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**Preparations for the twelfth session of the World Urban
Forum**

Status of preparations for the twelfth session of the World Urban Forum

Report of the Executive Director

I. Introduction

1. One of the key roles of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) is global advocacy to mobilize and scale broader action regarding sustainable urbanization at all levels and by all stakeholders. Since its establishment in 2001, pursuant to paragraph 10 of resolution 18/5 of the Commission on Human Settlements, the World Urban Forum has become the world's premier knowledge, advocacy and partnership platform on urbanization, bringing together leading actors and decision-makers to address the most pressing issues affecting cities and communities. Participants include international organizations, governments (local, national and regional), civil society, grass-roots communities, the private sector and academia.
2. The Forum enables UN-Habitat to strengthen its global mandate, achieve expected results and leverage action towards the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. The Forum is also recognized in the UN-Habitat current strategic plan for the period 2020–2025 as a key vehicle for strengthening collaboration and partnerships with diverse stakeholders. As such, the Forum is a major platform for UN-Habitat to advance the enablers of its strategic plan, including in the areas of monitoring and knowledge, innovation, advocacy, communication and outreach, partnerships and capacity-building.
3. UN-Habitat will also continue to advocate and track progress with regard to the commitments contained in the Katowice Declared Actions,¹ as set out in the outcome document of the eleventh session of the World Urban Forum, held in Katowice, Poland, in June 2022.

II. Preparations for the twelfth session of the World Urban Forum

4. The twelfth session of the World Urban Forum will be held at the Egypt International Exhibition Centre, in Cairo, from 4 to 8 November 2024. In preparation, UN-Habitat has been working with Member States, local governments and stakeholders to ensure wide consultation on the background paper, the programme and on engagement opportunities.

* HSP/EB.2024/1.

¹ See <https://www.urbanagendaplatform.org/actions>.

5. Under the theme “It all starts at home: local actions for sustainable cities and communities”, the twelfth session of the Forum will focus on localizing the Sustainable Development Goals and on the local actions and initiatives required to tackle the current global challenges affecting people’s daily lives, including housing inadequacy, rising living costs, climate change, insufficient basic services, and ongoing conflicts.
6. The Forum will also follow up on actions and commitments contained in the outcome document entitled “A Pact for the Future” of the Summit of the Future of the General Assembly, to be held in September 2024, aimed at accelerating efforts to meet existing international commitments and take concrete steps to respond to emerging challenges and opportunities. The *World Cities Report 2024: Cities and Climate Action* will also be presented.
7. The UN-Habitat Task Force on the twelfth session of the Forum held its first meeting on 19 December 2023 and a second meeting on 30 January 2024. It has been providing guidance on all aspects of the preparatory process and will meet monthly.
8. The programme design for the twelfth session of the Forum, as updated by the Executive Board during its third session of 2023, is now being finalized by the UN-Habitat programme review committee.
9. To ensure that the Forum remains inclusive, the background paper for the twelfth session of the Forum is informed by input from expert group workshops. At these sessions, UN-Habitat mapped broad urban development issues, trends and priorities, taking into consideration their relevance to the global urban development agenda and United Nations system priorities.
10. UN-Habitat further consulted on the background paper with all permanent missions located in Nairobi, as well as with partner organizations. A first draft was shared with the host country and Member States, on 22 January 2024, through the UN-Habitat Stakeholder Advisory Group Enterprise and UN-Habitat stakeholders. The final version of the background paper, updated to reflect the feedback received, is now available on the website of the twelfth session of the Forum.
11. The official logo for the twelfth session of the Forum, co-developed by the host country and UN-Habitat, was finalized in January 2024, formally paving the way for the branding and development of advocacy materials.
12. On 1 February 2024, the registration process was launched, officially communicated to Member States and broadcast to all partners via the UN-Habitat website. Registration is through the UN-Habitat Global Events Management System and will remain open until 6 p.m. (UTC + 2) on 30 October 2024.
13. UN-Habitat conducted two virtual information sessions, aimed at amplifying the call for registration and providing general preparatory updates, for internal and external partners, held on 18 January and 8 February 2024, respectively, and attracting hundreds of participants globally.
14. The application period for hosting partner-led events is 20 February–8 April 2024. The partner-led event selection committees have been nominated by the UN-Habitat Task Force and trained in the use of the Global Events Management System. The outcome of the selection process will be communicated to all organizers starting on 31 May 2024.
15. Regarding the programme for the twelfth session of the Forum, the main sessions will be organized by UN-Habitat and facilitated by thought leaders and high-profile experts. They will include opening and closing sessions, dialogues, assemblies, round tables and special sessions. The main sessions will showcase examples, practices and concrete solutions that can display positive and transformative impact. Closely linked to the theme of the Forum, six dialogue areas have been identified. The dialogues, which will give structure to events being held at the Forum and serve as conceptual anchors for activities and discussions, are as follows:
 - (a) Dialogue 1, “Housing our future”, will focus on one of the most critical challenges for the sustainability of cities and communities: adequate housing. This dialogue will explore solutions to the decades-long and ever-growing housing crisis, and the rising inequalities it causes, including opportunities for a renewed social contract.
 - (b) Dialogue 2, “Cities and the climate crisis”, will address the pressing challenge of climate change and cities, emphasizing the importance of localized adaptation, mitigation and resilience to ensure that urban areas can thrive in a future marked by unprecedented climatic conditions.

