



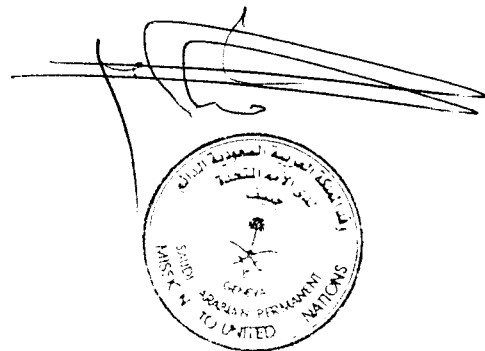
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Geneva, 29th October 2015

The Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations at Geneva presents its compliments to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and to the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living and with reference to your note verbale dated 23 April 2015, requesting views and inputs from Member States by replying to the questionnaire on priority issues towards the development of the New Urban Agenda (UN Conference on Sustainable Urban Development – Habitat III, 2016) pursuant to resolution, A/HRC/25/17, the Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has the honour to attach a copy of the government of Saudi Arabia's response to the questionnaire.

The Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living the assurances of its highest consideration.

United Nations
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
GENEVA





Mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing

Questionnaire

What role will national and international human rights standards on the right to adequate housing play in informing your positions and proposals for Habitat III? Can you please provide concrete examples in this regard?

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has always taken human rights into consideration. The Rule Basic Law (Constitution) of the Kingdom included several articles related to human rights. For example, article (26) emphasized the State obligation to protect human rights. Article (27) stated that the state guarantees the right of citizens and their families, in case of emergency, sickness, disability and old age, and support the social security system and encourage institutions and individuals to contribute to charity.

This was reflected in the regulation of the Public Authority for Housing - replaced by the Ministry of Housing later - where the first mentioned goal of the Authority was to facilitate citizen access to an affordable house, considering quality, citizen income, and within the appropriate stage of his life. It was also reflected in the proposed National Housing Strategy that summarized the vision for the Kingdom's housing sector as "An effective housing sector that shall contribute to the national development of Saudi Arabia by enabling citizens to access adequate housing, through a sustainable, knowledge and quality based housing market".

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia committed to international legal standards of the right to adequate housing identified by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. For example, the Ministry of Housing put minimum standards to ensure house quality and adequacy. It also planned and implemented an initiative to provide housing subsidies. This initiative that aimed to target eligible Saudi families without access to adequate housing, was based on non-discrimination and equality.

To provide subsidized adequate affordable houses to eligible Saudi families, an unprecedented fund (250 billion SR) was allocated for this purpose. According to the 10th Development Plan (2015 - 2019), and to meet Saudi citizens housing demand, 1.25 million housing product with a cost exceeding 625 billion SR should be provided. The Ministry of Housing will contribute to provide 500 thousand housing product with a cost of 250 billion SR, the Real Estate Development Fund will contribute to provide 300 thousand housing product with a cost of 150 billion SR, the private sector will contribute to provide 400 thousand housing product with a cost of 200 billion SR, while governmental agencies will contribute to provide the remaining 50 thousand housing product.

In addition, The issuance of the mortgage legislation will encourage introducing new capital to housing finance market, and new developers to the housing sector, which will result in an increase in supply, and better opportunities to meet the right of Saudi citizens to acquire affordable houses.



One aspect for discussion in the context of Habitat III will likely be "social cohesion and housing". What public policies, programmes, or plans are being considering or have been put forward by national or subnational level governments related to "social cohesion" (for example: non-discrimination and equality) and the right to adequate housing? Please specifically reference any policies, programmes, or plans aimed at ensuring inclusive housing for disadvantaged groups such as migrants and refugees, women, young people, older people, and people with disabilities in urban centres.

The Kingdom represented by the Ministry of Housing has always aimed at ensuring social cohesion and right to adequate housing. Several policies and programmes were put and implemented by the Ministry of Housing to achieve this goal.

