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## FEANTSA welcomes inclusion of homelessness as priority in UN New Urban Agenda and calls for EU to match focus at regional level

Quito, Habitat III Conference, 17 October 2016 – [\*The European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless \(FEANTSA\)\*](#) welcomes the clear commitment of UN members to eliminate homelessness and progressively realize the right to adequate housing that has been made during the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) in Quito, Ecuador.

The outcome document of the Conference, the **UN New Urban Agenda**, calls for measures to “**prevent and eliminate homelessness,**” to “**combat and eliminate its criminalization**” and for “**the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing.**”<sup>1</sup>

With the Habitat conferences taking place every 20 years, this is a unique opportunity to shape the cities of the future in a way that is inclusive for all. Indeed the European Commissioner for Regional Policy, Corina Cretu, has publicly declared that the rationale of the **Urban Agenda of the EU** will be “embedded in the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals and Habitat III.”<sup>2</sup>

Frek Spinnewijn, Director of FEANTSA: “Current approaches to urbanization which view housing as a commodity are clearly not working and homelessness is the most visible and severe manifestation of this failure. Whilst we therefore welcome the reference to eradicating homelessness, the **right to adequate housing** needs to be more clearly stated as the cornerstone of any framework for sustainable urban development. Access to housing is a precondition for the exercise of many other fundamental rights and it should be protected and enshrined as such.”

Momentum is growing at the international level. In a report by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing to the UN Human Rights Council, governments were challenged to commit to ending homelessness by 2030 in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.<sup>3</sup> Following this report, a resolution was initiated by the majority of EU Member States and adopted by the UN Human Rights Council on 23 March 2016, which contained strong calls for action to integrate the human right to adequate housing in the implementation of the UN New Urban Agenda and the SDGs, and to eliminate legislation that criminalises homelessness.<sup>4</sup>

Leilani Farha, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing: “At its core, homelessness is the result of systemic issues, discrimination and government failure to protect human rights. Habitat III is the opportunity of a

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.habitat3.org/file/535859/view/588897>

<sup>2</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/2014-2019/cretu/announcements/speech-commissioner-corina-cretu-regi-committee-meeting\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/2014-2019/cretu/announcements/speech-commissioner-corina-cretu-regi-committee-meeting_en)

<sup>3</sup> A/HRC/31/54 [http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage\\_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/31/54](http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/31/54)

<sup>4</sup> A/HRC/RES/31/9 [http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage\\_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/RES/31/9](http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/RES/31/9)



**FEANTSA**

## Press Release

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generation to launch a global human rights response to homelessness and we cannot fail to act to now to put an end to this global human rights crisis.”

Freek Spinnewijn: “FEANTSA is extremely well positioned to monitor and help to deliver on the international commitments agreed at Habitat III. We are ready and willing to work with the European Commission, EU Member States and European Cities in making sure that the clear commitment at the international level to eliminate homelessness is matched in the EU Urban Agenda. With approximately 4 million people experiencing homelessness every year in the EU area, it is time the EU stops disregarding extreme poverty and homelessness as problems of the developing world.”

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### Notes for editors:

1. [FEANTSA](http://www.feantsa.org) is the European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless. It is an umbrella of not-for-profit organisations which participate in or contribute to the fight against homelessness in Europe. It is the only major European network focusing exclusively on homelessness at European level.