(c) Dialogue 3, “Stronger together”, will shift the focus to strategies essential for partnerships to be able to bridge global goals with local realities, highlighting the power of collaboration in driving localized progress.

(d) Dialogue 4, “Financing localization and localizing finance”, will explore the importance of financial empowerment by examining mechanisms to ensure that resources are readily accessible at the local level in order to fuel sustainable development and localization.

(e) Dialogue 5, “Putting people first in a digital era”, will venture into the sphere of digital technology and innovation and their potential to drive localized solutions and promote inclusive development, while also noting the risks posed to cities and communities.

(f) Dialogue 6, “The loss of home”, will invite reflections on the meaning of “home” amid urban crises, examining how urban stakeholders, communities and authorities respond to turmoil.

16. The five-day event will conclude with the Cairo Declared Actions, recommendations that representatives of all stakeholder groups will take back home for further discussion and implementation. These actions are anticipated to build on commitments made at the Summit of the Future and contribute to commitments agreed on at the twenty-ninth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to be held in Baku in November 2024. The Declared Actions are expected to provide messaging for the proposed world social summit, to be held in New York in 2025, to coincide with the thirtieth anniversary of the World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen in 1995, a significant milestone in the history of sustainable development.

17. Looking forward, UN-Habitat will focus on regional mobilization through a wide array of advocacy platforms, which include but are not limited to multilevel urban forums, Urban October, the 2024 high-level political forum on sustainable development, the seventy-ninth session of the General Assembly, and other partner-led advocacy platforms. With regard to multilevel urban forums, UN-Habitat has developed a practical guide on how to leverage urban forums to advocate on policy formulation, review, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The guide will be made available on the UN-Habitat website in due course.

18. UN-Habitat has also started working with the host city to realize the legacy initiatives of the twelfth session of the Forum. The Government of Egypt and the Governorate of Cairo, with support from UN-Habitat, have begun a programme aimed at the organization of “Cairo Urban Week”, to be held in the lead up to the twelfth session, as a demonstration of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda at the local level.

19. The Forum’s programme and participation model are aimed at enhancing accessibility and inclusivity, building on the achievements of the eleventh session of the Forum. A UN-Habitat team has planned for inclusive events management in Cairo in anticipation of ensuring continued support for accessibility with regard to United Nations conferences. Egypt has committed to meeting all logistical requirements, including by ensuring universal accessibility, sign language, real-time captioning and live streaming. UN-Habitat, the host country and the host city are committed to ensuring that the twelfth session of the Forum is inclusive, accessible, sustainable and digitally available to all.