One of the most important is the (Eligibility & Prioritization Mechanism for Housing Subsidy Applications "Eskan") programme planned and implemented by the Ministry of Housing to ensure assigning the available budget to the most eligible Saudi families, and to reduce the waiting time to acquire adequate houses. It comprises both an integrated legal framework which regulates the housing subsidy delivery, and a powerful and transparent mechanism to apply it through an integrated electronic platform that includes an integrated network connected to relevant entities, computer programs to process applications, and a portal (www.eskan.gov.sa) that provides several interactive services to applicants in all kingdom regions.

This programme focused on embedding non-discrimination and equality concepts. All applicants to get housing subsidized products were given equal opportunities through a transparent environment based on a well studied scoring system. This system tends to prioritize disadvantaged groups such as disabled, widows, divorced women, orphans, elderly and poor. The Saudi woman is treated as the head of household if she is the sponsor for her children and consequently she has the right to apply. The system also tends to include different social segments within each housing project to ensure social cohesion.

The Ministry of Housing implemented a set of minimum standards that should be considered by the developers within (PPP) projects to ensure providing adequate houses to housing subsidy beneficiaries within sustainable and integrated communities.

The Ministry also considered the segments that may not be included or ideally served by this mechanism such as singles and severe cases through alternate programmes that are currently under discussion.



In light of the fact that subnational and local governments play an essential role with respect to the implementation of the right to adequate housing, what plans and procedures does your Government intend to implement to ensure they are engaged in the lead up to Habitat III as well as with respect to the implementation of commitments coming out of Habitat III?

In Saudi Arabia, the Ministry Of Municipalities and Rural Affairs (MOMRA) has 16 branches (Amanat) covering the 13 regions and major cities. The (Amanat) includes 269 municipalities. The elected Municipal councils have wide authority especially with regard to study and express an opinion on a number of issues before they are submitted to the relevant authorities. These may include master plans, projects of expropriation in the public interest, terms and conditions of construction, land use, municipal services and fees, as well as follow-up conditions and criteria related to public health.

(Amanat) usually reflect the people needs and address relevant authorities such as Ministry of Housing concerning required housing projects to provide adequate housing for local communities, and Ministry of Social affairs concerning charities and social insurance.

All relevant ministries and authorities such as Ministry Of Municipalities and Rural Affairs and Ministry of Housing are aware of the outcomes of Habitat II, and Habitat III needed contributions, and they will share setting the challenges faced, and recommendations for Habitat III.

What interesting or unique housing policies, programs, or good practises consistent with the human right to housing does your Government intend to highlight through the Habitat III process? Please provide examples both from local, subnational, or national levels of government, and, if applicable, from non-government sectors as well.

Many relevant government and non-government entities in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia developed several housing initiatives, policies, and programs regarding the human right to adequate housing. Many of these initiatives and practices should be highlighted through the Habitat III process. Prominent examples may include :-

■ Eligibility & Prioritization Mechanism for Housing Subsidy Applications "Eskan"

As mentioned earlier, this programme is a national project planned and implemented by the Ministry of Housing to develop a mechanism to verify the eligibility conditions and determine priorities of the citizens applying to acquire housing units built by the ministry and other forms of government and private subsidized housing products. The programme aims to serve the most deserving families that do not have adequate housing, taking into account age, income, family size, marital status and special cases such as disabled, widows, divorced women, orphans, elderly and poor, through a clear and transparent scoring system. The Ministry launched a unified portal for receiving and processing all residential subsidy requests (www.eskan.gov.sa). The number of applicants through the portal was nearly one million Saudi citizens representing almost one million Saudi family, where the number of



beneficiaries was about (755,000) citizen. The program provided equal opportunities to men and women and allowed Saudi women to apply as the head of household if she is the sponsor for her children. Furthermore, women were given advantage in some cases as cases of widows and divorcees through awarding extra points to raise the priority.

■ National Network for Rent Services "Ejar"

In order to organize the residential real estate market, the Ministry of Housing has established a national network for rent services. It aims to control the rent market in the Kingdom through the provision of unprecedented electronic services for all relevant stake holders. It helps facilitating the tenant access to suitable housing and the lessor presentation of his units through a real estate broker office. It allows verifying the tenant ID, electronic documentation for rent contract, and electronic payment of rent bill. The network (www.ejar.gov.sa) was launched for real estate brokers registration in 2014 AD.

