



KENYA PERMANENT MISSION TO UN-HABITAT

CONCEPT NOTE ON RESOLUTION ON ELEVATING ADEQUATE AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING AT THE UNITED NATIONS HABITAT ASSEMBLY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Beyond four walls and a roof, housing is the cornerstone of people's health, dignity, safety and security, inclusion and social well-being. The term adequate housing therefore conveys a broader notion of housing that also includes access and proximity to both basic social and infrastructural services. Homelessness and slums are an extreme manifestation of the lack of adequate housing and a component of a wider policy agenda.

While the issue of inadequate housing has been a challenge for many years, the Covid-19 pandemic has catapulted it to the forefront of the development debate. Over one billion people live in slums and informal settlements around the world and a similar number live in inadequate housing, or are homeless. This includes populations across the global north and south. The global housing deficit is estimated to be 440 million homes by 2025.

Access to affordable housing is a global challenge, which is compounded by the ever-rising rate of urbanization, the high cost of credit, the high cost of land especially in urban areas, and the prohibitive cost of construction. Private sector funds channeled into housing were profit-motivated and largely not within the purchasing power of low-income households.

1.2 Justification of Elevating Adequate and Affordable Housing

The housing crisis is global in nature with all regions facing different deficit levels in terms of adequacy and affordability. UN-Habitat's role in supporting Member States in this regard is critical. The Second Session of the United Nations Habitat Assembly UNHA provides a unique opportunity for UN-Habitat to reposition and scale up this role, which is anchored in its historical roots, vast expertise, and unique leading role within the United Nations on this agenda. This is an opportune moment to elevate the housing agenda at UNHA, and in so doing, revitalize UN-Habitat's role in global coordination, advocacy and policy support.

1.3 Key building blocks needed to achieve adequate and affordable housing

Some of the key building blocks needed to achieve adequate and affordable housing include:-

1.3.1 Recommit to a holistic and human rights-based approach to housing: When addressed through a holistic approach, housing has the potential to deliver a range of social, economic and environmental benefits that particularly help low-income and marginalized groups.

1.3.2 Multi-stakeholder involvement: Achieving the right to adequate housing for all depends on strengthened and coordinated efforts from governments with other stakeholders, including local authorities and private sector.

1.3.3 Evidence-based interventions: Emphasis should be put on the need for careful assessment to avoid one-size-fits-all approaches. More detailed and wide-ranging data on housing conditions is needed in order for national and local governments to guide their housing policies and address housing deprivation and homelessness. Currently, there is a major deficit of data.

1.3.4 Appropriate levels of financing and scale: This includes the use of a range of regulatory, funding and financing tools that support and prioritize investment in a range of housing delivery models, which have affordability; sustainability and needs based allocation as their core purpose.

1.4 The value of a global and inclusive multilateral platform on adequate housing

While a comprehensive international framework on adequate housing exists, a strong and inclusive multilateral platform is essential to:

- i. Ensure that all stakeholders can appropriate the existing international framework on adequate housing and operationalize it through holistic measures.
- ii. Ensure that measurable efforts in enhancing universal access to adequate housing leads to measurable results through facilitating data collection, strengthening benchmarking, monitoring, capturing and translating success.
- iii. Coordinate among countries, different level of governments and other stakeholders to ensure that policy tools are designed and adapted to the local context, as well as taking into consideration trans-border processes, for example on issues related to international investments or climate-induced impact on housing.
- iv. Facilitate the participation and contribution to the realization of the right to adequate housing of other stakeholders, including private sector, local governments and civil society organizations. The platform would in fact allow for strengthening institutional capacity of all housing stakeholders, deepening their understanding of the right to housing, administrative expertise, financial resources, and commitments to achieve agreed goals.
- v. Support substantial discussion on topics that have been recently engaging the housing community.