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Social and human rights questions: social development

Resolution adopted by the Economic and Social Council on 18 June 2020

[on the recommendation of the Commission for Social Development ([E/2020/26](#))]

2020/7. Affordable housing and social protection systems for all to address homelessness

The Economic and Social Council,

Recalling its resolution [2019/4](#) of 6 June 2019, in which it decided that the priority theme of the 2020 session of the Commission for Social Development would be “Affordable housing and social protection systems for all to address homelessness”,

Recalling also the outcomes of the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly,

Reaffirming that the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development¹ and the further initiatives for social development adopted by the General Assembly at its twenty-fourth special session² constitute the basic framework for the promotion of social development for all at the national and international levels, and encouraging the continued global dialogue on social development issues,

Recalling General Assembly resolution [70/1](#) of 25 September 2015, entitled “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, in which the Assembly adopted a comprehensive, far-reaching and people-centred set of universal and transformative Sustainable Development Goals and targets and affirmed its commitment to working tirelessly for the full implementation of the Agenda by 2030, and its recognition that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development,

¹ *Report of the World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, 6–12 March 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.8), chap. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II.

² General Assembly resolution [S-24/2](#), annex.



Recognizing the importance of implementing nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieving substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable, and ensuring access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services,

Recalling General Assembly resolution [69/313](#) of 27 July 2015 on the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, which is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,

Recalling also General Assembly resolution [74/4](#) of 15 October 2019, entitled “Political declaration of the high-level political forum on sustainable development convened under the auspices of the General Assembly”,

Recalling further the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,³ which, inter alia, recognizes the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself or herself and his or her family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions, and noting the relevance of these provisions to the formulation of family-oriented housing and social protection policies and measures,

Recalling the New Urban Agenda,⁴ which, inter alia, promotes cities and human settlements that fulfil their social function, including the social and ecological function of land, with a view to progressively achieving the full realization of the right to adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, without discrimination, and recalling also the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030,⁵ which promotes the mainstreaming of disaster risk assessments into land-use policy development and implementation, including urban planning, land degradation assessments and informal and non-permanent housing,

Noting the important work undertaken by the Statistical Commission pertaining to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which has led to the formulation of global indicators, including on social protection and access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing,

Noting also the importance of aggregated and disaggregated data for formulating effective policies to address homelessness and the need to make concerted efforts to identify people experiencing homelessness, both temporarily and chronically,

Reaffirming the importance of supporting Agenda 2063 of the African Union, as well as its first 10-year implementation plan, as a strategic framework for ensuring a positive socioeconomic transformation in Africa within the next 50 years, and its continental programme embedded in the resolutions of the General Assembly on the New Partnership for Africa’s Development⁶ and regional initiatives, such as the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme,

Recognizing that addressing homelessness, including through affordable housing policies and social protection systems and measures for all, including floors for all, assists Member States in realizing the right to an adequate standard of living, including housing, in implementing the New Urban Agenda and in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals,

³ See General Assembly resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex.

⁴ General Assembly resolution [71/256](#), annex.

⁵ General Assembly resolution [69/283](#), annex II.

⁶ [A/57/304](#), annex.

Noting that homelessness can be an obstacle to the effective enjoyment of all human rights and it needs to be addressed through urgent national, multilateral and global responses,

Noting with concern that climate change is predicted to increase the frequency, irregularity and intensity of both sudden- and slow-onset natural disasters such as hurricanes and droughts, heightening the risk of homelessness, including for those who have been displaced owing to natural disasters,

Noting with concern also that humanitarian emergencies may also lead to homelessness, including among people who become refugees or internally displaced persons,

Noting with concern further that homelessness among adolescents and youth is a major concern in many countries and that youth have been identified as the population group most at risk of becoming homeless,

Noting with concern that homelessness among children is increasing and that abandoned children, children who are orphaned as a result of HIV/AIDS, children or youth with homeless parents, or children displaced by humanitarian emergencies, including armed conflicts and natural disasters, and unaccompanied migrant children often experience homelessness,

Reaffirming its resolutions [2016/7](#) and [2016/8](#) of 2 June 2016, in which Governments are encouraged to continue to develop, improve, extend and implement inclusive, effective, fiscally sustainable and nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures and in which it is acknowledged that social protection floors can provide a basis from which to address poverty, vulnerability and homelessness, and are therefore essential to end the marginalization of the homeless and help them to integrate into society,

Noting that, increasingly, countries are expanding the fiscal space available for introducing various elements of social protection, and that a number of middle- and even low-income countries have already initiated components of national social protection systems and extended them successfully, with demonstrable positive impacts on poverty eradication,

1. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General;⁷
2. *Acknowledges* the urgent need to accelerate action on all levels and by all stakeholders to fulfil the vision and Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,⁸ and emphasizes that the international community, through the outcome documents of the major United Nations conferences and summits adopted by the General Assembly, has reinforced, inter alia, the urgency of eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, combating inequality within and among countries, protecting the environment, creating sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and fostering social inclusion within the United Nations development agenda, including the outcomes of the World Summit for Social Development,¹ the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development,⁹ the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030⁵ and the New Urban Agenda;⁴
3. *Reaffirms* the commitment to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development for all by ensuring that no one would be left behind and

⁷ [E/CN.5/2020/3](#).

⁸ General Assembly resolution [70/1](#).

⁹ General Assembly resolution [69/313](#), annex.

reaching the furthest behind first, and by recognizing human rights and that the dignity of the human person is fundamental;

4. *Calls upon* Member States to ensure the promotion and protection of all human rights, in accordance with their obligations under international human rights law, while recognizing that homelessness constitutes a violation of human dignity and may be an obstacle to the fulfilment of all human rights and that urgent national and international action is therefore required to address it;

5. *Reaffirms* that poverty has various forms and dimensions, including homelessness and living in inadequate housing, which is often linked to lack of income and productive resources sufficient to ensure sustainable livelihoods, hunger and malnutrition, ill health, limited or lack of access to education and other basic services, increased morbidity and mortality from illness, unsafe environments, and social discrimination and exclusion, and that these factors make individuals and their families vulnerable to homelessness;

6. *Also reaffirms* that urban and rural poverty should further be addressed by, inter alia, promoting public and private investments to improve, for deprived persons, the overall human environment and infrastructure, in particular housing, water and sanitation, and public transportation; and promoting social and other essential services, including, where necessary, assistance for people to move to areas that offer better employment opportunities, housing, education, health and other social services;

7. *Notes* that homelessness is not merely a lack of physical housing, but is often interrelated with poverty, lack of productive employment and access to infrastructure, as well as other social issues that may constitute a loss of family, community and a sense of belonging, and, depending on national context, can be described as a condition where a person or household lacks habitable space, which may compromise their ability to enjoy social relations, and includes people living on the streets, in other open spaces or in buildings not intended for human habitation, people living in temporary accommodation or shelters for the homeless, and, in accordance with national legislation, may include, among others, people living in severely inadequate accommodation without security of tenure and access to basic services;

8. *Notes with concern* that homelessness is a global problem, affecting people of different ages and with diverse economic, social and cultural backgrounds, in both developed and developing countries, and that, while homelessness is mainly driven by structural causes, including inequalities, poverty, a loss of housing and livelihood, a lack of decent job opportunities, lack of access to affordable housing, including owing to negative impacts of the commodification of housing, lack of social protection, lack of access to land, credit or financing, and high costs of energy or health care, as well as lack of financial and legal literacy, it could be also related to a number of contributing factors, and social issues including drug and alcohol abuse and mental disorder and other mental conditions;

9. *Recognizes* that homelessness is a complex issue that requires a multisectoral approach and integrated responses, cutting across fiscal, economic, labour, housing, health, social protection, urban development, environmental and population policies, and emphasizes the need to take whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches to address and prevent homelessness, by adopting policies that are inclusive of and responsive to the needs and aspirations of individuals, especially those in disadvantaged or vulnerable situations;

10. *Also recognizes* that homelessness can be driven by family and personal circumstances and economic crises, including mental disorders and other mental

health conditions, family breakdown, divorce, separation and abandonment, domestic violence and child abuse;

11. *Invites* Member States to develop comprehensive, intersectoral national strategies and specific policy interventions to address homelessness, taking into consideration existing frameworks and instruments related to homelessness;

12. *Calls upon* Member States to collect disaggregated data on demographics, such as by age, sex and disability, related to homelessness and establish categories of homelessness, accompanying the existing measurement tools, and encourages Member States to harmonize the measurement and collection of data on homelessness to enable national and global policymaking;

13. *Encourages* Member States to promote affordable and equitable access to basic services, in particular quality formal and non-formal education, at all levels, including programmes that promote equality and inclusion through the affirmation of the fundamental dignity of the human person, and health care, including through the acceleration of the transition towards equitable access to universal health coverage, as well as access to affordable housing, nutrition and food, and access to employment and decent work, information and communications technology and infrastructure, through advancing gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls;

