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**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 Doha International Family Institute, 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

Investing in affordable housing and social protection systems towards sustainable families and societies.

Introduction

By adopting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Member States underscore the importance of addressing the shortage of adequate and affordable housing as a challenge towards achieving sustainable development for all, which is highlighted under SDG target 11.1, which aims to ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and to upgrade slums by 2030.

Affordable housing represents a key challenge for youth and families alike. Lack of affordable housing is affecting the transition to adulthood around the world. The delay in this transition is linked to that of marriage and family formation, which represents the main pathway towards the creation and formation of nuclear families, allowing youth to take on adult roles, such as child rearing and independent living. This transition, also termed ‘wait adulthood’ or ‘waithood’, denoting multiple reasons for the delay in family formation, including marriage and parental dependence, is conditioned by a number of economic settings; including securing adequate and affordable housing. Evidence shows that the objective of family formation is constrained by the readiness of men to secure acceptable housing and work, signaling their economic stability. Research also shows that as youth seek the transition towards family formation, the lack of affordable housing, compounded by the lack of job opportunities, delays marriage and consequently their transition to adulthood. Moreover, the increased cost of housing has a positive impact on family dissolution.

All humans are entitled to the right of housing. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948, proclaims that “everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control”. Yet, the human right to a house and a home to raise families is becoming difficult to attain due to the financialization of housing, which has significant impact on the cost of housing, eventually affecting family formation and dissolution as well. In fact, the housing market faces a substantial disparity between supply and demand. On one end of the spectrum, there is an over-supply of expensive and non-affordable housing, and on the other a stark shortage of affordable housing, resulting in the deprivation of youth as well as low-income households of home ownership. This issue is causing youth to continue living with their parents for increasingly longer duration, which in turn affects their decision to form families.

Social protection policies play an important role in addressing family formation and dissolution as well as tackling the lack of adequate and affordable housing structures. Such policies have the untapped potential to contribute to the achievement of development goals at the national, regional, and global levels. Research shows that youth are met with social exclusion as a result of the lack of job opportunities and access to affordable housing, where housing policies that address their specific needs are non-existent. Family-sensitive social protection policies can impact family stability and sustainability, by providing access to affordable housing units.

Governmental contributions are essential for the development and sustainability of affordable housing. There are various ways to tackle the lack of affordable housing,

such as the allocation of land and paving the way for the creation of housing for low-income households. Governments could also control the planning and building regulations, for example by showcasing housing costs that are increased by the high standard of living as well as specific building regulations. Controlling these regulations could allow for the expansion in the amount of affordable housing. Finally, partnerships between the public and private sector are crucial, where engagement of both sides will increase the supply by offering more homes while addressing the demand side through financing.

Recommendations

To this end, we recommend:

1. Adopting housing policies that fit the family as a unit and acknowledging that lack of affordable housing is a root cause of delayed marriage and family formation.
2. Strengthening social policies such that families may access affordable housing and social protection systems and policies, and re-examining the housing welfare system with the aim of adopting a framework that enables and facilitates the strengthening of the family and the engagement of youth.
3. Developing and adopting national laws and policies that assure affordable family-sized housing and support.
4. Adopting and/strengthening social protection policies and systems that provide coverage for all, with a specific focus on vulnerable families.
5. Involving youth in the development of policy interventions and research agendas while considering the political, social and economic dynamics of the region.
6. Promoting public-private partnerships towards the innovation, development and scale-up of affordable and adequate housing units.
