Concept Note

Local struggles for housing rights, in the context of environmental degradation, urbanisation and climate change

Side event at the 43rd session of the UN Human Rights Council

Date: Friday 6th March 2020, 10:30 – 11:30
Venue: Room XXI, Palais des Nations, Geneva
Topic: Local struggles for housing rights, in the context of environmental degradation, urbanisation and climate change

Background:
The right to adequate housing is under pressure from urbanisation and increasingly threatened by environmental degradation, climate change and climate policies. The implications for persons living in informal settlements and for those experiencing poverty, are particularly severe. We are already seeing informal settlements across the world devastated by climate-induced natural disasters and by slow-onset climate impacts such as sea level rise, and their residents suffering in extreme weather such as heat waves and flooding. Informal settlement dwellers and people living in precarious living conditions are particularly vulnerable due to: the fragile nature of their physical structures; the precarious locations in which they are forced to settle; the poor infrastructure and services (eg: lack of water and sanitation services); and their lack of political voice and influence in policy-making. Further, climate change and disaster risk reduction are increasingly being used as excuses for evictions of informal settlements to make way for modernization and development projects, without adequate resettlement programs for displaced persons.

In this context where the right to adequate housing is imperiled, there is an urgent need for States to increase their ambition to tackle climate change and environmental degradation in order to prevent further harm to rights. It is equally crucial that the housing and climate policies employed by States and donor institutions (including climate finance mechanisms), are inclusive and rights-respecting. Participation of affected communities is key: where policy-makers understand the challenges faced by rights holders, particularly by hearing
from them directly, they are better placed to address those challenges in their policy-making. In fact, in most cases, communities themselves are best placed to design solutions to the housing rights challenges they face.

This event will highlight ground-level experiences from the Global South, of the right to adequate housing and related rights (eg: water and sanitation) in the context of urbanisation, environmental degradation and climate change. Speakers will explain how these phenomena are impacting housing rights in local communities in urban and rural areas and will highlight community-led solutions to protect and fulfil rights in this context.

**Speakers:**

- **Representative of the Permanent Mission of Finland in Geneva**
  Opening remarks

- **Ms Leilani Farha, UN Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing**
  Opening remarks

- **Ms Jaqueline Martinez, Fundacién Salvadorena de Desarrollo y Vivienda Mínima, El Salvador**
  Perspective from El Salvador

- **Ms Aizighode Obinyan, Spaces for Change, Nigeria**
  Perspective from Nigeria

- **Mr Jules Dumas Nguebou, Association des amoureux du livre, pour le Développement Local, Cameroon**
  Perspective from Cameroon

- **Ms Clara-Luisa Weichelt, Misereor**
  Closing remarks

- **Lucy McKernan, Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**
  Moderator

**Contacts:**

Lucy McKernan  
Global Initiative for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights  
lucy@gi-escr.org

Clara-Luisa Weichelt  
Misereor  
Clara-Luisa.Weichelt@misereor.de