



UN-HABITAT

Open-ended Intergovernmental Expert Working Group on Adequate Housing for All

Intersessional Meeting on Definition of Informal Settlements

Land Housing and Shelter Section, UN-Habitat

Date: 08 September 2025

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Introduction

Adequate Housing at the centre of UN-Habitat mandate since its establishment

Housing crisis: 2.8 billion people live in inadequate housing, including 1.1 billion people who live in slums or informal settlements and over 300 million are experiencing homelessness.

UN-Habitat Assembly Resolution 2/7: Adequate Housing for All - establishing of OEWG on (OEWG-H) and a Knowledge Platform on Housing &
Resolution 2/2: Accelerating the transformation of informal settlements and slums by 2030

Housing, land and basic services at the core of the new **UN-Habitat Strategic Plan 2026-2029**

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Open Ended Intergovernmental Working Group on Adequate Housing for All (OEWG-H)

Objectives:

- Develop robust, peer-reviewed, and Member State-endorsed set of recommendations to accelerate the achievement of safe, sustainable, adequate, and affordable housing for all.
- Submit recommendations to the third United Nations Habitat Assembly in 2029.
- Use content developed and provisional recommendations to advance adequate housing policies and programmes at national and local level.

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Open Ended Intergovernmental Working Group on Adequate Housing for All (OEWG-H)

- **OEWG-H1: 9–11 December 2024**
- **2025 Roadmap by Co-Chairs France and Kenya**
- **Expert Group Meetings**
- **Intersessional thematic meetings**
 - Housing Finance (24th June)
 - Tenure Security (25th June)
 - Informal Settlements (26th June)
 - Social Housing (27th June)
 - Sustainability (16th September)
 - **Definitions: Informal Settlements and Homelessness (17th September)**
 - Monitoring framework (18th September)
- **OEWG-H2: Nairobi, 22–23 October 2025**

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Agenda – Definition Informal Settlements

Time EAT	Session	Speakers/Moderators
15 min 4.00 - 4.15 pm	Opening remarks	OWG co-chairs France & Kenya
5 min 4.15 - 4.20 pm	Opening remarks	UN-Habitat Video from Anacláudia Rossbach , Executive Director
10 min 4.20 - 4.30 pm	Presentation on the OWG process	Ombretta Tempa , Chief Land, Housing and Shelter Section, UN-Habitat
20 min 4.30 - 4.50 pm	Framing the definition of informal settlements	David Nguthiru , Programme Officer, UN-Habitat Simon Deprez , Housing Expert, UN-Habitat
80 min 4.50 - 6.10 pm	Moderated Discussion: Key questions and Reflections Open discussion	Moderator: Joshua Maviti , Programme Management Officer, UN-Habitat Discussant: Prof. Margarita Greene Z. , Professor of Architecture, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Associate Researcher at the Center for Sustainable Urban Development
10 min 6.10 - 6.20 pm	Summary and Way forward	Discussant: Prof. Maria Mercedes Di Virgilio , Professor, University of Buenos Aires Ombretta Tempa , Chief Land, Housing and Shelter Section, UN-Habitat
10 min 6.20 - 6.30 pm	Closing remarks	OWG co-chairs France & Kenya

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Today's Intersessional Meeting

Goals:

- Present the background on **existing working definitions** of informal settlements
- Bring back the inputs from deliberations of the EGM on **the core elements to consider** for an international definition of informal settlements
- Collect additional inputs on the international definition of informal settlements

