



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
20 December 2023

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women

Sixty-eighth session

11–22 March 2024

Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and
to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly
entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and
peace for the twenty-first century”

Statement submitted by National Council of Women of Canada, 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

Housing is a Fundamental Human Right, not a Luxurious Commodity

The National Council of Women of Canada recognizes that the prevalence of poverty globally has seen a dramatic rise due to several interconnected crises. Women account for a little over 50 per cent of the world's population but they represent 70 per cent world's poor. Continued ongoing wars and multidimensional conflicts, global health, climate, and humanitarian crises have resulted in homelessness and exacerbated the risk of violence against women and children. Under international human rights law, the right to appropriate housing is a critical component of women's equality. While international and national legislation are increasingly recognizing women's right to sufficient housing, significant gaps remain between this acknowledgment and the reality of widespread denial of this right.

As a result of housing discrimination and inequality, many women and girls live in unstable, dehumanizing, and dangerous situations, putting them at risk of homelessness and violence. Forcible evictions and other violations of the right to housing disproportionately affect women and amplify existing inequities, posing a serious barrier to gender equality. While housing is the foundation of an individual's or family's stability and security, homelessness and affordable housing have become the new shadow pandemic. Meanwhile, real estate profits have grown, and housing has become increasingly unaffordable. In many nations, women, indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, migrants, and refugees endure housing discrimination or live in deplorable conditions.

Many residents are denied equitable access to public services, education, transportation, and other opportunities due to spatial segregation. Over 1.8 billion people live in informal settlements or in substandard housing, with limited access to basic amenities such as water. Sanitation and electricity power. They are sometimes threatened with eviction. Homelessness, one of the most serious abuses of the right to sufficient housing, has been on the rise in many developing and economically advanced countries.

In article 25 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and article 11.1 of the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, sufficient housing was recognized as part of the right to an acceptable standard of living. Other international human rights treaties have since acknowledged or referred to the right to appropriate housing or some of its components, such as home protection and privacy.

The right to appropriate housing is relevant to all member states since they have all ratified at least one international treaty referring to adequate housing and have all committed to upholding the right to this right through international declarations, plans of action, or conference conclusion documents. There are numerous international treaties and declarations that include the right to sufficient housing.

The National Council of Women of Canada is calling on all Member States to kindly remember their commitments in accordance with the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (h) articles 14.2 and 16.1; UN General Assembly resolution [A/HRC/43/43](#) and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2030 Agenda Universal Values Human Rights-based, Leave No One Behind, Gender Equality & Women's Empowerment.

We urge all member states to review their national housing plans and ensure that housing and real estate markets worldwide put an end to the financialization of housing and see that housing is not treated as a commodity for wealth and investment rather than a social good; to see affordability as more than only four walls and a roof,

a number of characteristics must be met before some types of shelter may be termed “adequate housing”, such as:

Security of tenure: Housing is not adequate if its occupants do not have a degree of tenure security which guarantees legal protection against forced evictions, harassment, and other threats.

Availability of services, materials, facilities, and infrastructure: Housing is not adequate if its occupants do not have safe drinking water, adequate sanitation, energy for cooking, heating, lighting, food storage or refuse disposal.

Affordability: Housing is not adequate if its cost threatens or compromises the occupants’ enjoyment of other human rights.

Habitability: Housing is not adequate if it does not guarantee physical safety or provide adequate space, as well as protection against the cold, damp, heat, rain, wind, and other threats to health and structural hazards.

Accessibility: Housing is not adequate if the specific needs of disadvantaged and marginalized groups are not taken into account.

Location: Housing is not adequate if it is cut off from employment opportunities, health-care services, schools, childcare centers and other social facilities, or if located in a polluted or dangerous area.

A home is the center of our social, emotional, and at times economic existence should be a sanctuary the place where we can live in peace, security, and dignity. We are appealing to your collective consciousness to put an end to the ongoing shadow pandemic of homelessness and housing affordability, as every woman and every child needs a place called home. Homelessness is one of the cruellest forms of poverty, prejudice, and injustice, affecting people of all ages, and socioeconomic origins.

Co-sponsoring organizations:

International Council of Women,

Kırmızı Biber Derneği,

Soroptimist International,

The Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women/La fédération canadienne des femmes de carrières commerciales et professionnelles,

The Canadian Federation of University Women,

Widows Rights International.