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## **The International Housing Coalition Awarded Rockefeller Foundation Grant For Promoting Housing and Urban Development Worldwide**

Washington, DC – The International Housing Coalition (IHC), an international development organization, has been awarded an initial \$100,000 grant from the Rockefeller Foundation to produce a White Paper on housing and urban development in the developing world. The White Paper will be completed this spring and will be followed by a series of events to disseminate the Paper's findings. This will help the IHC promote policy solutions to address the global challenges associated with urbanization for a better world and more sustainable future.

The IHC was organized by the National Association of Realtors (NAR), the Canadian Real Estate Association (CREA) and Habitat for Humanity International (HFHI) to promote the goal of "*Housing for All*." Recognizing the worldwide housing problem and the lack of priority being given to housing and slum issues, the IHC was created for the purpose of restoring housing and urban slum improvement to a position of importance and priority on the world development agenda.

"The development agencies are struggling to get their hands around the fact that nearly half the people in the countries served now live in cities. In fact, all net growth in population in the decades ahead is expected to be accommodated in urban areas," said **Peter Kimm, Chairman of International Housing Coalition**. "Of course, this has widespread implications for the development profession, which has strong roots in a drive for better public health and food security for a population largely tied to the land. While today we welcome the job growth associated with urbanization, we cannot accept the dire living conditions and abysmal slums that too often accompany this growth."

More than a billion people live in slums in sub-standard shelter without access to clean water and sanitation. In developing countries more than a million people are born in or move to cities every week, and in 10 years the urban population will exceed the rural population. While urban growth may be inevitable, the dire living conditions of the urban poor are not. The case for a robust effort to address urban slum conditions has been well developed, and becomes only more relevant as the developing world becomes more and more urbanized. Investing in housing and urban services has many benefits:

- **It can spur economic advancement of the poor.**
- **It can accelerate economic growth.**
- **With the right policies, modest public investment can stimulate private housing investment.**
- **Decent housing addresses a multitude of basic human needs, especially health.**
- **Slum upgrading engages the urban poor, one of the most marginalized groups.**

Despite an ever more urbanized world and a growing appreciation of the role of cities in economic growth, actual funding for shelter and urban programs from the development agencies has been declining. The reasons for this decline are varied but at least in part reflect an assumption that urban slums are self-correcting and that scarce donor resources are best spent elsewhere. In fact there is ample evidence that strategic investments in improving living conditions of the urban poor pay widespread dividends.

The Rockefeller Foundation grant will help strengthen IHC's efforts to build new constituencies and to engage the US public and policymakers on urban development issues. The IHC strategy is to effect policy and programmatic change in foreign assistance through an advocacy program based on a broad coalition of varied organizations. The advocacy efforts are integrated with and draw strength from the

organization's active engagement in housing and urban development applied research, information sharing, and policy advice in selected countries.

**Peter Kimm** commented "The Rockefeller Foundation's historical commitment to working on urban development issues makes the Foundation an important and ideally suited partner as we reach out to key constituencies. We look forward to working with them at such a critical time."

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*The Rockefeller Foundation, established by John D. Rockefeller, Sr., in 1913, works around the world to ensure that the benefits and opportunities of globalization are spread more fully to more people in more places. Since 2005, the Foundation has launched major initiatives to strengthen global health systems, mobilize an agricultural revolution in Africa, rebuild New Orleans in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, fortify the economic security of American working families, and shape more sustainable transportation policies in the United States, in addition to bolstering resilience to climate change in poor communities. For more information, visit [www.rockfound.org](http://www.rockfound.org).*

*International Housing Coalition is an international advocacy organization that promotes the goal of "Housing for All" as an essential element to ending poverty worldwide. For more information, visit [www.intlhc.org](http://www.intlhc.org).*