The Forty-fourth World Health Assembly,

Noting that from 1950 to 1990 the world’s urban population almost tripled, from 734 million to 2390 million, or from 29% to 45% of the total population of the planet, and that the increase is continuing;

Aware that most of the urban population increase was in cities of developing countries, whose urban population increased five-fold, from 286 million in 1950 to 1515 million in 1990;

Noting that annual urban population growth rates of 3% or more have been common in developing countries, and may continue over the next 20 years; that such growth exceeds the capacity of a city to provide adequate resources, housing, employment and services, and results in the exposure of increasing numbers of urban dwellers to the hazards of poverty, unemployment, inadequate housing, poor sanitation, pollution, disease vectors, poor transport, and psychological and social stress;

Taking account of the conclusions and recommendations of the Technical Discussions held during the Forty-fourth World Health Assembly;

Recalling actions taken by WHO on urban health development;

Recognizing the need for the reappraisal of urban health systems that contribute to the promotion of urban health in the context of health for all;

Noting that the WHO Commission on Health and Environment has identified urbanization as a major driving force of development;


1. URGES Member States:

   (1) to prevent excessive urban population growth by:

      (a) developing national policies that maintain in balance urban population and infrastructure and services, including attention to family planning;

      (b) adjusting urban and rural development policies to provide incentives for the public, industry, the private sector, and government agencies, to prevent excessive concentration of population in potential urban problem areas;
2. CALLS ON the community of international agencies:
   (1) to give proper attention in their programmes to the interrelation between the urban crisis and the growing degradation of the global environment;
   (2) to consider environmental, social and health needs when deciding on their priorities and service allocations and the impact of these decisions on health;
   (3) to develop new ways of providing support to national governments, municipal governments and community organizations to help them address urban health problems as part of urban development programmes;

3. REQUESTS the Director-General:
   (1) to continue to strengthen WHO's information base and ensure its availability to countries and cities for addressing the human and environmental health aspects of urban development;
   (2) to strengthen technical cooperation with and among Member States in urban health development, in order to increase awareness of the needs of the urban poor, develop national skills to meet these needs, and support the extension of city networks for health worldwide;

(2) to strengthen the capacity for healthy urban development by:

   (a) adjusting and implementing policies at all levels to render urban development sustainable and to preserve an environment supportive of health;
   (b) assessing the impact on health of the policies of agencies concerned with energy, food, agriculture, macroeconomic planning, housing, industry, transport and communications, education and social welfare, and adjusting them better to promote healthy communities and a healthy environment in cities;
   (c) developing suitable structures and processes for coherent intersectoral and community participation in the planning and implementation of urban development;

(3) to ensure that responsibilities for urban development and management, including health and social services, are decentralized from the national level to a level compatible with efficient and integrated management and technological requirements;

(4) to give priority to the development, reorientation and strengthening of urban health services based on the primary health care approach, including appropriate referral services, with particular emphasis on responding to the needs of the urban poor;

(5) to strengthen effective and full community participation in urban development, by promoting strong partnerships among government and community organizations, including nongovernmental organizations, the private sector and the local people;

(6) to develop networks of cities and communities for health at national and international levels in order to increase community participation and gain political support for technical programmes to improve health services and environmental health;

(7) to improve information and research in order to relate health data to environmental conditions and health services, and to measure health differentials between parts of the town or city in order to guide municipal authorities in the planning and management of health development programmes;
(3) to promote regional networks and interdisciplinary panels of experts and community leaders, to advise on health aspects of urban development;

(4) to submit a report on progress in the implementation of this resolution to a future World Health Assembly through the Executive Board.