**Mr. Chair, State Secretary Laabak, ladies and gentlemen**

On behalf of Habitat Norway it is an honour to welcome you all to Habitat Day 2017 as the first event

in our five cities national “Urban October” campaign. It is a pleasure to receive in particular our

foreign speakers from the World Bank Sameh Wahba, Director of Urban Affairs, Oumar Sylla, Director

of Un Habitat’s Global Land Tool network, Kecia Rust Director of the Centre for Affordable Housing

Finance in Africa and Boonyabancha Somsook, Secretary General of the Asian Coalition for Housing

Rights. Very welcome are also our local forces: state secretary Bjørnar Laabak from the Ministry of

Modernisation and Local Government and Assistant Director General in the Ministry of Foreign

Affairs dr. Kaare Stormark. In addition to Habitat Norway’s own Tore Kiøsterud and his colleague

Viggo Nordvik from NOVA. I also see former colleagues and friends of Norway from abroad in the

audience. Bien venue.

I would like to extend a particular vote of thanks to The Oslo School of Architecture and Design and

its vice chancellor Ole Gustavsen who has provided us with this excellent auditorium.

We live in a global situation where affordable housing generally is inadequate and adequate housing

is unaffordable. One of the most daunting challenges of urbanization is the provision of adequate

housing that people can afford. From slum residents to middle income households, it is estimated

that currently 300 million households are financially stretched by housing costs. This number could

grow to 440 million by 2025. At the same time building affordable housing is probably one of the

most effective tools – as Norway’s our own postwar history shows us – to bring people out of

poverty. It creates jobs and income, financial as well as social capital, it harvests natural resources in

the production of building material, develops new infrastructure, technology and organizational

systems. Social housing is a major sustainability maximiser covering the three e’s of economy, equity

and ecology. But how relevant are Norway’s experiences in a wider global perspective? Tore and

Viggo will tell us in a minute.

Housing lending has during the last three decades moved away from the most poor. The World Bank,

the main global lender to support improvement in housing conditions, has evolved to embrace the

private sector more fully and moved away from the poverty orientation that for many years was its

core focus. A much smaller share of the Bank’s lending has gone to support low income housing (10

per cent of total shelter lending since the mid 1990s, versus more than 90 percent from the mid

1970s to the mid 1980s). And a much smaller share has gone to low income countries (20%, down

from about 40% from the mid-1970s to the mid 1980s). The Bank has recently launched a new

housing strategy. What is in it for the low income stratas, Sameh? Has the pendulum swung back

towards social housing?

Today, every day, one quarter of the world’s urban population continues to live in slums. An

increasing number of urban dwellers, especially the most poor and vulnerable groups are living in

precarious conditions, addressing their housing needs informally, lacking access to basic services and

living space, isolated from livelihood opportunities and vulnerable to forced evictions or

homelessness. Every day, as people are born in or move to urban centres in search of opportunities,

the demand for housing grows. Globally, a billion new houses are needed by 2025 to accommodate

50 million new urban dwellers per year; costs are estimated at USD 9 to USD 11 trillion by 2025. Will

the solution be to build new world class fantasy cities, dormitory cities in the urban periphery or self

help, densified, incremental cities. How to finance it? We have invited Kecia from South Africa to

provide us with some possible, alternative approaches.

In spite of increased recognition of the right to the city, to adequate housing policies and

programmes, the infringement of many criteria of housing adequacy continues. Especially weak is the

protection from forced evictions. Every year, millions of people around the world are evicted from

their homes and land, against their will and without consultation or equitable compensation.

Between 1998 and 2008, forced evictions affected at least 18.6 million people, despite the fact that

international law explicitly recognises the right to security of tenure and has repeatedly declared the

practice of forced evictions to be a gross and systematic violation of human rights. A growing number

of urban migrants and Internally Displaced Persons(IDPs) also confront insecure tenure and the

resulting threat of further displacement. Not only as a result of natural hazards and renewed conflict,

but also as forced evictions are increasing. What tools are there Oumar to secure the land-, the

property- and the inheritance rights of marginalized people, women in particular?

To conclude: new initiatives are needed to reclaim and realize the fundamental right to housing. We

need to challenge its commodification and reclaim it as a human right. UN’s Special Rapporteur on

Housing Leilani Fahra recently, together with United Cities and Local Government (UCLG), launched a

new worldwide movement to reclaim and realize the fundamental human right to housing. The

initiative is called the “Shift”.

The “Shift” rejects forced evictions in the name of development. A movement that encourages

Governments to use taxation to promote the right to housing and that addresses inequality. That

invests taxes socially and curbs overinvestments and that is accountable to people. The “Shift”, still in

its infancy, will develop and grow a global community of people by linking all those interested in the

right to housing. From grassroot movements, to private sector businesses to international human

rights organisations and to participants of the Habitat Day 2017 in Oslo.

So again, welcome to Habitat Day and Urban October 2017. And an especial vote of thanks to the

Board members of Habitat Norway, for having made this event a reality.

Erik Berg

**Enclosure**

A MAIN CONCEPTS

Adequate housing was recognized as part of the right to an adequate standard of living in international instruments including the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Adequate housing must provide more than four walls and a roof. A number of conditions must be met before particular forms of shelter can be considered to constitute “adequate housing”. These elements are:

* Security of tenure: housing is not adequate if its occupants do not have a degree of tenure security which guarantees legal protection against forced evictions, harassment and other threats.
* Availabilty of services, materials, facilities and infrastructure: housing is not adequate if its occupants do not have safe drinking water, adequate sanitation, energy for cooking, heating, lighting, food storage or refuse disposal.
* Affordabilty: housing is not adequate if its costs threatens or compromise the occupants’ enjoyment of other human rights
* Habitability: housing is not adequate if it does not guarantee physical safety or provide adequate space, as well as protection against the cold, damp, heat, rain, wind, other threats to health and structural hazards.
* Accessibility: housing is not adequate if the specific needs of disadvantaged and marginalized groups are not taken into account.
* Location: housing is not adequate if is cut off from employment opportunities, health – care services, schools, childcare centres and other social facilities, or if located in polluted or dangerous arenas
* Cultural adequacy: housing is not adequate if it does not respect and take into account the expression of cultural identity

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