ARCHITECTS' COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DES ARCHITECTES D'EUROPE

Date: 7th March 2007
Ref: 072/07/OL/SEC

ACE Political Statement

EU Summit 8-9 March 2007

Sustainable Architecture & Environment – Energy Efficiency

Final

The ACE commits itself to:

1. An active promotion of the principles of sustainable development
2. The formulation of proposals for concrete action
3. Contribute to the implementation of agreed EU proposals, in terms of that which concerns it directly, as well as in conjunction with other interested organisations.

Spheres that will be addressed by such actions will include the institutional level, the level of the building sector, and the level of individual architects and students in the Member Organisations of the ACE.

Specific early measures will encompass:

1. The inclusion of energy and environmental performance information as an assessment criterion in all architectural competitions and competitive selection procedures
2. The encouragement of similar performance information to accompany all published architectural reviews
3. A recommendation that such performance information becomes an additional criterion in selection processes for public architectural awards.

Background

For several years the ACE has been actively involved in a process of analysis and action at the European level that, among other things, has been aimed at promoting architecture as an important part of the quality of life of European citizens. This has been pursued through diverse economic, social and cultural elements and by reasserting the central role of architects in helping to ensure sustainable, high-quality construction that satisfies the aspirations and needs of clients while preserving the public interest. European architects greatly welcome the enhanced emphasis now accorded to sustainable development with its energy dimension by the European institutions. The need for a holistic and integrated approach and cross-fertilisation is at the centre of the architectural profession's attitude when designing a sustainable built environment.

At the same time the building industry has a key role to play in any agenda for sustainable development for the 21st century. As buildings are the community's principal physical assets, getting good value requires that the full life cycle impacts of all buildings be considered, avoiding short-sighted attempts to merely minimise initial cost. A coherent strategy on sustainable development will seek to prolong the useful life of existing structures, and indeed to prolong the utilisation of the materials with which they were originally constructed. Adaptation is usually preferable to new building, and upgrading of performance usually represents an efficient deployment of resources.

A sustainability ethos in building will require the consideration of environmental implications associated with design, construction, operation and disposal of buildings. The appropriate use of local construction materials will often be preferred, which can also contribute to a regional expression of

buildings thus fostering a sense of place and identity in the built environment, as well as reinforcing European cultural diversity.

Energy is a key part (though only part) of the sustainability issue. It is widely acknowledged that the construction, occupation and running of buildings accounts for close to half of all energy consumption in the EU. Very considerable opportunities exist to improve the energy performance of buildings in Europe. The design and construction of a building that takes optimal advantage of its environment need not impose any significant additional capital cost and, compared to more highly engineered 'conventional' buildings, it may be significantly cheaper to operate, thus bringing direct benefits to owners and society at large.

The present environmental and energy situation and the need for sustainable urban development demands an approach to planning and architecture that addresses both the city and the individual building as complex interactive systems which have symbiotic relationships with their wider surroundings, and which utilises methods such as ecological foot printing to make explicit the relationships between urban resource use and the available supporting productive land.

Energy and sustainability issues cannot be considered only in their technical dimensions, as of their nature, these approaches and systems can have profound architectural implications. Energy efficient architecture and sustainable building is not a style, as will be evident from consideration of successful case studies. The spatial experience in a more sustainable architecture is not necessarily distinctive, except in so far as passive solar buildings, buildings designed to be responsive to climate and ambient conditions, may generate interiors with a dynamic quality informed by changes in daylight and the sun's availability and position, with spaces featuring a sense of the diurnal and seasonal changes in the surrounding environment.

As a profession we encourage public bodies to devise efforts to help produce a culturally driven, competitive and sustainable, high-quality built environment. The ACE is well placed to gather the support and participation of its Member Organisations, who are the representative professional organisations of architects across the EU, in striving to bring about the necessary changes in traditional attitudes within the European building sector.

These actions will contribute to the European Commission's recently-published package of measures to establish a new Energy Policy for Europe to combat climate change and to boost the EU's energy security and competitiveness.

To implement the above principles, notably in the context of the new programming period of the Structural Funds 2007-2013, will have a significant, immediately positive impact in relation to the integrated approach to urban regeneration and renovation of housing, in particular in the New Member States.

Declaration:

The architectural profession is, through its European representative organisation the Architects' Council of Europe (ACE), determined to help deliver high quality, sustainable architecture, that must characterise the built environment in Europe throughout the 21st Century in order that it makes a sizable contribution to resolving the environmental and climatic problems faced by our planet.

End of statement