



Housing Policies: Affordable Homes

Message by Dr. Joan Clos, UN-Habitat Executive Director

Every year the United Nations celebrates World Habitat Day on the first Monday of October, marking the official start of Urban October: a month of celebrations and citizens' engagement in the urban life worldwide.

This year's celebrations are quite special as they coincide with the first anniversary of the New Urban Agenda adopted in Habitat III in Quito, Ecuador.

The New Urban Agenda enshrines a new vision of urbanization as an indispensable engine for development and a prerequisite for prosperity and growth.

It is thanks to this paradigm shift that urbanization and development are indivisibly linked one to another.

To ensure that this vision is properly understood by all, and effectively implemented, we need to urgently address the crucial aspect of housing affordability.

This is why Housing Policies: Affordable Homes has been selected as the theme for World Habitat Day 2017.

An analysis of housing affordability over the last 20 years reveals that despite increasing demand, housing –and rental housing– has been largely unaffordable for the majority of the world population.

Handing over housing to the market has proved a failure in providing affordable and adequate housing for all.

We all remember well that housing was at the epicentre of the eruption of the global economic crisis of 2008, instead of being at the heart of the urban policy.

Today, 1.6 billion people live in inadequate housing, of which 1 billion live in slums and informal settlements.

And while millions of people lack suitable homes, the stock of vacant houses is gradually increasing.

Ensuring housing affordability is therefore a complex issue of strategic importance for development, social peace and equality.

Addressing the housing needs of the poorest and most vulnerable, especially women, youth and those who live in slums must be a priority in the development agendas.

Promoting sound housing policies is also crucial for climate change, resilience, mobility and energy consumption.

This is why we would like to remind on this day the importance of locating housing at the physical - and holistic - centre of our cities.

For housing to contribute to national socio-economic development and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, the New Urban Agenda calls for placing housing policies at the centre of national urban policies along with strategies to fight poverty, improve health and employment.

As we strive to create cities for all, an urgent action for achieving affordable homes requires a global commitment to effective and inclusive housing policies.

I wish you a happy World Habitat Day and I invite you all to take part in the Urban October activities.