



# Economic and Social Council

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## Commission for Social Development

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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development

and the twenty-fourth special session of the General

Assembly: priority Theme: Affordable housing and social  
protection systems for all to address homelessness

### Statement submitted by Priests for Life, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council\*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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\* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



## Statement

Priests for Life, an NGO with ECOSOC status, seeks to advance respect for the innate worth and dignity of every human being regardless of disability, disease, age, race, sex, condition of dependency or stage of development and believes that no one ought to be selectively marked as expendable. Priests for Life believes that all members of the human family are deserving of protection, including those who have been subjectively classified as expendable and excluded from basic social protection; no member of the family ought to be stripped of their human dignity and denied their most basic right – the right to life.

Priests for Life believes that not only the life of every human being needs to be protected but that the dignity of every person ought to be enhanced including by housing conditions. It welcomes the decision of the 58th session of the Commission for Social Development to focus on the theme Affordable housing and social protection systems for all to address homelessness.

Housing is a universal need recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Ideally, housing serves as much more than a structure that protects individuals and families from the elements as it provides them with security and peace and the basic services of sanitation and running water that help to enhance human dignity.

Tragically, according to the report “Affordable Housing and Social Protection Systems for All to Address Homelessness” by the Commission for Social Development Expert Group, an estimated 100 million people in the world are homeless and nearly 1.6 billion people may lack adequate housing living in slums and informal settlements.

The need for adequate housing affects most countries around the world universally impacting the same fragile groups that are most affected by homelessness including the disabled, the elderly, and families headed by women. Women are too often forced to flee their homes with their children because of domestic violence, the leading cause of homelessness for women and children.

Family homelessness appears to be increasing at an alarming rate around the world and data is critically needed to assess the true state of family homelessness including on the shortage of affordable housing in urban areas. Policies that address the factors that contribute to homelessness are needed as are policies and programs that assist vulnerable women and children impacted by this crisis. The Convention on the Rights of the Child stated that State Parties should as much as possible provide material assistance and support programs, particularly with regard to nutrition, clothing and housing, to parents who are in need.

The housing requirements of the growing number of elderly and the housing needs of the disabled deserve special attention. It is during life’s most fragile state that social protection systems are most needed.

Vulnerable groups most excluded from housing are urgently in need of social protection policies if the goal of Agenda 2030 to leave no one behind is to be achieved. These groups span the life cycle beginning with the child, who as the Convention on the Rights of the Child reminds us needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth, the disabled, and the elderly.

Social protection systems to address homelessness ought to be founded on respect for human dignity and the innate right to life from conception to natural death without exception. This includes unborn children identified as having a physical

impairment, disabled individuals, the sick and elderly, all of whom are in need of social protection systems that address their unique housing needs.

Priests for Life supports Target 11.1 of Sustainable Development Goal 11 calling upon States to ensure access for all to adequate, safe, and affordable housing and basic services by 2030. Failure to achieve this target will leave many behind. The imperative given by Pope Francis serves as inspiration to provide access to all for housing and basic services: We can find no social or moral justification, no justification, no justification whatsoever, for lack of housing.

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