



International Union of Tenants
Association Internationale des Locataires
www.iut.nu

- Consultative status with
UN Economic and Social Council
- Participatory Status with the
European Council

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**Affordable Rental Housing –
a guarantee of social cohesion and mobility**

**Statement of the Congress Berlin
September 20 – 23. 2007**

IUT and its members consider affordable rental housing a vital component to the struggle for social cohesion and inclusion in every country and society. Rental housing facilitates mobility, which contributes considerably to more flexible labour markets and less unemployment.

Rental housing also makes it possible for young people, students and workers, to stay in other cities or countries for longer or shorter periods. Elderly people often find well functioning rental housing attractive as it often includes services.

As members of the International Union of Tenants, we have - irrespective of continent- witnessed an increased development of privatisation and the withdrawal of states' and governments' intentions and responsibilities to up-keep their political and social agendas concerning the provision of affordable rental housing.

From the sell-off of several million flats in Germany, Italy and Austria mostly to private equity funds; the massive loss of rental housing to private ownership in Uganda, Sweden, France, Great Britain, Russia and the CEE – Countries; the conversion of 400,000 government subsidized apartments in the USA to high market rents; to the massive forced evictions for urban 'redevelopment' schemes from Harare to Mumbai, from Abuja to Beijing to New Orleans, tenants and the poor are increasingly victimized as governments abandon their responsibilities and unregulated global investors destroy affordable housing for speculative profit.

Lack of affordable rental housing is a threat to social justice and stability. All members of the United Nations have signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights article 25:1, and most have signed the Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural rights, article 11 which both established the Right to Housing. Also, all European countries represented in the IUT have signed the European Social Charter (revised, Article 31; the Right to Housing).

Lack of affordable rental housing continues to be one major ingredient to increased social exclusion and hinders integration. It is no secret that lack of rental housing always have negative affects on the under privileged and socially and economically weak groups in the society. The problem is made worse by the ravages of AIDS/HIV, a major cause of poverty and homelessness in developing countries and a direct cause of evictions and homelessness as pointed out by the IUT Focal Point for Africa, TTA Tanzania.

The supply of affordable rental housing must stay a responsibility of all states and governments. The Market and the private sector can never be entrusted with this responsibility. Rental housing must continue to play a key role in urban renewal and in socio-economic and environmental sustainability.

A well functioning society needs a variety of dwellings in regards to size and standard – and tenure, for different needs and periods of a person's life. It must be up to a person's own choice, according to circumstances, whether he or she wishes to own or rent the dwelling” (The IUT Tenants’ Charter).

The 2007 Congress of the International Union of Tenants therefore demands legal measures to guarantee the Right to Housing and the freedom of choice in housing.

We demand;

- *that the EU - Competitive Laws are not permitted to reduce national housing policy*
- *adoption of a legally enforceable Right to Housing in national and EU- constitutions and bodies of law*
- *regulation of transnational investment in rental housing by regional and national governments and international institutions*
- *equalization of tax benefits for tenants and homeowners*
- *compliance by investors and property developers with the UN guidelines on Development Related Evictions*
- *transparency of ownership and interests by investors and developers in housing*

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Berlin, Germany September 23, 2007

Agreed by the participating delegates representing tenants from 26 associations in 22 states:

Australia (Queensland), Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, England, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Norway, Poland, Romania, Russia, Scotland, Sweden, Spain, Switzerland, Tanzania, the Netherlands and the USA