

Progress in the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda (2019–2022) Quadrennial report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report has been prepared pursuant to paragraph 3 of Economic and Social Council resolution 2017/24 and in accordance with General Assembly resolution 71/235, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report on the progress of the implementation of the New Urban Agenda every four years and called upon the relevant organizations of the United Nations system to ensure that no one and no country was left behind in the implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development held in 2016. The report was prepared in consultation with more than 40 partners, including non-governmental organizations.

The report has seven sections. Section I outlines the context, specifically with respect to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Section II provides an update on the progress made regarding the three transformative commitments of the New Urban Agenda. Section III discusses how the New Urban Agenda is being implemented through effective governance structures, inclusive urban planning and management at the national and local levels, financing, capacity-building, technology use and facilitated engagement. Section IV presents an assessment of how the New Urban Agenda has accelerated progress on other global agendas, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals and agendas relating to climate change. Section V reports on the growing role of local governments in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. Section VI describes the progress made in developing an incremental, inclusive reporting system for the New Urban Agenda. Finally, section VII reports on the status of the recommendations from the 2018 quadrennial report and sets out new recommendations for 2026.

I. Introduction

1. The present report has been prepared pursuant to paragraph 3 of Economic and Social Council resolution 2017/24 and in accordance with General Assembly resolution 71/235.
2. The 2018 quadrennial report was the first in a series of five quadrennial reports and an element of the follow-up to and review of the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. It assessed the systems and resources in place to implement and monitor the Agenda 18 months after its adoption.
3. The present report has been prepared in the context of rapid urbanization, threats to global planetary ecosystems and the profound impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, as well as the opportunities cities can provide to anchor the pandemic recovery in social justice, deliver on the Decade of Action and ensure effective climate action.
4. As is outlined in the Secretary-General's policy brief on COVID-19 in an urban world,¹ and further elaborated on in the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) report on cities and pandemics, the pandemic has exposed systemic inequalities, highlighted pre-existing urban challenges, created new vulnerabilities and pushed hundreds of millions of people back into poverty. The pandemic has shown the crucial role of the State in providing public goods and adequate basic services, highlighted the significance of local fiscal capacity and inclusive, multi-level governance and underlined the importance of planning and urban design, the centrality of adequate housing and the need to create neighbourhoods that are more ecologically sustainable.
5. The pandemic response has also proved that bold new choices can be made and that local governments can lead the way by, for instance, reclaiming public space for soft mobility and finding dignified solutions for the homeless. The pandemic has inspired new policies that transcend business as usual and promote a green economic recovery that creates conditions for investment for a sustainable urban future. Importantly, the pandemic has underscored the relevance of the New Urban

¹ United Nations, "Policy Brief: COVID-19 in an Urban World" (2020).

Agenda as a robust framework for resilient urbanization that offers a pathway to greener, healthier and more just societies.

6. Steps taken to shape the future will need to account for the long-term challenges identified in the Secretary-General's report *Our Common Agenda*,² including the key issues of demographic shifts and urbanization. Cities and other subnational governments have a key role to play in solving our global challenges.

II. Progress regarding transformative commitments for sustainable urban development (2018–2022)

A. Social inclusion and ending poverty

7. While global poverty was declining for decades, the trend was reversed in 2020, when the absolute number of people living in extreme poverty rose for the first time since 1997.³ The COVID-19 pandemic has entrenched and extended disadvantages, deprivations and inequalities, both within cities and across the urban-rural divide, with significant gender dimensions, yet it has also provided opportunities to promote social policies and inclusion.⁴ Member States in all regions, such as Colombia, Indonesia and Zambia, along with their local governments, have reported how targeted social protection programmes such as cash transfers have been instrumental in alleviating the impact of the pandemic. Without adequate provision of basic services, there is a risk of the pandemic weakening the social fabric.

8. The centrality of the right to adequate housing, including access to land, public spaces and public services, became more evident during the pandemic. It is estimated that the housing deficit will be 440 million by 2025.⁵ Globally, an estimated 70 per cent of households now live with precarious tenure.⁶

9. Nearly 1 billion people – one in four urban dwellers – live in urban slums and informal settlements. While the proportion of the urban population living in slums worldwide declined between 2000 and 2014, from 28 per cent to 23 per cent, that positive trend subsequently reversed, and by 2018 the proportion had grown to 23.5 per cent. It is likely that the pandemic has intensified that negative trend.

10. Despite these setbacks, many cities have responded to the pandemic by promoting slum upgrading initiatives and housing programmes targeting the homeless, women, migrants and people with disabilities. Several Finnish cities, as well as Barcelona, Bogotá, Bristol, Guangzhou and Rio de Janeiro, have enhanced provision of services and housing. Monrovia has established its first urban development strategy addressing informal settlements.⁷ Barcelona, Bratislava, Los Angeles, Kiev, Madrid, San Francisco and São Paulo have invested in programmes to support at-risk homeless populations.

