

**On the occasion of the International Tenants' Day, and the UN Habitat Day
European Parliament
September 6, 2008**

Welcome speech by Sven Carlsson, President of the International Union of Tenants.

Distinguished Members of the European Parliament, ladies and gentleman,

Since 1986 the International Union of Tenants has dedicated the first Monday in October to the world's tenants, as the International Tenants' Day. The previous year, in 1985, the UN General Assembly adopted the resolution for a UN Habitat Day, to be observed world wide on this very day.

In 1986 IUT's idea was not to try and create one more international Day but to highlight one important part and goal of the activities of UN Habitat – the Right to Housing. For this reason we are particularly glad for the opportunity to cooperate with the UN Habitat office, and its representative Mr Bakole, here in Brussels

Habitat is about our daily living, our dwellings, and our communities where we live – and we at IUT are convinced that access to safe, sound and affordable housing is one of the fundamental pillars in every democratic and peaceful society. Unfortunately, this situation is not the reality in many countries today.

The IUT and its 54 member organisations in 45 countries around the globe celebrate this day somewhat differently, according to different cultures, priorities and possibilities. Most common are different forms of public manifestations, to arouse public, media and political attention of current urgent housing issues, with a focus on rental housing of course!

In February this year the International Union of Tenants opened a liaison office here in Brussels. Of this reason we are particularly proud and glad that we can observe the International Tenants' Day here in Brussels, the capital of Europe.

The theme for this mornings' conference is "Decent and affordable housing in the European cities". We have invited experienced and well qualified speakers that will present their views and ideas on this theme. I also assume that we have an interested and also a well experienced audience here today.

We all look forward to a most interesting morning and I wish everyone, speakers, panel participants and the audience a warm welcome

With these words I call upon The President of the Swedish Union of Tenants, Ms Barbro Engman, to speak.