

Briefing from the UN Commission for Social Development

The 58th Session of the United Nations Commission for Social Development (CSocD) took place from 10 to 19 February 2020. The priority theme discussion was “Affordable housing and social protection floors for all to address homelessness.” It was a watershed moment in IGH’s advocacy to elevate homelessness into the UN ecosystem. As a result of the meeting, member states drafted a resolution that has the power to shape future UN priorities. The Priority Theme Draft Resolution is to be adopted by the Economic and Social Council in June 2020, on the recommendation of the CSocD.

For CSocD, IGH’s Advisory Board Members, Dame Louise Casey and Mark McGreevy, moderated high-level panel discussions on the priority theme. IGH partnered with the NGO Committee on Social Development and the NGO Working Group to End Homelessness to run the Civil Society Forum on 14 February 2020. IGH’s Vanguard City partners; Indu Prakash Singh, Yanella Posente, and Alicia Vázquez Silvera; spoke at the Civil Society Forum and at the UNDESA side event, “Working Together to End Homelessness.”



Dame Louise Casey reviewing IGH’s Framework during the Commission on Social Development.

The Report of the Secretary-General on the CSocD priority theme includes a review of strategies and policies to address homelessness, spotlighting the need for integrated approaches across government and civil society, concluding that,

“Homelessness is a complex issue that requires a multi-sectoral approach and integrated responses, cutting across fiscal, economic, labor, housing, health, social protection and urban development policies. Whole-of-government and whole-of society approaches need to be taken to address and prevent homelessness. Policies have to be inclusive of and responsive to the rights, needs and aspirations of individuals, especially those in disadvantaged or vulnerable situations.”

Below are useful links if you would like more information:

- [58th Session of the Commission for Social Development Website](#)
- [Draft Resolution](#)
- [Report of the Secretary-General](#)
- [Working Group to End Homelessness’s Make Us Count Campaign](#)

The Draft Resolution Briefing (Written by Niamh Mohan from the Office of Louise Casey)

The draft resolution for the first time in UN policy making includes both a definition and a measurement of homelessness. The resolution:

- calls on member states to establish key categories of homelessness;
- encourages member states to harmonize measurement and collection of data on homelessness (point 12);
- strengthens the role of the UN Statistical Commission; and
- emphasizes “the need to make concerted efforts to identify people experiencing homelessness” (page 2).

Below are key quotes from the resolution, particularly on the new definition and measurement of homelessness.

Paragraph 7 on the definition of homelessness

“7. Notes that homelessness is not merely a lack of physical housing, but is often interrelated with poverty, lack of productive employment and access to infrastructure, as well as other social issues that may constitute a loss of family, community and a sense of belonging, and, depending on national context, can be described as a condition where a person or household lacks habitable space, which may compromise their ability to enjoy social relations, and includes people living on the streets, other open spaces or in buildings not intended for human habitation; people living in temporary accommodation or shelters for the homeless, and, in accordance with national legislation, may include, among others, people living in severely inadequate accommodation without security of tenure and access to basic services”– quoted from paragraph 7, page 4 of the draft resolution.

The homelessness definition in paragraph 7 is based on the ‘Framework’ created by IGH in partnership with others, which has been piloted successfully in several different countries and was presented at the UNDESA expert group in Nairobi. All the key categories of homelessness from the IGH framework are now included (including those caveated under ‘national legislation’) in the resolution.

Paragraph 12 on the measures of homelessness

“12. Calls upon Member States to collect disaggregated data on demographics such as age, sex and disability related to homelessness and **establish categories of homelessness**, accompanying the existing measurement tools; and **encourages Member States to harmonize measurement and collection of data on homelessness to enable national and global policymaking”** – quoted from paragraph 12, page 5 of the draft resolution.

Paragraph 12 now allows for measurements of homelessness using comprehensive collection of data on homelessness - and includes all the established categories of homelessness in paragraph 7.

Page 2 on the Statistical Commission and the need to make concerted efforts on data

“Noting the important work undertaken by the United Nations Statistical Commission pertaining to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which has led to the formulation of global indicators, including on social protection and access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing”– quoted from page 2 of the draft resolution.

“Noting the importance of aggregated and disaggregated data for formulating effective policies to address homelessness and the need to make concerted efforts to identify people experiencing homelessness, both temporarily and chronically”– quoted from page 2 of the draft resolution.

The draft resolution highlights the role of the United Nations Statistical Commission in the formulation of global indicators (on social protection and access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing). The draft resolution notes the importance of “the need to make concerted efforts to identify people experiencing homelessness”. By highlighting the role of the Statistical Commission, it enables it to play a greater role in data collection related to homelessness and all the categories in paragraph 7 and 12 of the draft resolution.

Other sections covered in the draft resolution

Most of the resolution focuses on affordable housing and social protection floors to end homelessness. Further noteworthy sections of the resolution include:

- focusing on the specific needs of individuals and groups who are disproportionately affected by homelessness:
 - young people (paragraph 37)
 - children and family homeless (paragraph 21, 22 and 31);
- inviting Member States to develop strategy and policy interventions to address homelessness “taking into consideration existing frameworks and instruments related to homelessness” (paragraph 11);
- emphasizing the importance of expanding the coverage of social protection floors to all “including those experiencing homelessness” (paragraph 24);
- encouraging work support around employment and decent work as part of ‘basic services’ (paragraph 13) and invites labour market policies (paragraph 14 and 15). It stresses the need “to better coordinate social protection policies with measures with poverty reduction programmes and other social policies to avoid excluding people in informal or precarious jobs” (paragraph 27)
- recognizing that government have the primary responsibility to end homelessness while noting that civil society organisations (paragraph 35) and private sector play a role (paragraph 26); and
- encouraging governments and other organizations and stakeholders to raise awareness of homelessness, including family homelessness, and address the specific needs of individuals and groups, in particular young people in vulnerable situations (paragraph 37).