11. In response to the pandemic, the Third Committee of the General Assembly approved a draft resolution on inclusive policies and programmes to address homelessness, including in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic,⁸ that sets out concrete actions to end homelessness, mitigate evictions and promote affordable housing. In the draft resolution, Member States are encouraged to increase the pool of affordable housing, upgrade slums and take steps to end arbitrary evictions.⁹

12. The return of public service provision to municipal control (re-municipalization) has emerged as a viable and legitimate policy option in cities where privatization of public goods has hindered access by low-income households. In 2019, the State of Selangor (Malaysia) re-municipalized its

² A/75/982.

³ M. Kharas and H. Dooley, "Extreme Poverty in the Time of COVID-19" (Brookings Institution, 2021).

⁴ See note 1.

⁵ Jonathan Woetzel and others, "A Blueprint for Addressing the Global Affordable Housing Challenge" (McKinsey Global Institute, Oct. 2014).

⁶ World Bank, "Why Secure Land Rights Matter" (2017) (available at <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2017/03/24/why-secure-land-rights-matter>).

⁷ Cities Alliance, "Greater Monrovia Urban Development Strategy" (2020).

⁸ A/C.3/76/L.12/Rev.1.

⁹ Lifting pandemic emergency measures can lead to an eviction crisis. See Arthur Neslan, "Growing Eviction Risk As Rent Freezes End in Europe" (Thomson Reuters Foundation, 15 July 2021) and Emily Benfer and others, "The COVID-19 Eviction Crisis: An Estimated 30-40 Million People in America Are at Risk" (Asper Institute, 7 Aug. 2020).

water supply service to promote social justice and transparency in service delivery.¹⁰ After a large private waste management company in Norway declared bankruptcy, 13 municipalities in that country decided to re-municipalize waste collection for improved equity and fostering of knowledge within the community.

13. Ensuring the social, economic and political inclusion of women is a persistent challenge in cities. Legal barriers and discriminatory regulations hinder land tenure security for women. The pandemic has stalled the advances made in women's employment and safety owing to accrued care tasks, lost jobs and increased gender-based violence. Tunisia has reported progress on tackling gender-based violence through the creation of the National Observatory for the Prevention of Violence against Women. Addressing the needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons in housing and urban policies remains a major challenge.

14. During 2020 more than 82 million people were displaced due to persecution, conflict, violence and climate change.¹¹ In the Middle East and North Africa region and sub-Saharan Africa, conflict is the primary driver of displacement.¹² The majority of refugees and internally displaced people move to cities seeking economic and social opportunities, yet they often live in marginalized areas exposed to hazards, without access to adequate housing, infrastructure, employment or basic services.¹³ In the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) region, many migrants and refugees occupy informal settlements. Moreover, violations of land and housing rights persist globally and have continued throughout the COVID-19 pandemic despite calls by the international community to halt displacements.¹⁴

15. Despite enduring conflict and violence globally, some cities in the Americas have registered falling homicide rates even though national rates have risen, demonstrating that urbanization, when well-managed, can reduce homicide rates. Analysis by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime of data from 68 cities shows that there is no positive correlation between urban growth and increases in homicide rates.¹⁵

16. Migration continues to grow globally, rising from less than 180 million people in 2000 to more than 270 million today.¹⁶ Migration disproportionately affects cities, often the intended destination of migrants. Inclusive responses to the needs of migrants, refugees and displaced persons, and notably those of women and girls, remain limited. Strategies for the integration of migrants are emerging in partnerships with United Nations system entities in Barcelona, Colombia, Guatemala City, São Paulo, Seychelles and Turkey.

B. Inclusive urban prosperity and opportunities

17. Cities are centres of opportunity. When sourced with adequate labour, institutions, infrastructure and services, they attract international investment and increase economic efficiency. Well-managed urbanization enables countries to increase productivity, accelerate national economic growth and gain access to global markets, provided urbanization is anchored in macroeconomic policies and meaningfully integrated into national economic development policies.

18. Countries continue to struggle with balancing productivity of the urban economy with providing decent work for all. Countries that depend on natural resource exports rely on urban economies dominated by non-tradable services, diminishing affordability without increasing productivity.¹⁷ The current urban trends suggest that even in growing economies, social disparities are increasing. As of 2019, 49 per cent of all non-agricultural employment remained informal, without adequate social protection. Botswana has introduced several programmes to specifically support the informal sector, including the Letlhabile programme that provides loans to businesses affected by the pandemic. In Kenya, slum dwellers have co-managed projects with local governments to improve

¹⁰ Mary Ann Manahan and Laura Stegemann, "Putting the 'public' in public services: (Re)municipalisation cases in Malaysia and the Philippines", in Satoko Kishimoto, Lavinia Steinfort and Olivier Petitjean, eds., *The Future Is Public: Towards Democratic Ownership of Public Services* (Transnational Institute and others, 2020).

¹¹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "Global Report 2020".

¹² Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, "No Matter of Choice: Displacement in a Changing Climate" (2021).

¹³ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, "Global Report on Internal Displacement 2019" (May 2019) and "Global Report on Internal Displacement 2020" (April 2020).

