

## Statement of the Executive Director

**On the occasion of Human Rights Day, 10 December 2018**

Today marks the seventieth anniversary of the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#), which recognises, among other things, the universal right to adequate housing. UN-Habitat is mandated to promote socially and environmentally sustainable human settlements for all. In line with the [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#), and when called upon, we support governments, civil society and all stakeholders on ensuring access and rights for all to adequate housing and basic services, notably for vulnerable groups such as the urban poor, women, youth, migrants, people with disabilities and indigenous groups.

As a cross-cutting issue, human rights touches upon all aspects of UN-Habitat's work. In our draft 2020-2025 Strategic Plan, UN-Habitat commits to upholding human rights and using the human rights-based approach in all our initiatives, ensuring that they are promoted, respected and fulfilled.

On the occasion of Human Rights Day, UN-Habitat reiterates that adequate housing should also pertain to security of tenure. Adequate housing means that human settlements are equipped with proper, basic services, and is affordable, habitable, accessible, and physically and culturally appropriate. It is the human right of every woman, man, youth and child to have and sustain a safe and secure home, to live in, in peace and dignity.

Many cities today have not had the opportunity to plan or incorporate residential areas in their overall urban development. This is partly due to the inability of local governments to cope with rapid rural-to-urban migration. Consequently, municipal governments grapple with the provision of adequate urban basic services, such as infrastructure development, public transport, waste management and safety. Furthermore, as a result of unplanned urban expansion, informal settlements are often forcibly removed to make space for new developments. Evictions that are not carried out in accordance with the law and in conformity with international treaties, is a human rights violation.

Approximately two million people are forcibly evicted annually. This must urgently be addressed. While UN-Habitat advocates for sustainable urban development and planning, and concedes that resettlement may be necessary at times, such action must be a last resort, and should strictly conform with the [United Nations Basic Principles and Guidelines on Development-based Evictions and Displacement](#). UN-Habitat encourages Governments to conduct impact assessments and consider alternative solutions in a comprehensive and holistic manner, prior to the initiation of demolitions to mitigate the risks and overall impact.

Today, on Human Rights Day, **let us stand up for equality, justice and human dignity**, and come together to form partnerships and develop concrete solutions to issues pertaining to adequate housing. UN-Habitat stands ready to work with Governments and partners at all levels to develop sustainable solutions and preventative measures to ensure that adequate and safe housing is provided to all, fully in line with the New Urban Agenda, which places housing at its centre, and Sustainable Development Goal 11.

More information:

[Joint UN-OHCHR and UN-Habitat Factsheet 21 on the Right to Adequate Housing](#)

[Joint UN-OHCHR and UN-Habitat Factsheet 25 on Forced Eviction](#)

[Housing at the Centre of the New Urban Agenda](#)

[Assessing the Impact of Eviction: Handbook](#)