

High-Level Dialogue on Adequate Housing for All at Economic and Social Council – 22nd July 2025

Chairs' Summary

The High-Level Dialogue on Adequate Housing, co-hosted by H.E. Ambassador Robert Rae, President of ECOSOC, and Ms. Anacláudia Roszbach, Under-Secretary General and Executive Director of UN-Habitat, reaffirmed the central role of adequate housing as a foundation for sustainable economic development, social justice, gender equality, health and urban resilience. Housing emerged as a critical infrastructure for peace, stability, prosperity and inclusion.

The dialogue benefitted from the contributions of Ms. Amina Mohammed, UN Deputy Secretary-General; H.E. Patty Hajdu, Minister of Jobs and Families of Canada; H.E. Ambassador Beatrice Karago of Kenya; Hon. Anar Guliyev, Chairman of the State Committee on Urban Planning and Architecture of Azerbaijan; H.E. Abdulaziz bin Nasser Al-Khalifa, Secretary General of the National Planning Council of Qatar; Hon. Anne Hidalgo, Mayor of Paris; Hon. Maria Clara Muzzio, Deputy-Chief of Government of the City of Buenos Aires; Ms. Tatiana Molcean, Executive Secretary of UNECE, Ms. Rola Dashti, Executive Secretary of UNESCWA; Mr. Claver Gatete, Executive Secretary of UNECA; and Ms. Coleen Volk, President of the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. H.E. Ambassador Lok Bahadur Thapa, President-elect of ECOSOC also attended the meeting and Mr. Jonathan Reckford, CEO of Habitat for Humanity contributed through a video message.

1. Housing as a foundation for sustainable development

Speakers reiterated that housing is not simply a roof and four walls, but a cross-cutting enabler of health, education, gender equality, climate resilience, and social stability. Without it, no progress can be made towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. Whether in conflict affected settings, fragile states, or fast-urbanising regions, safe, affordable and adequate housing is a matter of peace, dignity, and human rights. Speakers stressed that the right to housing must be treated as a core element of the social contract and a precondition for inclusive and just societies.

The dialogue recognised the reality of informal settlements and slums, which continue to house more than a billion people and growing, affecting the access to land tenure security, services, planning and legal recognition. Informality fuels fear of eviction and undermines investments in adequate housing. Particularly in fragile conflict settings, the lack of legal documentation and tenure security leaves millions unable to return, rebuild their homes, and access recovery assistance.

2. Policy priorities and innovation

Policy priorities discussed include zoning reforms, digitalization of land and property registries, and the use of modular construction techniques to accelerate delivery. Speakers emphasized that housing policies must go beyond the construction of housing units and encompass the provision of

infrastructure, basic services, mobility, and livelihoods. Ensuring tenure security, inclusive planning, and integrated urban development were highlighted as key pillars for effective and sustainable housing systems and the prevention and upgrading of informal settlements.

Retrofitting existing buildings, urban densification and redevelopment, tackling vacant and underused housing, leveraging land and property taxation to ensure affordability were presented as essential elements to addressing the housing crisis at scale.

Speakers emphasized that solutions must be grounded in communities themselves. Community-led, Indigenous-led, and youth-led approaches were identified as highly effective and deserving of greater recognition, funding, and policy support. These approaches are best positioned to respond to local needs, strengthen social networks, and ensure that housing delivers long-term inclusion and stability.

Investment in public, cooperative, and social housing was deemed necessary to meet the growing demand from lower income groups and to create diverse, mixed-income communities. Participants called for scaling up such models, alongside enabling legal, financial, and institutional frameworks to sustain them.

Homelessness was highlighted as a growing and urgent concern, calling for integrated responses that combine housing provision with health, social protection, and long-term support systems.

3. Accessibility, youth, and leaving no-one behind

Ensuring access to adequate housing for persons with disabilities, older persons, youth, Indigenous Peoples, and marginalised groups was recognised as a critical priority. Discussants stressed that housing must be designed and delivered in ways that uphold autonomy, safety, and participation. Accessibility and universal design should be integral to all housing strategies.

The exclusion of young people from housing markets was raised as a growing concern. Participants called for youth-focused policies and financial instruments that can support first-time buyers and expand youth-led cooperatives.

4. Multilevel governance, recognising the role of cities and coalitions

The dialogue highlighted the importance of coordinated governance across all levels (local, regional and national) and the role of diverse coalitions in delivering housing at scale. Effective partnerships between public authorities, civil society, housing providers and communities were seen as central to designing and implementing sustainable housing solutions. The engagement of local governments, that are often on the front lines of the housing crisis was noted as essential, requiring both recognition and support from multilateral and national systems. Speakers stressed that housing systems should reflect local contexts while benefiting from national policy coherence and international cooperation.

5. Next steps and areas for action

The dialogue concluded with calls to maintain high the attention on housing, scale up investments in a diverse set of housing model (particularly social, cooperative, and public, as well as community-led), strengthen multilevel governance, and ensure that local actors have the tools and support to lead the process. Commitments to ensure housing remains firmly in the Declaration of the Second World Social Summit were made and to continue sharing lessons and successful practices at the 13th Session of the World Urban Forum, as well as through other milestones like COP30 and the midterm review of the

implementation of the New Urban Agenda, culminating in the High Level Meeting during the 2026 High Level Political Forum.

Participants urged the alignment of housing policies with environmental and climate goals, the adoption of data-driven approaches, and the promotion of partnerships across sectors. Moving forward, housing must be placed at the centre of efforts to renew the social contract and accelerate progress toward inclusive, resilient, and equitable societies. Including for people living in informal settlements and slums, where the risks of exclusion, eviction, and climate vulnerability are greatest. This urgency is reflected in UN-Habitat newly approved Strategic Plan 2026-2029, endorsed by Member States during the latest United Nations Habitat Assembly, which places housing, land and basic services at the core of the institutional engagement and as a clear multilateral priority for sustainable development.