¹⁴ United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, "COVID-19 Guidance Note: Prohibition of Evictions" (28 April 2020).

¹⁵ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, "Global Study on Homicide, 2019" (Vienna, 2019).

¹⁶ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "International Migrant Stock 2020".

¹⁷ Payce Madden and Jeffrey Gutman, "Urban Economic Growth in Africa: Analyzing Constraints to Agglomeration" (Brookings Institution, 30 Oct. 2020).

infrastructure and generate income. Through Kenya’s Kazi Mtaani initiative, residents from informal settlements have secured employment on upgrading projects in their neighbourhoods.

19. The pandemic has exacerbated unemployment rates. The International Labour Organization projects that global hours worked in 2021 will be 4.5 per cent below pre-pandemic levels, equivalent to the loss of 131 million full-time jobs,¹⁸ with job loss rates for women considerably higher than for men.¹⁹ While working hours in high- and upper-middle-income countries tended to recover in 2021, lower-middle and low-income countries suffered losses.²⁰ Botswana, Colombia, Cuba, Finland and Turkey have supported employment with job training focusing on urban youth. Egypt’s Upper-Egypt Local Development Programme has reduced urban poverty by creating decent jobs and applying a budgeting formula to allocate central government funds to the local level. In Kenya, the Ajira Digital programme has connected 1.3 million citizens to digital employment and trained over 50,000 young people for online jobs. In Turkey, the Transition to Formality Programme, supported by the International Labour Organization, works with employers and informally employed Syrians to offer job security and help them comply with tax regulations.

20. Inadequacies in providing basic services are usually larger the smaller the urban centre.²¹ In Africa, 51 per cent of urban growth is forecast to occur in small agglomerations.²² Through the Ghana Secondary Cities Support Programme, municipal assemblies have received World Bank loans to promote economic development in intermediate cities. Finland, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic and Turkey have supported smaller population centres through regional development programmes. In Mexico, the Construction and Rehabilitation of Public Markets Programme of 2018 has strengthened local economies, promoted the sale of local products, and increased income for thousands of families in Oaxaca.

C. Environmental sustainability and resilience

21. Currently, under the auspices of Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy, more than 10,000 cities across the world have committed to reducing carbon dioxide emissions by 24 billion tons by 2030. Most of the cities are developing renewable energy systems, adopting energy- and resource-efficient approaches, promoting green buildings, reducing their use of fossil fuels, and transitioning to cleaner, inclusive public mobility systems.

22. Air pollution continues to be a major health risk to cities, with an overall worsening trend towards lower air quality, particularly in Central and Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Reliance on older, inefficient, private vehicular transport exacerbates pollution. UN-Habitat data shows that regions with a high share of public transport have significantly lower levels of air pollution. Indoor air pollution from inefficient cookstoves remains a major concern for 2.2 billion people without access to clean cooking.²³

23. Other forms of waste and pollution also put increasing pressure on cities. Municipalities in low-income countries spend about 20 per cent of their budgets on waste management on average, yet over 90 per cent of waste in low-income countries is still openly dumped or burned. Cost-effective means of adapting landfill sites to reduce emissions and improve safety, such as the Fukuoka method, are increasingly applied in Africa, including in Rwanda, Kenya and Ethiopia.²⁴

24. The last two decades have seen a sharp increase in the number of recorded disaster events,²⁵ which has accelerated action on disaster risk reduction and urban resilience. Climate change, coupled with unplanned urbanization, has rendered many settlements and populations (disproportionately women, children and the elderly) vulnerable to natural and human-made disasters. In 2020, in alignment with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, the United Nations

¹⁸ International Labour Organization, “ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the World of Work”, 8th ed. (27 Oct. 2021).

¹⁹ International Labour Organization, “Policy Brief: Building Forward Fairer: Women’s Rights to Work and At Work at the Core of the COVID-19 Recovery (2021).

²⁰ See note 19.

²¹ D. Satterthwaite, “Background Paper: Small and Intermediate Urban Centres in Sub-Saharan Africa” (March 2016).

²² African Development Bank, OECD and United Nations Development Programme, *Africa Economic Outlook 2016* (OECD, 2016), p. 149.

²³ International Renewable Energy Agency, *Renewable Energy Policies in a Time of Transition: Heating and Cooling* (2020).

²⁴ For details, see the Urban Agenda Platform at <https://www.urbanagendaplatform.org/best-practice/application-fukuoka-method-3-landfill-sites-ethiopia>.

²⁵ United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, “Human Cost of Disasters: An Overview of the Last 20 Years, 2000–2019” (2020).

Office for Disaster Risk Reduction established the Making Cities Resilient 2030 initiative, which contributes to sharing knowledge and supporting cities in disaster risk reduction mechanisms, contributing directly to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 11. Globally, close to 30 per cent of countries have adopted disaster reduction strategies.