14. *Invites* Member States to consider adopting labour market policies that strengthen institutions and provide adequate labour protection to all workers, especially the most disadvantaged, including through minimum wage policies, while taking into account the role of workers' and employers' organizations, as applicable, as part of policies to boost income growth for the vast majority of workers, taking into consideration the specific circumstances of each country;

15. *Encourages* Member States to implement policies that support the full and productive participation of women in the labour market, including women with disabilities, and promote equal pay for equal work or work of equal value, access to childcare facilities, the reconciliation of family and professional life, and the sharing of responsibilities between parents, and that also promote meaningful participation in the economy and in decision-making processes at all levels;

16. *Encourages* national and local governments to improve access to affordable housing through integrated housing policies and social protection measures, including social protection on both the demand and the supply sides, including by addressing legal and policy barriers to equal and non-discriminatory access to adequate housing, including for women of all ages and women-headed households, and providing access to credit facilities, as well as through protection against unlawful forced eviction, the provision of adequate emergency and temporary shelter and services and security of tenancy and support for the development of affordable housing, which is especially important for low-income households;

17. *Invites* national and local governments, in collaboration with the private sector and local communities, to stimulate the supply of a variety of adequate housing options that are safe, affordable and accessible for members of different income groups of society, and to take positive measures to improve the living conditions of homeless people, with a view to facilitating their full participation in society, and to prevent and eliminate homelessness;

18. *Also invites* national and local governments to increase allocations of financial and human resources, as appropriate, for the upgrading and, to the extent possible, prevention of slums and informal settlements;

19. *Recognizes* that an affordable housing policy, while essential, is not sufficient to end homelessness, that it should be accompanied by other measures such

as social protection policies, and that nationally appropriate social protection systems for all address multiple, often interrelated and complex causes of homelessness by preventing poverty, easing the burden of certain expenditure during periods of unemployment, contributing to health-related goals, gender equality and decent work, and facilitating the inclusion of persons with disabilities;

20. *Also recognizes* that nationally appropriate social protection systems can make a critical contribution to the realization of human rights for all, in particular for those who are trapped in poverty and homelessness, and that promoting universal access to social services and providing nationally appropriate social protection floors can contribute to reducing inequality and poverty, addressing social exclusion and promoting inclusive economic growth;

21. *Urges* Member States, in accordance with national circumstances, to establish as quickly as possible and maintain the social protection floors that comprise basic social security, so that all those in need have access to essential health care, including maternity, newborn, child, long-term and palliative care, that meets the criteria of availability, accessibility, acceptability and quality, and to basic income security for children and basic income security for persons of active age who are unable to earn sufficient income, in particular in cases of sickness, unemployment, maternity and disability, inter alia, in the context of enabling employment, and basic income security for older persons, as set out in the Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202) of the International Labour Organization;

22. *Recognizes* the important role that families can play in combating social exclusion, and highlights the importance of investing in inclusive and responsive family-oriented policies and programmes in areas such as education, training, decent work, work-family balance, health care, social services, intergenerational relationships and solidarity and targeted cash transfers for vulnerable families, in order to reduce inequality and promote the well-being of all persons of all ages, as well as to contribute to better outcomes for children and other vulnerable family members in vulnerable situations and help to break the intergenerational transfer of poverty;

23. *Also recognizes* the importance of providing social protection schemes for the formal and informal economy as instruments for achieving equity, inclusion and the stability and cohesion of societies, and emphasizes the importance of supporting national efforts aimed at bringing informal workers into the formal economy;

24. *Emphasizes* the importance of continuing to strengthen national social protection policies and systems and expand the coverage of social protection floors to all, including people working in the informal sector and those experiencing homelessness, while also investing in quality basic social services to ensure equal access to quality education, universal health coverage, safe drinking water and sanitation;

25. *Recognizes* the importance of the practice of sport and physical activity for homeless people, including youth and students facing homelessness, and of access to sport infrastructure, and highlights that sport can provide important social benefits to homeless people as well as opportunities to overcome challenges linked to homelessness, social exclusion and lack of perspectives;

26. *Encourages* Member States to provide universal age-, disability- and gender-sensitive social protection systems, which are key to ensuring poverty reduction, including, as appropriate, targeted cash transfers for families in vulnerable situations, such as when headed by a single parent, in particular those headed by women, and which are most effective in reducing poverty when accompanied by other

measures, such as providing access to basic services, high-quality education and health services;

27. *Stresses* the need to better coordinate social protection policies and measures with poverty reduction programmes and other social policies to avoid excluding people in informal or precarious jobs;

