



**United
Nations**

Department of
Economic and
Social Affairs

Draft Concept Note

Multi-stakeholder Forum on the priority theme: Sharing solutions

“Affordable housing and social protection systems for all to address homelessness”

Wednesday, 12 February 2020, 10:00am – 1:00pm
Conference Room 4, UN Headquarters, New York

COMMISSION for SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

United Nations Headquarters, New York

1. Background and context

By adopting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Member States committed to achieving sustainable development for all nations and peoples and for all segments of society. They pledged to leave no one behind and to endeavour to reach the furthest behind first. Addressing homelessness, including through affordable housing policies and social protection systems for all, assists Member States in meeting various Sustainable Development Goals (especially SDG target 11.1) and realizing the right to adequate housing as part of their implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

Homelessness is a complex issue that requires a multisectoral approach and integrated responses, cutting across fiscal, economic, labour, housing, health, social protection and urban development policies. Whole-of-government approaches need to be taken to address and prevent homelessness. However, governments, while holding the primary responsibility, cannot end homelessness alone, and a whole-of-society approach needs to be taken. Civil society organizations play an important role in delivering services such as shelter management, outreach, legal advice, medical services and housing allocation support to people experiencing homelessness. In places where there is less government investment and/or intervention, civil society may be the only sector that provides crucial services to affected communities. Furthermore, they can be effective in advocacy and connecting homeless people with policymakers and other actors, and can facilitate research, monitoring and evaluation with the aim of ending homelessness.

Philanthropic communities can play an effective role in consolidating various existing efforts, involving multiple stakeholders at the local level, for example, acting as a catalyst for mobilizing financial and intellectual resources to end homelessness. 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 (increasing access to housing finance) and building a viable affordable housing finance market catering to the needs of middle-, lower- and informal-income households.

Comprehensive and coherent policy frameworks cutting across various sectors as well as broad-based partnership involving various actors at national, local and community levels are needed to effectively address homelessness. Such policies should be inclusive of and responsive to the rights, needs and aspirations of individuals, especially those in disadvantaged or vulnerable situations are needed.

The Bureau of the 58th session of the Commission decided to convene a multi-stakeholder Forum on the priority theme to share solutions to address homelessness. This will provide opportunities for various social partners, including national and local governments, academia, representatives from civil society, including the philanthropic community, and a person who experienced homelessness, to share practical solutions to address homelessness at all levels, and from different perspectives.

2. Objectives

The panel will highlight key issues, identify challenges, opportunities, and good practices, lessons learned, and innovative approaches in addressing homelessness, taking into consideration all categories of people experiencing homelessness: people living on the streets or other open spaces; people living in temporary or crisis accommodation; people living in severely inadequate and insecure accommodation, such as slums or informal settlements; and people who lack access to affordable housing; and by distinguishing between chronic and transitional homelessness.

The panel aims to learn from good practices and hear the voices of national policy-makers, local authorities, civil society practitioners, philanthropic community and those who experienced homelessness to shed lights on practical solutions that will help prevent homelessness, support those experiencing homelessness, and long-term strategies to end homelessness. The interventions also include strategies to address specific challenges faced by groups that are disproportionately affected by homelessness, including, women, children, adolescents, youth, older persons, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, people living in poverty and people displaced by natural disasters and conflicts.

More specifically, the Forum aims to:

- 1) Identify opportunities and key challenges facing national governments, local authorities, local communities and civil society practitioners in addressing homelessness, in particular, among those groups that are disproportionately affected.
- 2) Exchange information, expertise and good practices at the national, local and community levels, showcasing successful experience and promising solutions that help end homelessness in order to develop effective policies and strategies.
- 3) Explore how the United Nations and the international community could continue to enhance its role in raising awareness to address homelessness in ways that are evidence-based and bring real solutions on the ground. This will contribute to the building of more inclusive and resilient societies and sustainable development for all.

3. Structure and format of the Forum

The Multi-stakeholder Forum will be chaired by the Chair of the Commission for Social Development. The Chair will open the session with brief remarks and introduction of moderator and panellists. The Moderator will then invite panelists to make presentations. The moderator will facilitate a brief interactive dialogue among panellists, then open the discussion and invite questions and comments from the floor. Panellists are expected to structure their presentations around concrete strategies that have proven to be successful in addressing homelessness, and their impacts on individuals and groups who are disproportionately affected.

The expected outcomes of the panel discussion will be reflected in the Chair's summary, which will be part of the inputs of the Commission for Social Development to the ECOSOC, in particular the high-level segment of the ECOSOC and the 2020 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development under the theme "*Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development*".

The panel will be comprised of the following:

- The Chair of the Commission will chair the panel and open the meeting with brief remarks and introduce the moderator.
- One moderator who will moderate the panel discussion.
- Six panellists (high-level government official, Mayors/local government officials, representatives of civil society, including academia, philanthropic community, and persons who experienced homelessness)

4. Guiding questions

Panelists are suggested to consider addressing the following questions:

- What are the major gaps in the existing national and local systems/strategies to address homelessness? Any specific suggestions to improve them?
- What is the best approach to form broad-based partnership to end homelessness, involving national and local governments, local communities, civil society organizations, philanthropic community and vulnerable social groups and person who experienced homelessness?
- How the private sector can constructively contribute to prevent people falling into homelessness, support those experiencing homelessness, and bring sustainable solutions to end homelessness?
- How to form an effective alliance between those organizations working for ending homelessness and those working for specific social groups, such as women, children, youth, older persons, persons with disabilities, family, indigenous peoples, those living in poverty, and people displaced by disasters?
- How can the UN system facilitate sharing of lessons learned and good practices (policies and measures) in reducing the number of people living in homelessness across local communities, regions and nations?
- Based on your experience, what specific recommendations or proposals on policies and measures/programmes should be in place at local, national and international levels, in order to address homelessness?

5. Time allocation

Speaker	Suggested speaking time
Chair: opening remarks	5 minutes
Moderator: introduction/context setting	5 minutes
Panelists (6) presentations	7 - 10 minutes per panelist Moderator to bring key points raised by the panelists, and pose guiding questions that have not been addressed, if any.
Moderated interactive discussion	Q & A directly related to the presentations (10 minutes) Open dialogue with participants of the Commission (Interventions limited to 3 minutes per speaker)
Concluding remarks by panellists and moderator	15 minutes in total
Closing by the Chair	5 minutes
	Total duration: 3 hours

