

Human Rights Council side-event:
Extreme poverty and adequate housing in Latin America

12 March 2014 – 14:00-15:00 - 25th session of the Human Rights Council – Room XXII

Objectives

The aim of this panel is to bring housing and poverty in Latin America into focus as a critical human rights issue in the context of the post 2015 agenda. The main objectives are:

- (i) to share and learn from special rapporteurs and academics on measures to fight social exclusion through housing in Latin America;
- (ii) to share and learn from NGO practices involved in the fight against poverty in Latin America;
- (iii) to promote the work of the UN on housing and extreme poverty, specially the guiding principles on extreme poverty and human rights and the guiding principles on security of tenure for the urban poor and more generally the work of the UN special Rapporteurs on extreme poverty and human rights and on adequate housing.

Background

On February 2012, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution entitled “promoting social integration through social inclusion” stressing that “the promotion of sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth is necessary to achieve poverty eradication and should be complemented, as appropriate, by effective social protection policies, including social inclusion policies”[1]. It is until now, two years later, a particularly important time to put on light these two issues; poverty and social exclusion.

In Latin America and the Caribbean more than 75% of the population lives in cities, making it the most urbanised developing region in the world [2]. At the same time, poverty and increasing inequality are important challenges in the region. The provision of affordable, accessible and adequate housing arises as a key element to tackle these issues.

In the region more than 134 millions of inhabitants live in Informal settlements [3]. This has been the main mechanism for the urban poor to become part of the city, acquiring provisional shelter and land. Latin America characterises for its diverse land and housing strategies. Nevertheless, in the last decade, efforts have been focused on slum upgrading, recognising the importance of location and networks for social, economical and political inclusion.

On the other hand, we should understand that habitat is at the center of the debate about what constitutes a minimal, but dignified, standard of living. Housing, attached to non-discriminatory tactics, is only one example of what the right of an adequate standard of living entails. Indeed, several key human rights documents, like the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, have recognized housing as an inherent human right.[4].

The Human Rights Council, in its resolution 15/8, requested the Special Rapporteur to emphasize practical solutions for the implementation of the right to adequate housing. As a response to this request, during the 25th session of the Human Rights Council, the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing will a set of relationships with respect to housing and land, established through statutory or customary law or informal or hybrid arrangements, that enables one to live in home in security, peace and dignity. It is an



integral part of the right to adequate housing and a necessary ingredient for the enjoyment of many other civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights.

Participants

The event will bring together the experiences UN specialists, academics, States and non-governmental organisations working on the issue of housing, poverty and social inclusion policies. Here is a preliminary list of suggested panellists: Special Rapporteur on adequate housing, Raquel Rolnik, Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and Human Rights, Magdalena Sepúlveda (TBC), Chile (TBC), the Director of the Master of Social Development at DPU, University College of London, Alex Frediani (conformed), Lecturer in Human Rights at Institute of the Americas University College London, Par Engstrom (TBC). For non-governmental organizations, Techo (<http://www.techo.org/en>) and ATD Fourth World (TBC) are suggested.

Modality

There will be a short introduction from the chair (Techo) and presentations by four/five panelists, which will then form the basis for subsequent debates and questions from the floor.

Preliminary list of suggested panelists:

- Raquel Rolnik - Special Rapporteur on adequate housing, Raquel Rolnik,
- Magdalena Sepúlveda - Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and Human Rights (TBC),
- Representative from Chile (TBC),
- Alex Frediani - Director of the Master of Social Development at DPU, University College of London, (conformed),
- Par Engstrom - Lecturer in Human Rights at Institute of the Americas University College London, (TBC).
- Ignacia Ossul, Techo (confirmed).



Preselected issues to be raised during the event are:

- Housing;
- Security of tenure;
- Strategic Slum-upgrading;
- Poverty and social exclusion of the urban poor;
- Poverty, social exclusion and access to housing;
- Participation;
- Forced evictions;

Obviously, other issues related to housing, poverty and social exclusion in Latin America are more than welcomed.

Contact

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[1] UNGA, A/RES/66/122, 2 February 2012. This resolution was presented and defended by the mission of Peru.

[2] See Un Habitat (2011), Affordable land and housing in Latin America and the Caribbean. Volume 1.

[3] See Un Habitat (2011), Affordable land and housing in Latin America and the Caribbean. Volume 1.

[4] See Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, general comment No. 4 (1991) on the right to adequate housing; African Commission on the right to adequate housing and protection from forced evictions.