25. Sustainable urban development has proven to be an important nature-based solution. By managing land conversion, combating urban sprawl, restoring urban ecosystems and greening food systems, countries are making progress in reversing biodiversity loss locally. Nature-based solutions deliver energy-efficient, environmentally sustainable development at scale, which was endorsed in 2019 through the General Assembly's proclamation of the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, by its resolution 73/284. Relevant examples are the Cheonggyecheon Stream restoration project in Seoul that transformed a highway overpass into a park, the widespread application of the "sponge city" concept in China and the participatory urban gardening and agriculture in Rome that benefits marginalized communities while increasing green space. The Green Cities Initiative of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations was launched in 2020 to enhance stakeholder capacity to integrate urban and peri-urban agriculture, food systems and urban forestry into local planning and actions in 1,000 cities around the world by 2030.

26. Many countries are investing in climate adaptation through nature-based solutions and improving multi-level governance. Examples include developing climate-resilient infrastructure to combat flooding, planting trees to reduce the urban heat island effect, and building climate risk and early warning systems to save lives, including in least developed countries, by strengthening capacity to generate and communicate early warnings. Investment in partnerships with organized grass-roots and women's groups for effective localization of disaster risk reduction has strengthened community preparedness. Restoring urban mangroves provides significant flood protection; it is estimated that coastal cities such as Miami, Mumbai and Wenzhou could each save up to \$500 million annually in avoided property damage.²⁶

III. Effective implementation

A. Building a governance structure and establishing a supportive framework

27. Urban governance has been central to effective crisis response and a sustainable development trajectory. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the critical role local governments play as front-line responders in crisis response and recovery²⁷ and accelerated the digitalization of urban governance.

28. Despite progress towards the principles of the New Urban Agenda, many urban areas suffer from inadequate multilevel governance, unclear distributions of responsibilities between different spheres of government, weak cooperative mechanisms and limited participation of local governments in national coordination mechanisms.

29. Multilevel governance is most developed in countries with higher degrees of decentralization and fiscal cooperation and long-standing structures for dialogue between central and local governments on spatial planning, environment, infrastructure, transport and technology. The Urban Agenda for the European Union (Pact of Amsterdam) promotes multilevel governance cooperation on urban issues among Member States, cities, the European Commission and other actors.²⁸

30. The Council of Australian Governments, the Local Government Commission in New Zealand, the Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines and the Union of Municipalities of Turkey have all developed multilevel governance mechanisms. Multilevel governance approaches have also emerged in Africa, where several countries use them to promote an all-of-society approach to the implementation of the New Urban Agenda to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

31. Algeria, Cuba, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Tunisia have all decentralized public administration, as called for in the New Urban Agenda. Local governments assume a more central role in tackling global challenges and in urban governance, representing 24 per cent of public spending, 26 per cent of public revenue and 37 per cent of public investment. In terms of expenditure of subnational governments, the Asia-Pacific region is most decentralized, while Africa and Latin

²⁶ P. Menéndez and others, "The Global Flood Protection Benefits of Mangroves", *Scientific Reports*, 10 (1), pp. 1–11 (2020).

²⁷ See note 1.

²⁸ European Commission, "Urban Agenda for the EU Pact of Amsterdam" (2016).

America and the Caribbean remain more centralized financially.²⁹ Challenges to decentralization remain, including the fiscal autonomy of local governments, dependency on central government fiscal transfers and competition for resources between regional and local governments.

B. Planning and management of urban and territorial spatial development

32. As of 2020, over 150 countries had embedded urbanization into their national policy repertoires and institutional fabrics.³⁰ The pandemic has highlighted the ability of national urban policies to mobilize support for resilient, green and inclusive cities, often as part of national recovery packages. Since 2014, UN-Habitat, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and Cities Alliance have supported more than 56 national and subnational governments in developing and implementing their urban policies, through the National Urban Policy Programme. More than three quarters of national urban policies are being implemented in Europe, North America, Latin America and East and Southeast Asia; however, North Africa and Western Asia are lagging, with about 60 per cent of urban policies still in the early stages of development.³¹

33. Few countries effectively link national urban policies to national planning and economic development. Many national urban policies have not translated into action, evidenced, for example, by the continued proliferation of urban sprawl. Notable positive developments are the national reforms and planning processes across scales in the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Egypt, Oman, South Africa and Spain and the implementation of the European Union Cohesion Policy in more than 900 cities.³²

34. Several countries, such as Algeria, Ethiopia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Mexico, Nigeria, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia and Zambia, are applying national urban policies to address historical regional inequalities. Local development opportunities from large infrastructure investments are being leveraged through integrated spatial planning, examples being the Northern Corridor in Africa and the Tren Maya in Mexico.

C. Inclusive urban planning and management

35. In Latin American and Caribbean, Arab and African States, many large cities have undertaken integrated planning processes for efficient mixed-land use management, densification, connectivity, adequate housing, reduction of inequality and capturing and redistribution of land value. The city of Belo Horizonte, Brazil, has adopted an innovative land management and mobility plan that at once addresses climate change, inequality and local finance.³³

36. Urban planning is a powerful tool for achieving climate mitigation and adaptation, equity and economic productivity and the protection and social integration of refugees, migrants and other marginalized groups. For example, Spain has implemented gender-responsive planning using gender impact statements, technical norms in Extremadura and regional and local plans in the Basque Country, improving women's access to jobs, housing and services. Progress is still hindered in many cities by inadequate planning laws on, for instance, single-family zoning and minimum lot sizes, both of which limit affordability.

