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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,  
political, economic, social and cultural rights,  
including the right to development**

### **Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living and on the right to non-discrimination in this context, Leilani Farha, on her visit to New Zealand**

**Comments by the State\***

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\* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



## **Visit to New Zealand: Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living and on the right to non-discrimination in this context**

1. Aotearoa New Zealand thanks the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living and on the right to non-discrimination in this context, Leilani Farha, for her report on her visit to New Zealand (10-19 February 2020). We have reviewed the report and provide the following response and brief update on key developments in New Zealand housing policy since the Special Rapporteur's visit

2. Aotearoa New Zealand recognises the many concerns raised in the Special Rapporteur's report, and shares her view that the housing crisis facing Aotearoa New Zealand must be addressed urgently, but also in a way that is enduring.

3. Resolving the housing crisis has been, and remains, a central priority for the New Zealand Government. The visit by the Special Rapporteur was hosted in the context of an expanding government work programme on housing, and active engagement between the Government and Māori, civil society, experts, community housing providers, homeowners, tenants and others.

4. For this reason Aotearoa New Zealand welcomes the report and its recommendations. We are considering closely the report's specific recommendations in the context of the actions that we already have underway to address the housing crisis, many of which accord with the report.

5. The New Zealand Government, through Te Tūāpapa Kura Kāinga - Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, is currently consulting with New Zealanders on a Government Policy Statement on Housing and Urban Development (GPS-HUD). This is a new statutory instrument that will set a long-term strategic direction for housing and urban development in Aotearoa New Zealand, to guide not only government policy and investment, but the efforts of everyone who contributes to the future of housing in our country.

6. We are developing a new Māori Housing Strategy to contribute to a Government response to the Māori housing crisis by reviewing and resetting long-term system changes needed to address the causes of poor and inadequate housing for Māori. Development of the new strategy will include, and be informed by, insights and learnings gained through a review of He Whare Āhuru He Oranga Tāngata - the 2014 Maori Housing strategy. This approach will strengthen the Māori and Iwi Housing Innovation (MAIHI) Framework for Action and continue the momentum to achieve significant and enduring housing outcomes with, for and by Māori

7. The consultation document for the GPS-HUD is centred on a vision that "*Everyone in Aotearoa lives in a healthy, secure and affordable home that meets their needs, within a thriving, inclusive and sustainable community*". This vision recognises that everyone has a right to an adequate home, and also speaks to the broader view of housing adequacy as highlighted in the Special Rapporteur's report. That is, it is not just about the physical building (the roof over one's head) but the other elements that are essential to the right to an adequate standard of living, including the qualitative features of the communities within which New Zealanders live.

8. We are proposing six areas of focus for our efforts to resolve the housing crisis and meet the challenges and opportunities of the future, all of which include actions and policy programmes that are already well advanced. We consider that the six focus areas, outlined below, align well with key recommendations in the Special Rapporteur's report:

a. Ensure that more affordable houses are being built: As a result of our housing policies and investments, more homes are being built in New Zealand now than at any time since the 1970s, but we know we have a lot more to do. We will continue to focus on reforming the system settings that currently constrain housing supply, particularly affordable supply, and which exclude people from having access to adequate housing options. We will

also continue to increase the role that government plays in facilitating and coordinating housing and urban development projects; investing in infrastructure, and partnering with others to help drive scale, stability and productivity in the residential construction sector over the long term. For this purpose we have recently increased by \$2 billion the borrowing capacity of our public housing provider and lead urban developer, Kāinga Ora, and also set aside a \$3.8 billion Housing Acceleration Fund in Budget 2021, which was delivered on 20 May 2021

b. Provide homes that meet people’s needs: As a result of our housing policies more people and whānau are being helped than ever before. We have put in place significant measures to improve the quality and security of rental accommodation, including improving the standards to make rental homes warmer and drier, and limiting when landlords can increase rents. We are also increasing the funding available for affordable housing provision. We will partner with community housing providers, iwi and others to take a place-based approach to increasing the supply of affordable, accessible housing, including through purpose-built rental housing and alternative pathways to home ownership.

c. Support resilient, sustainable, inclusive and prosperous communities: In delivering more affordable housing we also need to ensure that we are doing that in a way that gives people good access to services, jobs, and social connections. We recognise that we haven’t planned or invested well enough for our communities to grow to meet our ongoing needs sustainably and equitably. A core focus will be taking a place-based approach and ensuring all our communities, large or small, have the critical features that better enable environmental, economic, and social resilience, and which equip them to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change.

d. Invest in Māori-driven housing and urban solutions: Supporting the right of Māori to self-determine and realise better housing outcomes, and building a more effective Te Tiriti o Waitangi partnership, is a central element of the GPS-HUD and of MAIHI. The Government has recognised the barrier for Māori to gain access to financing for housing development on Māori land in particular for infrastructure, and have dedicated funding to address this impediment and support papakāinga housing (housing on Māori land) solutions to support collective models of Māori home ownership and communal living alternatives. In May, Budget 2021 delivered an additional \$380 million to improve Māori housing in the regions, and set aside \$350 million for a Māori Infrastructure Fund. The Government will partner and invest with Māori-led housing solutions such as:

- 1,000 new homes for Māori in regions that will be a range of papakāinga housing, affordable rentals, transitional housing, and owner-occupied housing
- Funding to strengthen MAIHI approaches and partnerships with iwi and Māori to deliver more whenua-based housing and papakāinga.
- Funding to improve housing quality through repairs of 700 Māori-owned houses for whānau most in need, led by Te Puni Kōkiri (Ministry of Māori Development) to improve social and health outcomes.
- \$30 million towards building future capability for iwi and Māori groups to accelerate housing projects and a range of support services.

e. Prevent and reduce homelessness: We are already rolling out 18 immediate actions under the Aotearoa New Zealand Homelessness Action Plan. By working in partnership with the community we are increasing the supply of housing, supporting people with services to help them sustain suitable housing, and build better lives. By 2024 we will have delivered more than 18,000 new public and transitional housing places, and we remain committed to increasing supply further. By urgently putting in place new supply and continuing to build more public housing we will end our reliance on motel accommodation. We know that motels aren’t an ideal solution, however, they are preferable to people living in cars, staying in overcrowded housing, sleeping in parks or on the street. We know we need to make sure people are appropriately supported while new housing supply is built. That is why the Government recently announced moves to ensure families and children are placed in accommodation with facilities better suited to their needs with support to keep them safe

and well, and provide a pathway to more permanent housing. The approach will start in one location but may be rolled out to others.

f. Re-establish housing's primary role as a home rather than a financial asset: We agree with the Special Rapporteur that housing speculation — and the trading of existing housing stock rather than investment in new builds — has fuelled housing unaffordability and social inequality in Aotearoa. Addressing this is a focus for the GPS-HUD and the subject of recently announced actions. To reduce speculative housing investment we have agreed to remove the ability for property investors to offset their interest expenses against their rental income when they are calculating their tax, and have doubled the period (to ten years) within which investors are subject to paying tax on the sale of a house.

9. Our consultation and engagement on the GPS-HUD, on the review of the Māori Housing Strategy, and on the many work programmes we are undertaking, provides an opportunity to continue to explore the specific recommendations of the Special Rapporteur. We thank the Special Rapporteur for her valuable contribution to Aotearoa New Zealand's future.

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