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Rapporteur hails Canada's "historic" decision to recognize right to housing in new national housing strategy

Canada housing rights

23 November 2017

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STATEMENTS

[Statement by Ms. Leilani Farha, Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing as a component of the right to and Adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context at the 69th session of the General Assembly - Third Committee, Item 68 \(b & c\)](#)

GENEVA (23 November 2017) – The UN Special Rapporteur on the right to housing has commended Canada for announcing the adoption of its first-ever national housing strategy.

"What makes this a truly historic moment is the Government's acknowledgement that housing is a human right and its intention to recognize this through a rights-based housing strategy as well as in legislation," said Leilani Farha. "This is a long-time coming – for years Canada has resisted repeated calls by UN bodies to address homelessness and inadequate housing as an urgent human rights matter."

"I am glad to see that the Government has now made a significant shift in its approach. It is finally moving toward a more inclusive understanding of human rights, recognizing all people as rights holders, including those who live in inadequate housing and those who are homeless."

Ms. Farha added: "This is an important step that is in keeping with Canada's commitment to the right to housing contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the commitment Canada made in 1975 when it ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights."

The Special Rapporteur described the national housing strategy as ambitious in scope, with significant resources committed to it over 10 years, providing a broad range of programmes. It recognizes the continuum of housing disadvantage, focuses on particularly vulnerable groups, and aims to address issues including homelessness, housing affordability, inadequate housing conditions, and insufficient supply of social housing stock.

She is particularly encouraged by the announcement of two new bodies: a

One is particularly encouraged by the announcement of the new bodies: a Federal Housing Advocate and a National Housing Council. Though further details are to be determined, these positions offer the possibility of an independent accountability and monitoring framework and provide an opportunity for affected groups to be heard on systemic issues of concern in the area of housing.

"Homelessness is the most egregious violation of the right to housing and other human rights. I am disappointed by the Government's failure to commit to ending all forms of homelessness by 2030 in keeping with Goal 11 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Just two years after joining 192 other States in adopting the SDGs the Government seems to be abandoning a key target. Canada is one of the wealthiest countries in the world with a strong economy, there is little doubt that they could be real leaders in eliminating homelessness. I hope Canada will re-visit this before finalizing the strategy."

The Special Rapporteur's next report to the Human Rights Council, scheduled for March 2018, will focus on human rights-based housing strategies and is intended to assist States as they move forward in their efforts to implement the commitments made in the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) and the [New Urban Agenda](#).

ENDS

Ms. Leilani Farha (Canada) is the UN [Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing](#) as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context. She took up her mandate in June 2014. Ms. Farha is the Executive Director of the NGO Canada without Poverty, based in Ottawa, Canada. A lawyer by training, for the past 20 years Ms. Farha has worked both internationally and domestically on the implementation of the right to adequate housing for the most marginalized groups and on the situation of people living in poverty.

Follow the Special Rapporteur on twitter at: [@adequatehousing](#), [#Right2Housing](#) [#MakeTheShift](#)

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