37. Despite increased adoption of planning strategies globally, uptake and implementation has not been at the scale and pace required to manage the expansion of cities and curb urban sprawl, as measured through Sustainable Development Goal indicator 11.3.1, which shows that between 1990 and 2019, urban growth outpaced population growth. To reduce urban sprawl, many cities in Latin America and the Caribbean use innovative land management and value-capture instruments that create resources for infrastructure improvements with redistributive impacts (in Brazil, Colombia and Peru). In Kampala, municipalities have adopted development control legislation and urban planning measures against sprawl.

38. Progress in urban mobility has been unequal. Many cities face serious congestion and display low shares of public transport. Globally, only 47 per cent of urban residents have access to low-capacity systems within a 500-metre walking distance and only 11 per cent have access to high-capacity systems within a 1,000-metre walking distance. Indonesia, Kenya, Mexico, Turkey and

²⁹ OECD and United Cities and Local Governments, "Report of the World Observatory on Subnational Government Finance and Investment: Key Findings" (2019).

³⁰ OECD, UN-Habitat and United Nations Office for Project Services, *Global State of National Urban Policy 2021: Achieving Sustainable Development Goals and Delivering Climate Action* (Paris, OECD, 2021).

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² European Commission, Urban Data Platform Plus (available at <https://urban.jrc.ec.europa.eu/strat-board/#/where>; accessed on 10 Feb. 2022).

³³ Florence, Johannesburg, Mexico City and Seoul report similar experiences.

the United States of America have made national investments in sustainable mobility infrastructure, with the United States and the European Union integrating mobility into their pandemic recovery plans. Finland and the World Bank are pursuing integrated approaches that link mobility infrastructure with urban densification, for efficiency gains and economic viability.

39. The pandemic has underlined the role of public space in public health and, in response, many cities have developed temporary solutions that have translated into longer-term action on mixed-use neighbourhoods, alternative mobility and urban regeneration (notably Barcelona, Milan, Nairobi, New York and Paris). Public spaces contribute directly to local development, social cohesion, climate mitigation and economic recovery. Considerable progress has been made since 2018 on public space reclamation, greening and inclusive use, including through gender-sensitive design. Design and management of public spaces have become more participatory and the legally required urban green area per capita has increased in many countries, including Bahrain and Turkey.

D. Financing the implementation of the New Urban Agenda

40. Implementation of the New Urban Agenda around the world continues to be impeded by inadequate financing. The response to the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the situation. Cities have experienced the “scissor effect” of increased public funding for emergency social security measures combined with lower tax revenues due to economic decline.³⁴ The pandemic, however, has offered opportunities to rethink investment priorities, models and project design to reduce health-related shocks and align diverse sources of finance.

41. The World Bank estimates that developing countries could meet their transformative commitments by spending 4.5 per cent of their gross domestic product.³⁵ The Global Infrastructure Facility, a Group of 20 initiative, seeks to address this challenge by assisting Governments and multilateral development banks in selecting, designing and bringing to market sustainable, bankable infrastructure projects in developing countries. It has unlocked investments of \$76 billion, including \$52 billion from private investors.³⁶

42. Many development partners have followed the trend of blending grants, loans and loan guarantees. In 2021, the European Union expanded its External Investment Plan to provide global coverage. Investments will be backed by a €53.4 billion External Action Guarantee, including a special window targeting cities.³⁷

43. Innovative instruments offer opportunities to increase financing for climate action. In 2020, Egypt issued “green bonds” for the first time to finance infrastructure projects,³⁸ following in the footsteps of Johannesburg. The State of Lagos in Nigeria has been issuing bonds for infrastructure development since 2010, improving its residents’ living standards. Many low-income countries have not made full use of sustainable financing, however, citing concerns about hindering productivity, economic growth and job creation owing to the conditionality of renewable energy technologies, which they consider premature.

44. Financing affordable housing that addresses the global housing deficit constitutes a major challenge. Brazil, Colombia, Indonesia and Mexico support vulnerable groups by providing a mix of grants and loans for families who wish to build their own housing. Turkey has financed building of affordable housing through long-term soft loans to low-income households. Thailand’s Baan Mankong (secure housing) programme for the urban poor in slums, financed by the public sector in the form of grants for infrastructure and housing and loans for land and housing, has provided new affordable in-situ housing.³⁹ The African Development Bank is assisting the municipality of Dakar in Senegal in improving its financial and administrative management systems and creating financial mechanisms to attract new investments for sustainable urban development.⁴⁰

45. Effective urban financing depends on more nuanced approaches to fiscal decentralization, as well as the capacity of local governments to mobilize endogenous resources. Collaboration among various levels of government, even if fluid and negotiated, ensures more effective outcomes of

³⁴ UN-Habitat, *Cities and Pandemics: Towards a More Just, Green and Healthy Future* (2021).