28. *Invites* Member States, in the context of their national sustainable development frameworks and the associated integrated financing frameworks, to formulate and implement national strategies to extend social security and essential social services to all, that are responsive to shocks, sustainable in the long run and with a focus on those furthest below the poverty line and negatively affected by climate change and natural and human-made disasters, within their economic and fiscal capacities;

29. *Recognizes* the importance of developing national and local disaster risk reduction strategies by 2020, in accordance with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, and of promoting their alignment and integration with sustainable development and climate change adaptation strategies, and also recognizes that the development of climate change adaptation and national disaster risk reduction strategies by 2020 is an opportunity to maximize synergies across the Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement¹⁰ and the Sendai Framework;

30. *Also recognizes* that adequate temporary accommodations can be useful for those persons who have lost their homes because of humanitarian emergencies, including natural disasters, and that assistance for their transition to permanent housing should be provided in a timely manner, in accordance with national circumstances, to shorten the time spent homeless;

31. *Further recognizes* the need to address family homelessness, including through gender-sensitive policies and resource allocation and appropriate support services for families to break the cycle of intergenerational homelessness;

32. *Encourages* Member States to continue to enact inclusive and responsive family-oriented policies and to confront social exclusion, recognizing the multidimensional aspects of social exclusion, focusing on inclusive and quality education and lifelong learning for all, health and well-being for all at all ages, full and productive employment, decent work, social security, livelihoods and social cohesion, including through gender- and age-sensitive social protection systems and measures, such as child allowances for parents and pension benefits for older persons, and to ensure that the rights, capabilities and responsibilities of all family members are respected;

33. *Emphasizes* the importance of supporting countries in their efforts to address homelessness through combating inequalities and challenges to social inclusion, giving particular attention to those who are in vulnerable situations;

34. *Calls upon* Member States to combat discrimination and negative stereotypes against people experiencing homelessness, including by strengthening anti-discrimination laws, advocacy and awareness-raising;

35. *Recognizes* that Governments have the primary responsibility to end homelessness, while noting that civil society organizations play an important role in delivering services, and encourages all actors to build a broad-based partnership at all levels to prevent people from falling into homelessness, support those experiencing homelessness and develop long-term sustainable solutions to end homelessness;

¹⁰ See [FCCC/CP/2015/10/Add.1](#), decision 1/CP.21, annex.

36. *Also recognizes* that the private sector can also contribute to addressing deficits in affordable housing on both the supply (land and infrastructure, construction and materials) and demand sides;

37. *Encourages* national and local governments, the United Nations system and other international and regional organizations and other stakeholders, inter alia, academia and civil society organizations, including philanthropic organizations, to raise awareness of homelessness, including family homelessness, and address the specific needs of individuals and groups, in particular young people in vulnerable situations who are affected by homelessness, to support their empowerment and full participation in the societies in which they live;

38. *Recognizes* that domestic resources mobilization, underscored by the principle of national ownership and supplemented by international assistance, as appropriate, will be critical to realizing sustainable development and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals;

39. *Reaffirms* the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, and recognizes the need to take steps to significantly increase investment to close resource gaps, including through the mobilization of financial resources from all sources, including public, private, domestic and international resource mobilization and allocation;

40. *Also reaffirms* that international cooperation has an essential role in assisting developing countries, including the least developed countries and small island developing States, in strengthening their human, institutional and technological capacity;

41. *Encourages* developed countries to implement their official development assistance commitments, including the commitment by many developed countries to achieve the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income for official development assistance to developing countries and 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of gross national income for official development assistance to the least developed countries;

42. *Welcomes* the contributions of South-South cooperation to poverty eradication and sustainable development, and reaffirms that South-South cooperation is an important element of international cooperation for development as a complement to, not a substitute for, North-South cooperation, and commits itself to strengthening South-South and triangular cooperation as a means of bringing relevant experience and expertise to bear in development cooperation;

43. *Stresses* the essential role that official development assistance plays in complementing, leveraging and sustaining financing for development efforts in developing countries and in facilitating the achievement of development objectives, including the internationally agreed development goals, in particular the Sustainable Development Goals, and welcomes steps to improve the effectiveness and quality of aid based on the fundamental principles of national ownership, alignment, harmonization, managing for results and mutual accountability;

44. *Invites* all relevant stakeholders, including the United Nations system and civil society organizations, to continue to promote the exchange of information and good practices on programmes, policies and measures that successfully reduce inequality in all its dimensions, address challenges to social inclusion, and address homelessness through affordable housing and social protection policies, with the aim of achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

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