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Habitat for Humanity International

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## Chapeau

Habitat for Humanity is pleased to submit written inputs for the preparation of the zero-draft of the Pact for the Future. We reiterate our commitment to ensuring that all members of the global Habitat for Humanity network work together to achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the New Urban Agenda, the Paris agreement, and other critical global policy frameworks.

Globally, the world has been grappling with a housing quality deficit for decades. The UN estimates that 2.8 billion people are affected by different forms of housing inadequacy, of whom close to 1.1 billion reside in slums and other informal settlements. The housing gap is the worst in lower- and middle-income countries, where urbanization and population growth are outpacing the formal housing supply, and an ever-growing number of people are either housing cost-burdened or living in inadequate shelter.

As recognized by the U.N., adequate housing is a human right that results from the combination of its seven dimensions: security of tenure; availability of services, materials, facilities, and infrastructure; affordability; habitability; accessibility; location; and cultural adequacy. The right to adequate housing also contains entitlements, which guarantee the necessary conditions to realize the right to adequate housing in all its dimensions. These entitlements include security of tenure; housing, land and property restitution; equal and non-discriminatory access to adequate housing; and participation in housing-related decision-making at the national and community levels.

As a global housing actor operating in over 70 countries around the world, Habitat for Humanity is focused on ensuring everyone has a decent place to call home. We recognize that global stressors, such as climate change, pandemics, conflict and continued displacement, are deepening the inequities in housing access, which result in various manifestations of housing insecurity. Systemic inequities further worsen the situation as it results in sub-standard housing conditions, overcrowding and fast-expanding informal settlements, clear evidence of exclusion and systemic failures, and the absence of proactive urban planning and infrastructure investment.

Adequate housing is a critical component of economic growth and development. Access to secure and affordable housing enables individuals and families to invest in education, health, and entrepreneurship, creating a foundation for economic prosperity. Research shows that at the national level, equitable access to adequate homes in informal settlements can generate a direct impact of as much as 10.5% economic growth while the expected years of schooling in some countries would increase by as much as 28% because of secure tenure, improved services and access to adequate homes in informal

settlements: globally, as many as 41.6 million additional children and young people could be enrolled in primary and secondary education because of home improvements in informal settlements.

The Sustainable Development Goals include targets to ensure affordable and adequate housing for all by 2030. Targets for housing are in SDG Goal 11 which unfortunately has been found to be regressing. The global backtracking of this target is attributable to multiple factors, including a lack of prioritization of housing in development programs. In sum, equitable access to adequate housing is one area, globally, where much progress must still be made. By prioritizing housing initiatives, the UN member states can contribute to achieving broader SDG goals, demonstrating their commitment to sustainable development, poverty alleviation, and social progress. They will also empower their most vulnerable citizens to break the cycle of poverty, strengthen local economies, and foster sustainable development.

## Housing and the SDGs, the New Urban Agenda and Our Common Agenda

While housing is increasingly being recognized - as we are seeing with commitments to the New Urban Agenda and calls to action by the Secretary-General - there is still limited action and attention being paid to housing within the SDGs, specifically SDG 11.1, where actions to improve housing and informal settlements is located. The lack of attention paid to this specific SDG is of significant concern, as confirmed by the [SDG 11.1 Progress Report](#) released by Habitat for Humanity International in 2022, which found that SDG 11.1 was regressing. During the 2023 High Level Political Forum on the SDGs, UN-Habitat released its own report on SDG 11, which unfortunately shows the trend continuing and signals regression for the third year in a row. Access to adequate and affordable housing is a core component of this target, and this reversal of previous progress reflects the global housing crisis that continues to affect millions around the world.

With most of the world's population living in cities and that proportion steadily rising (from 55% today to 80% in 2050), housing only becomes ever more central. "Our Common Agenda" UN's vision to "turbocharge" global cooperation towards achievement of the SDGs ([UNSG 2023](#)), "considers adequate housing as a foundation to renew the social contract between governments and their people, and a means of leaving no one behind. Indeed, adequate housing is a core condition to meet multidimensional needs related to education, health, income, and overall wellbeing". Notably, the U.N. Secretary-General has also raised housing as part of a renewed social contract to rebuild trust and embrace a comprehensive vision of human rights, as embodied by "Our Common Agenda". Housing is a core part of that, and Habitat applauds the recognition of housing's central role in carving a more equitable future for all.

Globally, there have been steps taken to ensure progress towards SDG 11. At the Second UN-Habitat Assembly in June 2023, Habitat for Humanity celebrated the approval by an overwhelming majority of member states of two fundamental resolutions on "accelerating transformation of informal settlements and slums by 2030," and "adequate housing for all." These resolutions are meaningful milestones, because they pave the way for more ambitious and renewed actions towards SDG 11 from a wider range of stakeholders at the global and local levels. However, while commitments are important, so too are actions. Member states hold the responsibility to fulfill the calls to action that are embodied in the resolutions, and to fully commit to achieving SDG 11. We therefore urge all UN member states to prioritize housing in their national agendas, and to strengthen the institutional capacity of their housing and planning departments to address housing needs of the most vulnerable, particularly the growing populations residing in informal settlements.

