

CONCEPT NOTE

Experiences in strengthening security of tenure for the urban poor around the world

Geneva, 11 March 2014

Palais des Nations, room XXVII, 10:00 to 12:00 am

Background

The Permanent Missions of Finland and Germany to the United Nations in Geneva will hold a side event on the occasion of the 25th session of the Human Rights Council, with the participation of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and the right to non-discrimination in this context, Ms. Raquel Rolnik, and four other distinguished panelists.

Our world is increasingly urban. For the first time ever, the majority of the world's population lives in a city, and this proportion continues to grow. While in 1990, less than 40% of the global population lived in a city, in only twenty years, by 2010, more than half of all people lived in an urban or peri-urban area. Amongst them, millions of women, children and men, require urgent responses anchored in human rights to ensure that multiple tenure arrangements are protected, in particular those of the most vulnerable and marginalized.

The event will focus on examples of policies and practices addressing security of tenure around the world, as one of the crucial elements of the right to adequate housing. In doing so, the event also seeks to offer an opportunity to spell out and discuss the particular situation and concerns of women in relation to tenure security.

The right to housing for the poor remains a challenge across the globe. Tackling security of tenure as a priority can increase the chances to take appropriate steps for progressively realizing this right as some positive practices from different parts of the world illustrate.

Main objectives

1. To raise awareness of the importance of adequate housing as a human right, and in this context, of the particular situation and concerns of women.
2. To introduce the Guiding Principles on security of tenure for the urban poor presented by the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing to the Council.
3. To present and discuss concrete experiences and practices from different parts of the world and various contexts, such as post disaster and post conflict reconstruction, urban settlements upgrading, access to land and housing, and rent policies.

Panellists

Raquel Rolnik, Special Rapporteur on adequate housing

Appointed Rapporteur in May 2008, Raquel Rolnik is an architect and an urban planner, with over 30 years of experience in planning and urban land management. She has a large experience in the implementation and evaluation of housing and urban policies. Based in Sao Paulo, she is a professor at the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism of the University of Sao Paulo and is the author of several books and articles on the urban issue. In her career, she has held various government positions including Director of the Department of Planning of the city of São Paulo (1989-1992) and National Secretary for Urban Programs of the Brazilian Ministry of Cities (2003-2007) as well as NGO activities, such as Urbanism Coordinator of the Polis Institute (1997-2002). She has advised national and local governments on policy reform and institutional development as well as on planning and management of housing and local development programs. Her mandate as Special Rapporteur ends in April 2014.

Lorena Zarate- Habitat International Coalition

Lorena Zarate is currently President of Habitat International Coalition (HIC). She was regional director of HIC-Latin America from 2003 to 2011. She has been involved in the elaboration and dissemination of the World Charter on the Right to the City (2002-2005), the consultation process to define the Mexico City Human Rights Program (2007-2009), and the Promoting Committee for the elaboration of the Mexico City Charter for the Right to the City (2008-2010). In 2013, she was awarded the John Bousfield Distinguished Visitorship from the Geography and Urban Planning Program at the University of Toronto. She is also author of several articles and publications in Latin America, North America and Europe on issues related to housing rights, social production and management of habitat and the right to the city.

Barbara McCallin, Norwegian Refugee Council

Barbara McCallin is Senior Advisor on housing, land and property (HLP) at the Geneva-based Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) of the Norwegian Refugee Council where she has worked since 2004. She is researching HLP issues in contexts of internal displacement with a particular focus on urban housing, and risk to tenure security in countries where informal land tenure and legal pluralism prevails. Before becoming Advisor on HLP, she worked as Country Analyst for the Balkans for the IDMC. Prior to this she worked for United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Mali and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Lucy McKernan- Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Lucy McKernan is the UN Liaison – Geneva, for the Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The Global Initiative is an NGO with expertise in human rights relating to housing, land and productive resources, women's ESC rights, strategic litigation and legal advocacy. Lucy is a human rights lawyer with experience with both national and international human rights mechanisms to advance the ESC rights of persons living in poverty. Previously she worked at the Public Interest Law Clearing House in Melbourne, Australia, focused on advocacy and litigation on housing rights for people experiencing poverty and homelessness, including a legal clinic for women's housing rights.

Christian Courtis- Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Christian Courtis is a Human Rights Officer at OHCHR in Geneva, since November 2008. He coordinates the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights team of the Human Rights and Economic and Social Issues Section. Previously, he directed the Programme on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights with the International Commission of Jurists, Geneva. He was a law professor at the University of Buenos Aires, Argentina, and has been an invited scholar to Universities in Latin America, Europe and the United States. He has published books and articles on human rights, constitutional and legal theory, particularly on the issue of the legal content and protection of economic, social and cultural rights.

Programme

- 10:00-10:15 Opening remarks
- Her Excellency Ambassador Päivi Kairamo
Permanent Representative of Finland
 - His Excellency Ambassador Hanns Schumacher
Permanent Representative of Germany
- 10:15-10:30 Introduction of Guiding Principles on Security of Tenure for the urban poor
by Ms Raquel Rolnik, Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a
component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to
non-discrimination in this context
- 10:30-11:00 Panel discussion
- Barbara McCallin, Senior HLP Adviser in Internal Displacement
Monitoring Center, Norwegian Refugee Council
 - Lorena Zarate, President, Habitat International Coalition
 - Lucy McKernan, Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural
Rights
 - Christian Courtis, Human Rights Office, Office of the High
Commissioner for Human Rights
- 11:00-11:45 Questions and discussion
- 11:45 Final remarks by H.E. Ambassador Schumacher
- 12:00 End of the event

Light refreshments will be served