

WUF11 SESSION CONCEPT NOTE

DELIVERING AFFORDABLE HOUSING ACROSS CONTINENTS

1. Summary:

The spread of COVID-19 has exacerbated a pre-existing global housing crisis, which was already affecting millions of people. As COVID-19 spread around the world, billions of people have been told to stay at home. However, this simple preventative public health measure is impossible for people who live in homelessness, or in unsafe or overcrowded housing.

From slums to gated communities, from overcrowding to sprawl, from homelessness to vacant houses, there is much evidence that housing is shaping cities worldwide despite regional, demographic, socioeconomic and cultural specificities. Housing challenges faced by each region varies significantly. The most common problem in the African region is related to the quantitative shortage of adequate housing, where formal housing solutions remain unaffordable to a majority of households, displaying a profound mismatch between the ever-growing demand and the supply. Important challenges for Europe, on the other hand, lay in the poor quality and location of the stock usually far from job and livelihood opportunities, lack of accessibility and services, and insecurity of tenure.

Still, concerns in both regions are equally focused on the affordability crisis: in many parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, less than 10% of households can afford a mortgage even for the cheapest newly built house. In most of the European region, housing prices have grown three times faster than incomes in the past 20 years. The challenge of making housing more affordable and addressing some of the barriers and bottlenecks, is made even more urgent by the growing income instability triggered by COVID-19 and by the lack of social protection systems that were able to capture people working in the informal sector. Rising levels of unemployment and poverty are visible in both regions, while also been matched with a constant increase in housing prices. Rising inequalities in the access to adequate housing are also present both in terms of gender and access to appropriate financial products.

In addition, the strong emphasis put on ensuring access to property has hampered the development of other tenure options which would be better placed to cater to different income groups and prevent informality and homelessness.

Finally, while rapid urbanisation is recognised as a central development challenge, not the same relevance has been given to policies, investments and responses focusing on sustainable, safe and adequate housing delivery. Sector-oriented strategies are not mainstreamed within the work of development actors and urban development at large.

The special session on housing will discuss the challenges posed by the market failure in the provision of adequate, safe, and affordable housing for low-income and vulnerable populations in both the European and the African continent by unpacking regional differences and context specific challenges. The event will explore innovative funding approaches under the Urban

Agenda and viable housing finance options including debt and equity, corporate and project finance, and public/private/PPP financing structures that could contribute to increase housing accessibility for a larger share of the population in both regions. Finally, the special session on housing will also showcase the efficacy of investments in local and national contexts where there is a clear policy and regulatory framework for housing in order to draw lessons that could inspire and be replicated in other contexts.

2. Objectives of the Session:

- Identify priorities for the realization of the SDG Goal 11.1 to ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing
- Explore the key challenges and best practices in the European and African continent to raise awareness on the diversity of global housing issues and opportunities related to the delivery of sustainable, affordable and inclusive housing
- Engage national and local governments, development finance institutions, NGOs, civil society, universities and research centers in addressing housing challenges as central to achieving the New Urban Agenda and Sustainable Development Goal 11
- Exchange experiences and good practices regarding the current state of housing in Europe and Africa and discuss mechanisms for cross-fertilizing .

3. Guiding Questions for Discussions:

- Why housing is unaffordable and which policies have worked to correct it?
- Beyond ownership – what other tenure options must be made available across continents to respond to the needs of modern societies?
- How can the housing needs (housing typology, type of occupation, etc) be better quantified and qualified in both regions? And overall, globally?
- How new housing creates value and how this value is and should be shared among stakeholders (owners, tenants, businesses and state)
- How can we ensure that housing is put at the centre of sustainable development and sector-oriented actions are embedded in international strategies? How can development financial institutions mainstream housing as central to sustainable development?
- Which European and larger, Mediterranean, housing experiences would be applicable in rapidly urbanizing countries of Africa??
- What mechanisms of collaboration are needed to cross-fertilize between Africa and Europe on housing matters?

4. Session Format:

Moderator: Charles Hinga, Principal Secretary State Dept for Housing and Urban Development, Kenya

Opening remarks

Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Executive Director, UN Habitat (7 minutes)

Vera Songwe, Undersecretary and Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (TBC) (7 mm)

Teresa Czerwińska, Vice-President, European Investment Bank (7 minutes)

Panelists:

Tanja Gönner, CEO, Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (10 minutes)

Werner Schmidt, Director, European Investment Bank (10 minutes)

Audrey Guiral Naepels, Deputy Head of Urban Development, Planning and Housing Division,
French Development Agency (10 minutes)

Papa Abdoulaye Sy, Global Lead Urban Development, Islamic Development Bank (10 minutes)

Dr Kingsley Muwowo, CEO of Shelter Afrique (tbc) (10 minutes)

Femi Adewole, President, Family Homes Funds Limited, Nigeria (10 minutes)

Oumar Sylla, Director (a.i) Regional Office for Africa UN-Habitat (10 minutes)

Q&A (20 minutes)

Closing remarks by moderator (10 minutes)