³⁵ Julie Rozenberg and Marianne Fay, *Beyond the Gap: How Countries Can Afford the Infrastructure They Need While Protecting the Planet* (World Bank, Washington, DC, 2019).

³⁶ <https://www.globalinfrastructure.org>.

³⁷ European Commission, “EU External Action Budget: European Commission Welcomes the Final Adoption of the EU’s New Long-Term External Action Budget for 2021–2027” (9 June 2021).

³⁸ <https://www.sis.gov.eg/Story/152386/Egypt-issues-first-Green-bonds-at-%24750-million-value?lang=en-us>.

³⁹ Community Development Organizations Institute, “Baan Mankong: Thailand’s National, People-Driven, Collective Housing Program” (Bangkok, Oct. 2019).

⁴⁰ Urban and Municipal Development Fund, “Supporting More Liveable and Sustainable Cities in Africa” (2021).

investment in urban development. Nigeria and South Africa have successfully introduced systems for transferring funds from the national level to subnational levels, rewarding local and regional government performance.

46. Microfinance and community savings groups have played a role in filling the vacuum left by insufficient public investment and private capital. Slum Dwellers International and the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights alone have over 800,000 members and operate across 698 cities in 48 countries.⁴¹ For example, investments by the Poverty Reduction Fund of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic in community-led initiatives between 2017 and 2019 provided 860,000 slum dwellers with increased access to basic services.

47. Opportunities for endogenous revenue optimization depend heavily on strong leadership and political will, as well as on streamlining tax policy and enhancing compliance, both of which are affected by digitalization and strengthening of the social contract. By digitalizing, educating taxpayers, training revenue collectors, conducting revenue audits and allowing taxpayers to pay in instalments, Kampala improved its revenue collection from \$1 million in 2010 to \$25 million (24 per cent of the city’s budget) in 2019.⁴² In Jharkhand State (India), a public-private partnership has appointed tax collection agencies and a project management unit in 41 cities, successfully expanding the municipal government’s revenue base.

48. Several years ago, Mzuzu, an intermediate city in Malawi that historically lacked adequate central government transfers, launched the Revenue Mobilization Programme using a fit-for-capacity property valuation system that yielded a seven-fold increase in revenues over a six-year period. Legal barriers in the current property valuation process, however, have inhibited further progress, underlining the importance of creating financial instruments in legal conformity with national policies. The potential for cities to improve their own-source revenue has also been demonstrated by Hargeisa (Somalia), which has introduced a system of in-kind land value capture, or “exaction”⁴³ through land readjustment.

E. Strengthening capacity to promote sustainable urbanization

49. During the COVID-19 pandemic, capacity-building and knowledge-sharing have evolved with increased digitalization. While national and local governments have proven resilient in the face of adversity, their capacity to implement the New Urban Agenda remains strained.

50. Part of the challenge is related to human capital. Most countries and cities lack the capacity for urban planning based on collected and analysed data. One of best practices comes from the Netherlands, where “Urban Data Centres” have been created jointly by the national statistical office and city governments.⁴⁴

51. Many countries are using the New Urban Agenda Illustrated toolkit, a global capacity development product comprising a handbook and online courses, to implement and monitor progress on the New Urban Agenda.

52. Regional platforms have proved to be key to sharing resources and building capacity. The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) regional platform, which is co-chaired by the European Commission, initiated a dialogue among its 42 member States on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda that produced the UfM Strategic Urban Development Action Plan 2040, accompanied by a dedicated plan on affordable and sustainable housing. ECE convened the Forum of Mayors 2020 as a platform for sharing experiences, policies and practices.

53. International organizations have supported national and subnational governments in collecting and analysing urban data. In 2020, OECD developed local indicators for global goals to measure the distance between national targets and cities’ performance.⁴⁵ ECE has developed performance indicators that help cities to monitor progress in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and attainment of the urban-related Sustainable Development Goals. Smart sustainable city profiles have been prepared based on those indicators, with the support of the International Telecommunication Union.

⁴¹ W. Shand and S. Colenbrander, “Financing the Inclusive City: The Catalytic Role of Community Savings”, *Environment and Urbanization*, 30 (1), pp. 175–190 (1 March 2018).

⁴² UN-Habitat, “Financing Sustainable Urban Development” (2021).

⁴³ “Exaction” is a monetary or non-monetary “payment” or service to the community that authorities require from a property owner in return for granting a land development permit.

⁴⁴ <https://www.cbs.nl/en-gb/onze-diensten/urban-data-centres>.

⁴⁵ Tool available at <https://www.oecd-local-sdgs.org/index.html>.

54. Intermediate cities worldwide face capacity challenges in preparing and using planning instruments, which limits their ability to attract investment. The professional organizations and local governments associations of the Commonwealth Local Government Forum have joined together to develop an extension planning methodology for intermediate cities. OECD and UN-Habitat, with the support of the Development Working Group, recently launched the “G20 Platform on SDG Localisation and Intermediary Cities” to promote knowledge creation and sharing, while the World Bank, OECD, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and UN-Habitat have embarked upon capacity-building initiatives supporting intermediate cities in Burkina Faso, Egypt, Kenya, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia and Uganda. Through its Our City Plans toolbox, UN-Habitat has strengthened participatory planning tools in more than 70 intermediate cities.

