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NPACH, City of Los Angeles Celebrate "World Habitat Day"

For immediate release
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Los Angeles, CA, September 28, 2005-On October 3, the National Policy and Advocacy Council on Homelessness (NPACH), with support from the Ford Foundation, will join the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and the City of Los Angeles in celebrating "World Habitat Day."

Los Angeles City Councilman Eric Garcetti, chair of the Council's Committee on Housing, Community, and Economic Development, will introduce a resolution in recognition of World Habitat Day, and NPACH is urging the community to celebrate the day by volunteering time, donating to homeless service agencies, and asking their elected officials to support policies dedicated to eliminating homelessness and poverty.

"As we have all learned over the last year, we are all only one job loss, one hurricane away from being homeless," said Councilman Garcetti. "Here in Los Angeles, more than 90,000 people are homeless every night. We must join with governments around the world in redoubling our efforts to help provide our people with the most basic of rights: the right to a roof over our heads."

Since its inception by the UN General Assembly in 1985, the United Nations has designated the first Monday in October every year as World Habitat Day to reflect on the state of human settlements and the basic right to adequate shelter for all. It is also intended to remind the world of its collective responsibility for the future of the human habitat.

Global ceremonies will be coordinated from Jakarta, Indonesia in memory of the thousands of lives lost and homes destroyed by the tsunami last December in Banda Aceh and other Indian Ocean coastal communities. Similarly, World Habitat Day in North America provides an appropriate backdrop to consider the terrible suffering wrought by Hurricane Katrina in the Gulf South. This year's theme, "Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and the City," was chosen by the United Nations to recall the year 2000 meeting of world leaders, where they made a commitment to launch a concerted attack on poverty, illiteracy, hunger, unsafe water, disease and urban and environmental degradation.

Almost thirty two percent of the world's urban population- roughly one billion people- live in slums, mostly in or on the edges of cities across the developing world. In the United States close to fifteen million people pay over fifty percent of their income on housing, more than one million children experience homelessness each year and thirty seven million Americans live in poverty. According to a survey conducted by the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, more than 90,000 people are homeless on any given night in the city.

Across the globe, a wide range of commemorative activities will take place. The African nation of Chad is hosting a series of events including a poetry contest for youth, sport competitions, and a nationally broadcast debate on the local implementation of the MDGs. Other events worldwide include a parade and film festival in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a discussion in Eritrea on shelter provision for Internally Displaced Persons, an art exhibit in Bangladesh of children's drawings depicting healthy housing, month long celebrations in the Philippines and the Netherlands, and a series of events in Nigeria sponsored by the National Union of Tenants, including visits to social housing projects and a church service for tsunami victims. North American activities are taking place in New York and Los Angeles, respectively.

Said NPACH Executive Director, Dr. Brad Paul, "In celebrating World Habitat Day, Los Angeles is to be applauded for drawing the important link between poverty locally and human suffering everywhere. NPACH is delighted to be part of this celebration as the UN's Millennium Development Goals help provide a framework for us to pursue housing rights for all."

More information on the web:

NPACH: <http://www.npach.org>
United Nations Habitat: <http://www.unhabitat.org>
Eric Garcetti: <http://www.lacity.org/council/cd13/>
Ford Foundation: <http://www.fordfound.org/>