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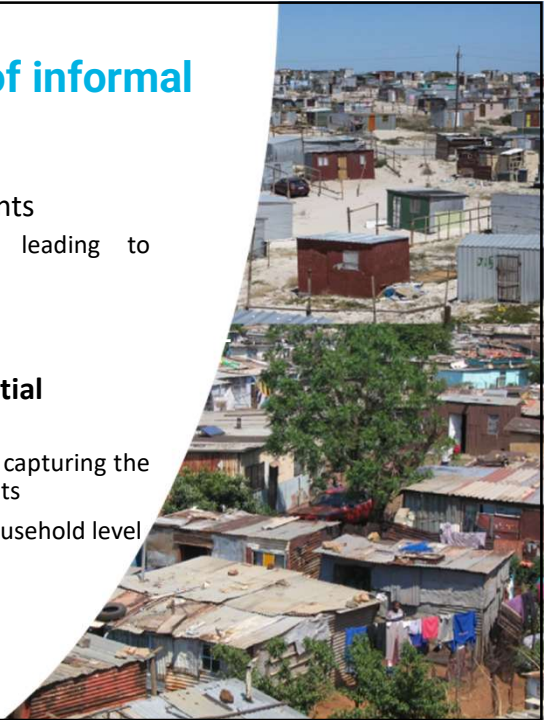
Why are we discussing a definition of informal settlements?

No globally accepted definition of informal settlements

- Countries apply different operational definitions; leading to inconsistent monitoring and reporting
- Definitions vary significantly across contexts

Current global definition of slum **does not have a spatial dimension**

- Definition lacks a settlement-level dimension capable of capturing the clusters of households that constitute informal settlements
- Existing approaches rely on deprivations, measured at household level



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Key developments on Informal settlements definition



Expert Group Meeting on Slum Definitions (EGM, 2002): informed monitoring of MDG Target 7.D and the five deprivation criteria



Habitat III Session and Issue Paper on informal settlements (2016): Highlighted the importance of informal settlements as a key issue for the NUA and the need to have a working definition for informal settlements under SDG Target 11.1



Programmatic working definitions: UNITAC, PSUP, IADB, Cities Without Slums (CA), Global Action Plan (GAP), etc.

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DEFINITION OF INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS

Emerging considerations on existing definitions from the EGM

- The **Expert Group Meeting** on 21 August convened around 50 experts.
- **Not all countries have an official definition in place**; some have multiple definitions relating to various authority levels or institutions.
 - Benefit of an international definition that can be adapted at national and sub-national levels
- Stakeholders have collaborated to **create working definitions** where no official national definitions exists.
 - Opportunity to learn from existing working definitions to inform a global definition (conceptual and operational aspects e.g. data collection practices)

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Definition of Informal Settlements

Emerging considerations on key elements from the EGM

Features of informal settlements definition highlighted by experts:

- Combination of household- and settlement-level perspectives
- Differentiation of settlement typologies
- Recognizing positive aspects and opportunities
- Principles of the development of a definition of informal settlements

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Key Questions from the EGM:

1. Does your country or organisation have a definition of informal settlements? If so, which one is it? Has this been recognized by statistical offices? What are the pros and cons of such definition?
2. What should be key elements of the definition of informal settlements?
3. What data collection methodologies exist? What are the innovations needed?

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Moderated Open Discussion

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Expert Discussant

Professor Margarita Greene Z.

Professor of Architecture, **Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile;**

Associate Researcher at the Center for Sustainable Urban Development



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Expert Discussant

Prof. Maria Mercedes Di Virgilio

Professor, University of Buenos Aires



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Way forward

- Inputs from intersessional meetings will be compiled into a **final draft analysis and set of draft proposed recommendations**.
- Documents will be made available in preparation for the **third Session of the Open-Ended Working Group** taking place in **2026**
- At the OEWG-H3, member states, accredited organisations and nominated experts will have another opportunity to **comment, review, and endorse recommendations**, which will then constitute part of the recommendations presented to the Habitat Assembly 3 in 2029

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Way forward and closing

- Kindly submit any additional written inputs to h4all@un.org by the **30th September 2025**
- Next sessions of intersessional thematic online meetings
 - **Monitoring framework:** Tomorrow, 18th September 2025
- **Second session of the Open-Ended Intergovernmental Working Group on Adequate Housing for All (OEWG-H2)**, Nairobi from 22 to 23 October 2025
 - **Register to attend on GEMS** ([UN-Habitat GEMS](https://events.unhabitat.org/) | <https://events.unhabitat.org/>)

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Thank You!

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