F. Using technology to support sustainable urban development

55. The pandemic has expedited the digitalization trend, which in some cases has proved to be a positive disruption towards sustainable living in cities. Shifts to remote work, telemedicine, online interaction with government, distance learning and online delivery of essential services in cities have reduced environmental stress while improving access and well-being.

56. The pandemic has also exposed the digital divide between and within cities and countries. In the least developed countries, only one in five people was online in 2020. Globally, marginalized groups that lack internet access and digital skills are underrepresented in data and do not benefit fully from the expansion of digital technologies.⁴⁶

57. National Governments have taken responsibility for steering “smart city” development beyond a technological concept to an approach that incorporates principles of inclusion, human rights and ecological sustainability. Cities as varied as Barcelona, Buenos Aires, Johannesburg, London, São Paulo, Seoul, Sihanoukville and Singapore have adopted a human-centric approach to smart city transition. The United States issued its federal smart cities guide in 2018, Argentina published its national smart city strategy in 2019 and the European Union launched the “Declaration on joining forces to boost sustainable digital transformation in cities and communities in the EU” in 2020 and the “Mission on Climate Neutral and Smart Cities” in 2021. Since 2018, the Cities Coalition for Digital Rights,⁴⁷ comprising 50 cities and organizations, has shared best practices and coordinated common initiatives on artificial intelligence, machine learning and big data applications for sustainable development.

58. Institutions have deployed user-friendly digital platforms and citizen-centric report cards as tools for digital governance. In 2020, for example, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees made 32 per cent of its payments to refugees in the form of mobile money.

59. Many countries in the Asia-Pacific region are at the forefront of developing digital platforms. Since 2019, the Group of 20 Global Smart Cities Alliance has been assisting cities in adopting policies for technology governance, including model policies on universal accessibility of information and communications technology, to support local governments in reaching higher procurement standards. While there has been strong uptake of community-led data innovations, including by federations of slum dwellers and through digital mapping in OpenStreetMap, the integration of citizen-generated data into policy and planning has yet to be achieved.

60. Technology has transformed sustainable transportation in urban areas. In Abidjan (Côte d’Ivoire), IBM has used anonymized data from mobile phone users to determine the most frequented bus routes and the city has introduced 65 network improvements, reducing passengers’ travel time by 10 per cent. Electric scooters, bikes and motorcycles are changing mobility patterns and electric mobility sharing platforms are expanding rapidly. Integrated ticketing in Iskandar (Malaysia), for example, is incentivizing the use of public transportation.

G. Facilitating development partner engagement and participation

61. The involvement of the diverse constituencies of the New Urban Agenda to support its implementation, as called for in General Assembly resolution 71/235, has enhanced collaborative action on housing and sustainable urban development. Learning systems, advocacy and joint actions have guided national urban policies, strengthened city networks and deepened engagement, thus

⁴⁶Krzysztof Izdebski, “Policy Brief: Preventing the Potential Discriminatory Effects of the Use of Artificial Intelligence in Local Services” (Council of Europe, Oct. 2020).

⁴⁷ <https://citiesfordigitalrights.org/>.

enhancing the elements that give practical meaning to the principles of inclusion and networked development reflected in *Our Common Agenda*.

62. Since 2018, 25 countries have held national urban forums to collect data and report on and advance sustainable urban development policy, investment and programming. For example, the Malaysian Government convened a national urban forum to engage leading professionals, local government officials and researchers in establishing urban policy and planning priorities. The Spanish Urban Agenda, created in 2019, established mechanisms for innovative governance that have since facilitated five subnational urban agendas and the urban action plans of more than 100 Spanish cities.

63. The World Urban Campaign, an advocacy instrument led by UN-Habitat, has established 170 cross-sectoral partnerships and relaunched the Urban Thinkers Campus while also advancing the action campaign #TheCityWeNeedNow. Nearly 40 municipalities have endorsed the Cities for Adequate Housing declaration initiated by United Cities and Local Governments.

64. In December 2020, the General Assembly, in its resolution 75/459, encouraged UN-Habitat to continue its collaboration with international development banks and the private sector to ensure alignment of large-scale urban investments with the principles of the New Urban Agenda. UN-Habitat has strengthened its partnership with the European Investment Bank to enable joint efforts to implement the New Urban Agenda by promoting well-planned and managed urban development in the context of rapid urbanization, as a driver of sustainable development and a vehicle for achieving green, climate-smart transformation of economies.

IV. New Urban Agenda as accelerator of global development agendas

65. General Assembly resolution 75/459 highlights the contribution of the New Urban Agenda to the localization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Since 2018, UN-Habitat has advanced the discourse on how the drivers of the New Urban Agenda – urban policies, urban governance, urban planning, municipal finance and technology – accelerate the achievement of other global agendas. Indeed, reports on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement and the global compact on refugees already attribute their outcomes to those drivers.

