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Statement submitted by << Please provide the name of your organization here. >>, 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.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

The NGO Working Group to End Homelessness (WGEH) is a group of non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council. We advocate at the United Nations for persons who are vulnerable, pursuing the human right to adequate housing for all and to end homelessness. We are committed to the elimination of homelessness in all its forms as described in A/Res/76/133 (2022) and E/Res/2020/7(2020), and the report of the Secretary General on homelessness A/78/236 (2023) as well as A/RES/78/172 (2023) *Inclusive policies and programmes to address homelessness, including in the aftermath of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19)*. The WGEH collaborates with the United Nations Member States, Agencies and Commissions, global platforms to end homelessness, academic centres, and individuals who are or who have experienced homelessness to devise solutions and call for change.

The signatories to this statement, as Economic and Social Council accredited non-governmental organizations and members of the WGEH, urge the 63rd Session of the Commission on Social Development to address homelessness in the exploration of the Priority Theme: *Strengthening solidarity, social inclusion and social cohesion to accelerate the delivery of the commitments of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development as well as the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

The Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development envisioned a people-centered framework for social development and committed to ensuring that disadvantaged and vulnerable persons and groups be included in development. As was declared 30 years ago in the Copenhagen Declaration, “We can continue to hold the trust of the people of the world, only if we make their needs our priority. We know that poverty, lack of productive employment and social disintegration are an offense to human dignity. We also know that they are negatively reinforcing and represent a waste of human resources and a manifestation of ineffectiveness in the functioning of markets and economic and social institutions and processes.” (A.CONF.166.9 #23)

Moreover, the three overarching goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development - end poverty, protect the planet and ensure by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity - “leaving no one behind,” are core to homeless advocacy. Homelessness is not mentioned once in the 17 goals or 164 targets, yet it is critical that preventing and ending homelessness be incorporated into National and Global Strategies to achieve Agenda 2030. Globally, 1.6 billion people worldwide live in inadequate housing conditions, with about 15 million forcefully evicted every year, and over 100 million estimated to be homeless. Young people are the age group with the highest risk of becoming homeless and there is a growing concern about an increase in the numbers of elderly who are homeless. (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs). Women’s displacement caused by Global Migration and wars have been contributing and exacerbating these United Nations 2005 estimates. These statistics do not include the hidden homeless, for example, women with children who live in untenured situations. Conservatively we can compute that 1 in 5 people fall into one of the three categories of homelessness: ***people living without accommodation, people living in temporary or crisis accommodation, and people living in inadequate and insecure housing.***

Homelessness has been identified as “one of the crudest manifestations of poverty, inequality and social exclusion”. It affects people of all ages, genders, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Homelessness is also a gross violation of the human rights to adequate housing, to security of persons, to health, and to protection of the home and family.” (ECOSOC, E/CN.5/2020/3, 1.3). Ending homelessness is related to the achievement of all seventeen of the Sustainable Development Goals,

which are integrated, indivisible and interlinked. Homelessness sits at the intersection of poverty, public health, housing affordability, domestic violence, mental illness, substance misuse, climate change and natural disasters, urbanization, racial and gender discrimination, social isolation, under and unemployment, political conflict, migration and land rights, to name a few of the causes and consequences of homelessness.

As representatives of civil society, we see the debilitating effects on people living in extreme poverty and note that for many, especially women-headed households with children, poverty is deepening. Hunger and food insecurity is increasing. Under and unemployment is prevalent in poor communities. We see the destructive effects of environmental disasters and economic fluctuations as they affect access to education, health care, decent work and the ability to engage in a digital world. Preventing homelessness and providing adequate, affordable housing is a critical first step to all of the above mentioned. Social Development must be advanced holistically with multisectoral approaches.

According to the World Social Report 2024, “we live in a period where shocks are becoming more likely” impacting social development. More than 4 billion people still lack any social protection. It is more important than ever that we look to the United Nations which provides a unique, inclusive and legitimate forum to build global consensus on how to address challenges in this new “crisis” environment and encourage collaboration for the common good. This consensus must support the expansion of social protection floors and include not only social protection instruments like social insurance, social assistance, and labor and economic inclusion programs that help people, especially women, find better jobs but also, education, housing and access to health care. We must increase investment in social protections so that all countries can build up social resilience. For every dollar transferred to poor families, there is an estimated multiplier effect of \$2.49 in the local economy. The evidence also suggests impacts on a range of outcomes—from nutrition and early childhood development to climate adaptation and mitigation to women’s empowerment and livelihood diversification. (World Bank)

The WGEH calls upon Member States at this 63rd Session of the Commission for Social Development to:

- Safeguard the right to an adequate standard of living, addressing homelessness as an affront to human dignity and an obstacle to the enjoyment of human rights by fulfilling commitments to provide safe, affordable, and supportive housing for all;
- Enact comprehensive policies and interventions to prevent and address homelessness by increasing the SUPPLY of affordable, permanent housing with social supports and including Persons Experiencing Homelessness (PEH) or people at serious risk of homelessness in the design/implementation/monitoring of all policies and programs, while including Civil Society, particularly the NGO Working Group to End Homelessness, in UN activities/programs targeting homelessness.
- Ensure homelessness is prioritized in the discussion of poverty at the United Nations, including in the preparations for and at the 2nd World Summit for Social Development, and in discussions

across the Sustainable Development Goals, as ending homelessness is essential to ending poverty and achieving Agenda 2030 and its promise to “leave no one behind.”

- Employ improved data collection methodologies on homelessness. Encourage Member States to capture the accurate and current numbers of people experiencing homelessness along with disaggregated demographic data that can be universally applied to formulate effective national, regional, and global policy.
- Expand the capacity of developing countries to foster social resilience by increasing and extending social protection programs especially for families and children, people with disabilities, and socially excluded persons such as people experiencing homelessness, through domestic resource mobilization, fair and progressive taxation, debt forgiveness and encouraging international cooperation.

We call on Member States to bring homelessness into all discussions, collect accurate data, and to enact specific policies and interventions. Solutions to homelessness cannot be designed as a "one size fits all" directive but require solutions at the local, national, regional and global levels.