## Chapter I. Sustainable development and financing for development

### Recommendation 1: Prioritize housing as an infrastructure for equitable human development.

In order to effectively prioritize housing as an infrastructure of equitable human development, UN member states must sustain and enhance initiatives that allow them to:

- **Prioritize improved homes for people in informal settlements:** Housing policies and frameworks must prioritize informal settlements and be adequately resourced by national development budgets in ways that enable local governments, communities and other stakeholders to co-produce localized, participatory, and responsive approaches to upgrading.
- **Integrate housing into education, economic and health effort to ensure mutual benefits:** Housing policies and frameworks for informal settlements must be implemented in coordination with other infrastructure and service development initiatives, such as health, education and transportation, to ensure equitable human development returns. Importantly, these initiatives should integrate gender, environmental and participatory principles in ways that ensure the sustainable inclusion of systematically excluded groups.
- **Enhance incrementalism and recognize ongoing local housing and upgrading efforts:** Much of the world's housing is self-built, and therefore it is crucial to recognize such processes and to ensure equitable access to adequate materials, tools and methodologies for improving housing adequacy.
- **Reform and apply spatial planning instruments to promote equitable responses and protect those living in informal settlements from the potential negative impacts of regularization and upgrading:** Local governments and other authorities should mobilize planning frameworks to protect residents of informal settlements against displacement and evictions while also ensuring integrated delivery of basic services and infrastructure, as essential housing components. Such interventions should prioritize the right to stay and prevent unintended negative impacts of upgrading, through inclusive planning approaches such as special zoning instruments, diversified land and housing tenure arrangements, collective tenure and ownership models, and housing improvement affordability schemes that consider the diversity of residents' economic capacities, among others.

### Recommendation 2: Housing solutions must be integrated and comprehensive to generate human development returns.

In order for housing to generate equitable human development returns, UN member states must sustain and enhance initiatives that allow them to:

- **Embed housing into citywide and national sectoral development strategies** in order to improve livability and accessibility within urban areas. Uncoordinated sector policies, particularly in transportation, infrastructure, and land use, have led to harmful outcomes in housing development. Many expensive housing projects lacking public transportation access and proximity to job markets have resulted in vacant units on the outskirts, failing to address affordable housing needs.
- **Ensure that residents of informal settlements are at the center of housing decision-making processes through meaningful and empowered participation:** To meaningfully respond to the diverse needs and aspirations of communities, housing policies and frameworks for informal

settlements should ensure their empowered participation in housing-related decision-making at the national and community levels.

- **Prioritize tenure security, along a continuum of land rights, to realize the right to adequate housing:** Tenure security is central to achieving sustainable and equitable access to adequate housing, and land tenure laws and regulations should be reviewed, reformed and/or implemented in the process of designing adequate housing programming at the settlement level. Authorities should find mechanisms to protect land from speculation, such as collective or public or semi-public tenure modalities.
- **Integrate reliable, affordable, and sustainable basic services into the development of improved housing services and habitability:** The inclusion of sustainable and widely available water, energy and other basic services in housing improvement is essential and must be prioritized by all relevant stakeholders. At the same time, governments should promote and enforce regulations that ensure access to affordable, safe, and culturally adequate building materials and improved habitability conditions for all. This is particularly relevant for tenants, who are more at risk of unsuitable housing conditions.
- **Leverage adequate housing as a tool for achieving climate and environmental justice and resilience:** Communities in informal settlements are bearing the brunt of the world's climate emergency and will struggle with the greatest human and financial costs of rising seas, increasing heat, climate-related events and expanding drought. Adequate housing in informal settlements is an important "nexus" of mitigation and adaptation solutions for communities. Ensuring incremental and locally informed approaches to adequate housing is essential to build the capacity of communities to respond to climate change, while also opening up opportunities for wider mitigation strategies that promote the sustainability of environmental systems.

### **Recommendation 3: Prioritize knowledge and data on housing and its impacts *by, about and for* informal settlement communities.**

In order for housing knowledge to be leveraged for development, UN member states should sustain and enhance initiatives that allow them to:

- **Support community efforts to produce local housing knowledge:** Public and research institutions should prioritize the recognition and strengthening of data collection processes that empower local communities. This means valuing, systematizing and using data that is generated *by* and *with* residents through situated and community-led methodologies of knowledge co-production.
- **Expand housing knowledge that explores the role that informal settlements play in wider economic, care, political, and ecological systems:** Knowledge about informal settlements should acknowledge them as a fundamental part of the city, tracing the connections with urban systems. This approach to knowledge production is crucial to avoid the stigmatization and criminalization of informal settlements, recognizing the agency of residents and collectives, as well as the drivers of wider inequities in cities.

## **Chapter II. International peace and security**

*(Add your organization's concise, concrete, and action-oriented recommendations for Chapter 2)*

### **Chapter III. Science, technology and innovation and digital cooperation**

*(Add your organization's concise, concrete, and action-oriented recommendations for Chapter 3)*

### **Chapter IV. Youth and future generations**

*(Add your organization's concise, concrete, and action-oriented recommendations for Chapter 4)*

### **Chapter V. Transforming global governance**

*(Add your organization's concise, concrete, and action-oriented recommendations for Chapter 5)*