



Geneva, 24th November 2015
1/5- 362 (wg)

The Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Bahrain to the United Nations Office and other international organizations at Geneva presents its compliments to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and wishes to refer to the letter and questionnaire of Ms Lailani Farha, Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context, in relation to her upcoming report to the Human Rights Council, 31st session in March 2016.

In this regard, the Mission has the honour to enclose herewith the reply of the Ministry of Housing at the Kingdom of Bahrain on the aforementioned subject.

The Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Bahrain avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights the assurance of its highest consideration.

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
Palais des Nations Unies
1211 Geneva 10
Fax: +41 22 917.90.08
Email: registry@ohchr.org
CC : srhousing@ohchr.org



Input by the Ministry of Housing

Mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to adequate housing. Human Rights Council, 31st session march 2016.

Without an internationally recognized definition of homelessness Bahrain follows in general the statistical approach taken by the United Nations that has defined homeless households as “households without a shelter that would fall within the scope of living quarters. They carry their few possessions with them, sleeping in the streets, in doorways or on piers, or in any other space, on a more or less random basis.” It is realized that homelessness brings along a strong element of social exclusion leading to a feeling of belonging nowhere rather than simply having nowhere to sleep.

Based on this approach, but also from a more general perspective, it is clear that homelessness as it exist in many, even developed, countries, does **not exist** in Bahrain.

The right to adequate housing is fully reflecting Bahrain’s national and international standards of Human Rights and exceed the international right to adequate housing standards.

The Government of Bahrain has a clear and consistent vision of providing access to adequate and decent housing to all Bahraini families, in particular those with limited income, for almost 40 years.

This vision is robustly anchored in the constitution, which states that **‘Government shall endeavor to provide housing to citizens with limited income’**.

The Vision of the Ministry of Housing has and continues to ensure a superior quality of life and a sustainable and attractive living environment for Bahrain residents through facilitating access to adequate and decent housing in particular for those citizens with limited income. Through the delivery of housing services based on this vision Bahrain provides an opportunity for each of the families to create a real ‘home’ to raise a family in a safe and secure environment and to form part of a supportive and integrated neighborhood.

The Housing sector, similar like all other sectors in Bahrain, has a highly developed legal and regulatory system that is social, fair and just and conforms to the best international practices. This system includes a strong protection against forced evictions, a strong protection against arbitrary destruction and demolition of the citizen’s home and a solid protection against interference with all aspects of home, privacy and family. There is freedom to choose one’s residence, to determine where to live and to freedom of movement. Bahrain has a high level of security of tenure, and a solid system of Housing,

land and property restitution. Citizens have equal and non-discriminatory access to adequate housing and have robust participation opportunities in housing-related decision-making at the national and community levels especially through the parliamentary and municipal council system, which are both elected.

This approach is aligned with Vision 2030's economic and social principles and the National Economic Strategy (NES) and fully supports the vision of the country and community. It targets to fulfill His Majesty the King's vision, which places the Bahraini citizen at the core of growth and development and as the principle recipient of prosperity and opportunities arising from the continuing economic and social development of the Kingdom.

From the successful experience of Bahrain in providing access to high quality housing to its citizens over the last 40 years it is clear that this can only be achieved with a consistent and clear vision and the willingness by government to implement programmes to support this vision for many decades. The realization of this vision could not have been achieved without the determined leadership and clear guidance by His Majesty King Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa, King of the Kingdom of Bahrain and the unrelenting support of His Royal Highness Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al-Khalifa, Prime Minister and His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, First Deputy Prime Minister, Crown Prince and Deputy Supreme Commander.

This approach is fully in line with the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights guidelines stating that adequate housing should not be interpreted narrowly but should be seen as the right to live somewhere in security, peace and dignity, which has been successfully achieved in Bahrain.

This success has also been internationally recognized in particular in 2006 with awarding the UN HABITAT Special Citation to the Scroll of Honor presented by the UNHabitat, United Nations Human Settlements Programme to His Royal Highness Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al-Khalifa, Prime Minister. The award by the United Nations is an endorsement of Prince Khalifa's commitment to providing housing to low income citizens and helping to reshape and modernize the housing sector in the Kingdom of Bahrain and lifting the living standards of all Bahrainis through an active focus on poverty alleviation

Bahrain's position and proposals for Habitat III will reflect Bahrain's success story in the housing sector and will encourage the inclusion of the right to adequate housing in all member state constitutions and based on this right, encourage the development of programmes that places citizen at the core of growth and encourage also the development of housing services that provide opportunities for families to create a real 'home' and to raise a family in a safe and secure environment and to form a constructive part of a supportive and integrated society.

The housing programme of the government (and the housing sector in Bahrain in general) is and has considered and promoted social cohesion in all its past and future developments. The housing system is governed by laws, policies and measures that promote inclusiveness. Social inclusion and equality are considered in Bahrain core values and therefore are critical components of the right to adequate housing and discrimination in its widest definition is unconstitutional.

The housing benefit system is clear, transparent and fair and does not deny any citizens of security of tenure or lack of access to credit. All citizens have ample opportunities for participation in decision-making. No discriminatory practices are carried out by private actors.

The government of Bahrain intends to highlight its success story over the last decennia of successful delivery of a variety of targeted housing services providing access to appropriate housing for all citizens and in particular highlight how the changing global, regional and local circumstances require an every changing approach to meet the challenges of a specific period. Flexibility with a strong accent on the overall vision is key.

Over the last decade a solid package of housing services has been developed providing effective housing solutions to the needs of Bahrain's citizens. This includes a comprehensive system of social housing loans, including purchase loans, construction loans, renovation/extension loans, a housing unit services which provides a ready-made house with preferential financing, rental apartment units for those who urgently require a housing solution, apartments for sale with preferential financing and subsidies for applicants who have waited for more than five years for their housing unit.

The most recent addition is the Social Housing Financing Scheme providing immediate access to housing. The scheme allows applicants on the housing waiting to purchase a housing unit of their choice, through mortgage finance up to BD 81,000 obtained from commercial or Islamic participant banks, being repaid by the beneficiary contributing 25 percent of his/her monthly salary. The government will contribute the difference between the monthly installment and beneficiary's contribution. Indeed a comprehensive social housing support system that can compete with the most sociable systems globally.

Throughout the years, the Government of Bahrain has as mentioned before a clear and consistent vision of providing access to adequate and decent housing to all Bahraini families, in particular those with limited income and at a government policy development level the impact of government's programmes on the Right to Adequate Housing has been closely monitored and correcting actions have been taken where needed.