

Inter-American Housing Union ponders future role

By Eric Carlson

ALTHOUGH the number of participants registered at the 26th annual conference of the Inter-American Housing Union in Quito, Ecuador, was perhaps half that of last year's attendance of 450 at the 25th anniversary meeting held in Cartagena, Colombia, the Union is taking several steps to strengthen its technical services and to enhance its promotional role for housing improvement and financing.

Secretary-general Alfredo Tapia, from the Union's new headquarters in Lima, Peru, has initiated the Strategic Planning Study, 1988-95, which analyses the Union's experience, strengths and weaknesses.

Among the key projects proposed are: the creation of a Latin American Housing Statistics Centre, the building up of library and data bank facilities, the organisation of special technical seminars, and an endeavour to

'Promotional role to be enhanced'

co-ordinate with other entities a project for an Inter-American Forum on Housing for the Americas, to be held at periodic intervals.

In Quito, the US AID Office of Housing announced that it would help by providing resources to the Union for

setting up a Housing Statistics Centre. Other projects are being explored.

In conjunction with the Union's conference in Quito, considerable attention was given to a review of the main recommendations of the International Shelter Conference held in Vienna in October 1986. These recommendations stressed the importance of reformulation of housing policy and approaches so as to clarify the respective roles of the private and public sectors.

Basically, the government role is envisaged as more of a facilitator for private sector participation and implementation. In Quito, public and private sector groupings met separately in these discussions, and then in a joint meeting agreed with the Vienna formulations, stressing the importance of public-private sector partnerships and also the need for formation of national coalitions for action on housing.

A report from Ernesto Wende, president of the Central Savings and Loan Bank of Bolivia, pointed to considerable progress in that country in rationalising and privatising the country's housing programmes and activities, in building a national coalition and foundation, and in embarking on important demonstration projects.

"Technological Innovation and Housing Financing" was the underlying theme of the plenary sessions in Quito. One block of presentations

was devoted to the automation and computerisation of financial institutions in the future.

Julio E. Kneit, president of the Mortgage Bank of Uruguay, presented the report of a multi-country study on "Effects of Housing Construction on Economic Reactivation", and Luis Guillermo Soto, president of Davivienda, the largest corporation for savings and housing in Colombia, presented an interesting and practical report on "Marketing in Savings and Loan Agencies for Housing: The Colombia Experience."

The Board of BIAPE, the Inter-

'Progress in Bolivia'

American Bank for Savings and Loans, with headquarters in Caracas, Venezuela, also met at the time of the Quito conference. Although BIAPE is still studying the possibilities for some equity investment of its small capital in existing housing finance institutions in several countries, there was little new to report.

Jesus Rafael Boada of Venezuela was elected President of the Union for the one year term until the next Inter-American Housing Union Conference, which will be held in Guatemala in 1989. ■