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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: Inclusive and resilient recovery from
COVID-19 for sustainable livelihoods, well-being, and
dignity for all: eradicating poverty and hunger in all its
forms and dimensions to achieve the 2030 Agenda**

Statement submitted by DePaul University, 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

The Working Group to End Homelessness is a group of 30 non-governmental organizations that witness a concern for poor and marginalized people globally in programs and advocacy. Dedicated to the elimination of homelessness in all its forms as described in [E/RES/2020/7](#) para 7, we work with the United Nations, global platforms to end homelessness, academic centers, and individuals who are or have experienced homelessness to devise solutions and call for change.

We urge the 60th Commission on Social Development to consider the impact of homelessness through its Priority Theme, *Inclusive and resilient recovery from COVID-19 for sustainable livelihoods, well-being and dignity for all: eradicating poverty and hunger in all its forms and dimensions to achieve the 2030 Agenda*.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, homelessness' intersection with health and well-being became clear. In April 2020, Leilani Farha, former UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing, noted, **“Housing has become the frontline defense against the coronavirus.** Home has rarely been more of a life or death situation. In the face of this pandemic, a lack of access to adequate housing is a potential death sentence for people living in homelessness and puts the broader population at continued risk.” (*COVID-19 Guidance note: Protecting those living in homelessness; April 2020.*) Certain Member States and local municipalities suspended evictions, offered people temporary accommodation, increased funding, and prioritized people experiencing homelessness for Personal Protective Equipment and vaccines. (*Seeley, Molly; Homelessness service systems responses to COVID-19; 2020*). These emergency measures were crucial and saved countless lives.

This **investment in homelessness must continue to take priority as we emerge into post-pandemic recovery.** The policy brief *COVID-19 in an urban world* notes, “access to essential public services is key for effective COVID-19 response, recovery and building resilience...especially for the urban poor, slum dwellers, the homeless, and other vulnerable groups.” The brief further mentions that increased “social protection is urgently needed with a focus on the most vulnerable and marginalized urban groups” including those who are homeless.

An inclusive and resilient recovery from COVID-19 pandemic that ensures well-being and dignity for all will contain comprehensive strategies for preventing and addressing homelessness in all its forms. “Homelessness is a profound assault on dignity, social inclusion and the right to life. It is a prima facie violation of the right to housing and violates a number of other human rights.” (*A/HRC/43/43, para 30.*) Strategies to prevent homelessness include poverty reduction and income support; critical time interventions as people exit hospitals, prisons or foster care; family or school interventions; eviction prevention; land rights; and housing stability programs. Strategies to address homelessness include street outreach; harm-reduction and trauma-informed care; crisis accommodation with supports; and housing and service options ranging from transitional support, to permanent supportive housing, to housing subsidies and vouchers, to social and affordable housing. People experiencing homelessness must be offered physical and mental healthcare and education, training, and employment opportunities. Furthermore, disaggregated data on people experiencing homelessness and programme outcomes must be collected, analyzed, and reported in order to adapt strategies towards greater effect.

Around the world, poverty is one of the primary drivers of homelessness. In May 2019, UN DESA and UN-Habitat convened an Expert Group Meeting on the theme *Affordable Housing and Social Protection Systems for All to Address Homelessness*. The resulting report stated, “Inequality has not only persisted but

increased, and considerable numbers of people within countries are left living in extreme or near poverty and excluded from full participation in economic, social, and political life. Homelessness is one of the manifestations of this inequality.” This led the 58th Commission to conclude, **“poverty has various forms and dimensions, including homelessness and living in inadequate housing.”** (*E/RES/2020/7 para 5.*)

Rising housing costs and stagnant wages cause many to live one crisis or paycheck away from homelessness. A survey of the OECD countries showed “households spend the largest share of their budget on housing, relative to all other household budget items; this holds true for low-, middle- and high-income households. While many households struggle to afford housing, low-income dwellers are particularly overburdened by housing costs.”

In a study of young women experiencing homelessness in Ethiopia, extreme poverty was the most frequently cited driver; many women left home to ease family financial pressures. (*Edwards, Beverly; Findings of a study exploring homeless street females in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: A need for community based programs; 2020.*)

Universal cash payments is a poverty-reduction strategy that is newly being applied to homelessness. These payments “would provide a buffer against homelessness by ensuring that people have a stable source of income that is not affected by one’s able-bodiedness or labor market noninvolvement, nor would it be terminated due to changes in life circumstances (e.g., acquisition of a job, improvement in an episodic mental illness).” (*Kerman, Nick; The role of universal basic income in preventing and ending homelessness; 2021.*)

A 2020 study from the United Nations Development Programme and the Pardee Center for International Futures at the University of Denver projects that, **as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, an additional 207 million people could be pushed into extreme poverty by 2030, bringing the total number to more than one billion.** Inclusive and resilient recovery from COVID-19 must focus on strategies to reduce poverty, and include homelessness as a particular manifestation of poverty.

Hunger and food insecurity exist within a complex interaction of different risk factors, including homelessness. Homelessness presents multiple barriers to food security and nutrition, including lack of access to cooking or storage facilities, malnourishment, and lack of the important social and cultural elements of food consumption. Shelter and food are two of the most basic human needs; insecurity in these categories goes hand-in-hand. In the United States, 70% of people experiencing homelessness also experience food insecurity, compared to 11% of the general population. (*Fitzpatrick, Kevin, et. al.; Homeless and hungry: food insecurity in the land of plenty; 2021.*)

Some women become so institutionalized by their experience of homelessness that they temporarily lose cooking skills, further impacting their children. A study of children experiencing homelessness in Bangladesh showed that 60% were underweight. (*Hakim, Abdul, et. al.; Malnutrition prevalence and health practices of homeless children: a cross-sectional study in Bangladesh; 2016.*)

The policy brief *The impact of COVID-19 on Food Security and Nutrition* notes, “Hundreds of **millions of people were already suffering from hunger and malnutrition before the virus hit** and, unless immediate action is taken, we could see a global food emergency” and calls people who are most vulnerable to be reached first.

Food banks are not a sustainable answer to hunger, in the same way that temporary shelters or tents are not a sustainable answer to homelessness. Rather, the answer lies in housing, with access to employment, education, and social protection floors that create better standards of living.

The Sustainable Development Goals have many interlinkages that, when comprehensively addressed, will see gains across well-being, poverty, homelessness, and hunger and allow us to better achieve the 2030 Agenda, ensuring human dignity and human rights. We urge Member States and the 60th Commission to:

- Explicitly mention homelessness as a dimension of extreme poverty;
- Recognize the high overlap between homelessness, hunger and poverty;
- Recognize that the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated pre-existing inequalities and provides opportunities for radical transformation;
- Adopt a human-rights based approach, recognizing the full humanity and dignity of people experiencing homelessness, hunger, and poverty, and empowering them to participate in the design of policies and programmes that affect them
- Expand social protection floors or prioritize the application of social protection floors for people who are particularly vulnerable, including those living in extreme poverty and at risk of or experiencing homelessness;
- Recognize that homelessness, hunger, and poverty are primarily driven by policy and structural choices;
- Undertake a comprehensive set of interlocking strategies ranging from physical and mental healthcare; education, training, and employment opportunities; homelessness prevention programmes; guaranteeing access to land and secure tenure; and a wide variety of housing and services options for people experiencing poverty and homelessness;
- Collect, analyze, and report on disaggregated data and programme outcomes for continual learning and adaptation towards even more effective policy and programmes.

Undersigned by:

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