



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General

July 2023

Original: English and French

2023 session

17 July 2023- 20 July 2023

ECOSOC High-level Segment

Statement submitted by UNANIMA International (UI) in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statements, which are being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

Statement

UNANIMA International is a coalition of 22 communities of Women Religious, and a group of 'Friends,' in over 85 countries with 25,000 members. For 20 years we have advocated on behalf of women, children, and girls – groups that are consistently most left behind. We submit this statement for the 2023 Economic and Social Council High-Level Segment on behalf of our grassroots members.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the evolution of other crises, including homelessness. Family homelessness was on the rise even before the onset of COVID-19, and our research finds that the hidden homeless are continually overlooked. While international measurements may be underestimated, current trends indicate there are over 150 million homeless people worldwide. However, when expanding definitions to include the hidden homeless, this figure is upwards of 1.6 billion.

Testimonies shared with us highlight the interconnectedness of the issues that vulnerable groups face. For example, a woman detailed her journey of climate-induced displacement. She left her home for the streets of Eldoret, Kenya in search of sustenance and some kind of life since the rains changed, and food was subsequently scarce. Her experience led to homelessness. This, and other on-the-ground reports look grim, but fortunately the targets outlined in the 2030 Agenda are linked too: progress on one goal helps advance the other sixteen. Moreover, the push to build back better from the pandemic has brought homelessness back into the spotlight. Governments, companies, and voluntary organizations are seriously committed to addressing this violation of human dignity.

Our exploration of family homelessness across multiple country case studies, and through the lenses of several Sustainable Development Goals have demonstrated that partnerships, reframing commitments within a human rights context, and sharing good practices are necessary for eradicating family homelessness. The security of having a home has enabled families to get back on track after their traumatic experiences with homelessness, and innovative, cost-effective solutions like the Housing First model are supported by numerous academic studies.

Given our expertise on homelessness and the concerns voiced by our grassroots members, we recommend that Member States:

1. Encourage and support local organizations like Sophia Housing in Dublin, Ireland, that provide housing with supports to thousands of homeless families.
2. Include people with a lived experience of homelessness in the design, implementation, and evaluation of relevant policies.
3. Commit to keeping homelessness on the agenda of the United Nations through ratification of human rights instruments (such as the New Urban Agenda).

Word count: 458