■ Developing real estate developers partnership mechanisms to provide affordable housing

In accordance with the recommendations of the National Housing Strategy to strengthen the partnership with the private sector, the Ministry of Housing developed a mechanism in order to make advantage of private sector knowledge and flexibility. It provided the private sector developers with a package of incentives to encourage them to provide eligible beneficiaries with sustainable affordable housing as soon as possible. The Ministry considered the developers views through several specialized workshops and through cooperation and coordination with the representatives of the National Real Estate Committee of Saudi Chambers Council. The mechanism includes also the development of standards for the rehabilitation of the developers, and providing legal frames to organize the private sector participation in different housing programmes. The Ministry launched the first of partnership projects (Riyadh -1) in Riyadh city for the construction of residential apartments. Later, the ministry launched five new projects for the partnership with the private sector in Madina and Jeddah (two projects), Dammam, and Qatif. These projects will provide (26) thousand apartments to eligibles.

■ Diversification of housing products

In order to ensure that the right of every citizen to adequate housing and to meet the requirements of all applicants of different needs and segments, the Ministry of Housing has provided a variety of products: land, loan, land and loan, and residential units. In addition, the ministry worked with the Real Estate Development Fund to diversify its roles and provide new funding alternatives to meet the different needs.

■ Increasing housing finance and diversifying its sources:

The Ministry is keen to increase housing finance and diversifying its sources. It took the initiative to organize meetings and workshops with bank sector representatives and the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency to study different financing alternatives, and to encourage long-term housing finance and reduce its risks, and to link debt service to an acceptable percentage



of the family income. This should increase the opportunities of Saudi citizens to acquire adequate housing.

■ Encouraging the injection of idle residential land to housing market

The Ministry is keen to resist the retention of residential land and disabling its development. It prepared a proposal to stimulate the residential land development and to inject it to the housing market, which is proposed to be reflected positively on decreasing land prices to fair levels, and thus lower the cost of construction and increase the opportunities of acquiring affordable housing by Saudi citizens.

■ Charity housing initiatives

Several charities are providing houses for needy citizens. One of the most important is (King Abdullah Bin Abdul-Aziz Foundation for Development Housing Dedicated to His Parents). It was established in 1423 AH and carried out 20 projects including (8,652) residential units. 15 of these projects with a total cost of about (6.64) billion riyals were finished and units were allocated to almost (65,000) beneficiaries of Saudi families. Other charities engaged in providing housing for needy citizens were founded. Examples include Prince Salman Charitable Housing Association, and Sultan Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud charity.

Please reflect on mechanisms used to monitor compliance with Habitat II (1996) at the national level that have proven effective and, if possible, provide examples. What kind of Mechanisms would your Government envisage as part of the monitoring and implementation of Habitat III?

All relevant ministries and authorities such as Ministry Of Municipalities and Rural Affairs and Ministry of Housing are aware of the outcomes of Habitat II and they positively reacted with them.

Habitat II (1996) recommended the concept development of housing sector indicator and urban development indicators. It identified five key areas where we believe that the Ministry of Housing has succeeded in implementing a variety of initiatives associated with these themes. This can be detailed as follows :

1	Partnerships with the local government sector and the private sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Developing real estate developers partnership mechanisms to build on developers land. ■ Launching partnership with developers to build on the Ministry land. ■ Diversifying of housing finance tools and alternatives
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2	Providing affordable housing and land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Developing the Eligibility & Prioritization Mechanism for Housing Subsidy Applications "Eskan" ■ Developing the electronic National Network for Rent Services "Ejar" ■ Implementing housing projects by the Ministry of Housing and through PPP
3	Providing basic services compliant with environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Developing minimum standards by the Ministry of Housing to ensure house quality and adequacy and sustainable serviced communities
4	Innovative financing for settlements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Incrementing & Diversifying of housing finance tools and alternatives
5	Planning, organizing and urban governance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Establishing the National Housing Strategy

The previously mentioned relevant entities will continue to implement and expand the mentioned initiatives in addition to introducing new initiatives in response to Habitat III commitments.