suited to long-term reclamation and preservation will be identified and appropriate action taken;
- ix. Incorporation of new land into settlements by provision of infrastructure;
- x. Control of the location of human settlements in hazardous zones and important natural areas;**
- xi. Expansion of agricultural lands with proper drainage.

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Return to [\[Top\]](#) [\[Action Plan\]](#)

**Recommendation D.7 Information needs**

- a. Effective land use planning and control measures cannot be implemented unless the public and all levels of government have access to adequate information.
- b. Comprehensive information on land capability, characteristics, tenure, use and legislation should be collected and constantly up-dated so that all citizens and levels of government can be guided as to the most beneficial land use allocation and control measures.**
- c. This implies:
  - i. The establishment of a comprehensive information system involving all levels of government; and accessible to the public;
  - ii. Topographic and cadastral surveys and assessment of land capabilities and current use, and periodic evaluations of the use of the land;
  - iii. Simplification and updating of procedures for collection, analysis and distribution of relevant information in an accurate and comprehensive manner;
  - iv. Introduction of new surveying and mapping technologies suitable to the conditions of the countries concerned;
  - v. Consolidation and effective use of existing or innovative legislation and instruments to implement land policies;**
  - vi. Development and use of methods for assessing**

**economic, social and environmental impacts from proposed projects in a form useful to the public;**

**vii. Consideration of land use characteristics including ecological tolerances and optimum utilization of land so as to minimize pollution, conserve energy, and protect and recover resources;**

viii. Undertake the necessary studies on **precautions** that can be taken to safeguard life and property in case of natural disaster.