



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Twelfth edition of the World Urban Forum opens in Cairo

Cairo, 4 November 2024 – The twelfth session of the World Urban Forum (WUF12) – the United Nations’ premier global conference on sustainable urban development – opened today in Cairo, a megacity renowned for its long history of urban growth and transformation.

The Forum is convened by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and is co-organized with the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt. It brings together more than 37,000 participants from over 182 countries, including national and local government officials, urban planners, business leaders, academics, and civil society organizations.

Under the theme, **“It all starts at home: Local actions for sustainable cities and communities,”** WUF12 will spotlight the importance of local solutions in addressing global urban challenges. With less than five years left to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), WUF12 focuses on localizing the SDGs, promoting partnerships and coalitions, and catalyzing actions that translate global ambitions into local impact. The city of Cairo, as this year’s host, adds special significance to WUF12, marking the Forum’s return to Africa after over two decades, at a time when urban growth across the continent is among the fastest in the world.

In a recorded video address, **the United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres**, highlighted the challenges and opportunities brought about by urbanization: “Cities generate 70 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions. And municipal waste is set to rise by two-thirds within a generation. Not only are cities powerful engines of social and economic development, they are also catalysts of sustainable solutions. [...] I invite you to seek innovations and inspiration and take them back to your communities.”

Anacláudia Rossbach, Executive Director of UN-Habitat, stated: “The global housing crisis affecting almost 3 billion people is of paramount concern. Transforming informal settlements and slums and addressing homelessness is a must. To do so, we must work together. The World Urban Forum is the perfect platform to scale and build coalitions and partnerships for impact. It is the biggest coalition in support of transformative change, needed to overcome the global housing crisis and give an

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urban contribution to the major crises we face, such as climate, conflicts, and poverty.”

Manal Awad, Minister of Local Development of Egypt, said: “The World Urban Forum’s 12th session (WUF-12) serves as a valuable platform to highlight the rich cultural and architectural heritage of Cairo, as well as the significant advancements and developments that have taken place in the city over the last decade. [...] Collaboration among community groups and partnerships with the private sector are essential for developing innovative and effective solutions to urban challenges, thereby fostering inclusive growth and resilience in urban areas.”

Message and support by global leaders

The opening ceremony was attended by the President of Egypt as well as three other heads of states, including the President of Sudan, the President of Yemen, and the President of the State of Palestine. The Mayor of The Hague also spoke during the opening ceremony.

In addition, 74 ministers, 42 deputy ministers, and 94 mayors plan to participate in WUF12, highlighting the event’s global importance and the collective necessity and commitment to addressing urban challenges.

Diverse participation, unified vision

Reflecting WUF12’s success in global engagement, 74 per cent of participants originate from Africa, followed by Asia, Europe, the Americas, and Oceania. The diversity extends across sectors: 21 per cent from academia, 16 per cent from government, 13 per cent from the private sector, and 7 per cent from civil society. The Forum has achieved gender parity. Out of the 407 speakers invited, 201 are male and 206 are female.

A dynamic programme to drive action

The WUF12 programme includes 37 main sessions and over 500 partner-led events, each designed to explore practical solutions to rapid urbanization and inspire innovation. Six high-profile WUF Dialogues will frame the week’s discussions, addressing how the concept of “home” ties into the critical challenges of urbanization.

Highlights include:

- **A ministerial roundtable** on 5 November focusing on multilevel governance for accelerating the New Urban Agenda and SDGs.

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- **The launch of UN-Habitat's flagship report, the World Cities Report**, focused in 2024 on cities and climate.
- **A special dialogue** with former and current UN-Habitat Executive Directors addressing progress on the New Urban Agenda.
- **The Urban Expo**, showcasing over 140 exhibitors, with interactive solutions on housing, transportation, and climate resilience.

Inclusive, sustainable event

WUF12's commitment to sustainability and accessibility sets a benchmark for inclusive engagement. All branded materials are made from recycled resources, single-use plastics are minimized, and comprehensive recycling systems are in place. The Forum is fully accessible, ensuring that all participants, including those with disabilities, have equal opportunities to contribute to the discussions.

Outcomes for lasting impact

At the close of the Forum, WUF12 will issue the **Cairo Call to Action**, a document outlining commitments and pathways for sustainable urbanization. Outcome documents will be crafted with guidance from the newly established WUF Advisory Group composed of global stakeholders and local leaders. These will aim to reinforce WUF's lasting impact on cities worldwide.

About the World Urban Forum

Established in 2001 by the United Nations, the World Urban Forum is the premier global conference on sustainable urbanization, designed to examine the impacts of rapid urbanization on cities, communities, economies, and climate change. Since its inception, WUF has been hosted in cities across the world, with the first session held in Nairobi, Kenya, in 2002.

About UN-Habitat

UN-Habitat is the United Nations entity responsible for sustainable urbanization. It has programmes in over 90 countries supporting policymakers and communities to create socially and environmentally sustainable cities and towns. UN-Habitat promotes transformative change in cities through knowledge, policy advice, technical assistance, and collaborative action. To know more, visit unhabitat.org.

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