



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
8 November 2019

English only

Commission for Social Development

Fifty-eighth session

10–19 February 2020

**Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and
the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly:
priority Theme: Affordable housing and social protection
systems for all to address homelessness**

Statement submitted by International Federation on Ageing, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

An estimated 100 million people in the world are homeless, affecting both wealthy and poor nations. While there are many causes and circumstances that result in homelessness, such as unemployment, lack of personal finances, discrimination and social exclusion, lack of social protection, shortage of affordable housing, family break-down, banishment from families, substance abuse, domestic violence and abuse, illness (including mental illness), disability, conflict situations, natural disasters, and forced migration, it should be noted that older homeless persons have additional vulnerabilities because of their advancing age. This includes the inability to deal with dangers of homelessness, protect their belongings, get enough to eat, ward off violence and abuse, and get emergency medical assistance.

Although population ageing is occurring around the world, stakeholders working to improve housing and social protection systems often overlook older persons and fail to include policies to prevent them from falling into homelessness. Insufficient nursing homes, lack of assisted living facilities and absence of long-term care can all lead to homelessness, especially when families are unable to provide the necessary care and attention.

It is the responsibility of Governments to ensure that all people of all ages live a life of dignity, well into their older age. Tangible, measurable actions are urgently required from across sectors.

Recommendations

The undersigned call upon the Commission for Social Development to recommend that Member States take action to prevent and address homelessness of older persons through:

1. Establishment of non-discriminatory employment policies

End age discrimination in the workplace, ensure minimum wages for workers of all ages, enact social protection policies, and provide universal unemployment insurance so that older persons are not forced out of their homes because they cannot afford adequate accommodations.

2. Creation of affordable, adequate housing

Ensure public housing policies that address the needs and income status of older persons, safeguarding access to adequate heating, lighting, food storage, sanitation and clean drinking water, as well as legal protection against forced evictions and harassment.

3. Improvement of health services

Provide adequate and affordable health services, including basic health literacy training, as well as long-term care facilities, to avoid older persons slipping into homelessness because of inadequate finances to take care of their health.

4. Improvement of social services

Social protection measures must be expanded to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty that often leads to homelessness.

5. Provision of safe places for the homeless

While many non-profit organizations have stepped up to provide food, shelter, water, sanitation, and medical care for the homeless, governments must recognize the basic human rights to these items as well as necessary social services and security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age, or other lack of

livelihood in circumstances beyond ones control (Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights). It must be borne in mind that homelessness should not be criminalized.

The International Federation on Ageing is honoured to have the opportunity to work alongside Member States to advocate for the rights of older persons in the fight to address homelessness. The rights of older persons are human rights.

This statement has been endorsed by:

- AARP
 - Gray Panthers
 - HelpAge International
 - Soroptimist International
 - The International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse
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