66. In the last five years, the number of nationally determined contributions with explicit urban content has increased significantly.⁴⁸ In its contribution, Rwanda acknowledges the importance of spatial planning for climate resilience by committing to sustainable land use management, including integrated spatial data management. Colombia's climate change strategy calls for every territorial entity to adopt development plans that mitigate risk to corresponding ecosystems and to identify peri-urban agricultural land aligned with the needs of neighbouring cities. The Philippines, in its National Climate Change Adaptation Plan, incentivizes the implementation of mixed-use, medium-to-high density, integrated land-use and transport planning and the establishment of “ecosystem towns” in protected areas and key biodiversity areas.

67. Several cities have cited the New Urban Agenda and its call for strengthened urban governance as key to integrating migration flows. The Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality has institutionalized its refugee response through its “Action Plan on Migration and Cohesion”, which prioritizes capacity-building and service mapping. Cities in Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon and Somalia have included displaced people (refugees, returnees and the internally displaced) as part of inclusive urban development strategies, facilitating access to serviced land and security of tenure. More than 75 cities have reported on their contribution to the global compact on refugees,⁴⁹ which promotes investment in all forms in the local government land planning and housing provision, another tenet of the New Urban Agenda.

68. A comprehensive, action-oriented framework, the New Urban Agenda is aimed at advancing the localization of the Sustainable Development Goals well beyond Sustainable Development Goal 11, offering countries ways to plan, finance, develop and manage cities and other human settlements. The Agenda serves as a strategic lever for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals through local action. For example, in their most recent voluntary local reviews (VLRs), Helsinki and Orlando (United States) explain how incorporating COVID-19 recovery measures into their development agendas has boosted Sustainable Development Goal achievement. The Economic Commission for Europe has determined that VLRs inspire greater ambition in voluntary national reviews.

⁴⁸ UN-Habitat, “Enhancing Nationally Determined Contributions through Urban Climate Action” (Nairobi, June 2020).

⁴⁹ See the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees “Good Practices and Innovative Approaches Database” at <https://www.unhcr.org/withrefugees/good-practices/>.

69. Acknowledging the importance of local action for achieving sustainable development, the United Nations recently launched the Local2030 Coalition, which acts as a platform and network designed to support and accelerate local-level delivery of the 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

70. Further progress in linking the New Urban Agenda to global goals has been seen in the robust application of national urban policies. The document “Local Implementation of the SDGs and New Urban Agenda: Towards a Swedish National Urban Policy”, for example, highlights how implementing the New Urban Agenda helps to meet the Sustainable Development Goal targets. The national reports of both Brazil and Malawi explicitly mention the role of national urban policies in delivering developmental dividends. Germany has reported on the role of subnational policies and programmes in delivering integrated, sustainable territorial development. Voluntary national review updates have provided opportunities to acknowledge additional progress.

V. Growing importance of cities and local governments

71. The New Urban Agenda recognizes the essential role of local governments in advancing sustainable development, driving climate action and building an inclusive and resilient future for all. The COVID-19 pandemic has reaffirmed this role. Prior to the pandemic, many local governments had already adopted their own urban agendas to guide territorial planning and contribute to national urban policies.

72. The role of cities in tackling global challenges has enhanced their legitimacy within the international arena, notably through the World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments. City diplomacy, in turn, has turned attention to local development and mobilized resources. A global survey of 47 cities found that city diplomacy was increasingly commonplace but often lacked formal strategies, training and funding.⁵⁰

73. Associations of local governments have engaged in intergovernmental processes, elevating the voice of their constituency vis-à-vis Member States and the international community. Local governments have made their international institutional arrangements and processes stronger by providing them with resources and technical expertise in cities such as Buenos Aires, Madrid, Moscow, New York and Shanghai, as well as Helsinki, which, together with other Finnish cities, provided content for the development of global guidance on localizing the Sustainable Development Goals.

74. City diplomacy involves intermediary cities as well as global and capital cities. The achievements of the Eurocities network, including partnerships with Chinese cities, are well reported.⁵¹ The United Nations Industrial Development Organization has assisted cities in consolidating city-to-city partnerships through the annual Bridge for Cities event involving a wider range of urban actors.⁵² Several countries have established forms of collective representation of city leaders and mayors.⁵³

75. Since 2018, many cities have developed VLRs to harness the organizing framework of the Sustainable Development Goals for urban planning while also monitoring the local contribution to the global goals. New York first proposed the formal VLR mechanism in 2018, namely its Global Vision | Urban Action platform, which aligned the city’s One New York strategic plan with 10 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Subsequent VLRs have documented the contributions of urban development to all 17 Sustainable Development Goals, well beyond Sustainable Development Goal 11. Other cities have followed suit, with 37 VLRs submitted in May 2020 and 106 in October 2021, 72 per cent of which were at the city level, 16 per cent at the regional level and 13 per cent at the state level. A total of 230 cities are signatories to the New York City Voluntary Local Review Declaration.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Anna Kosovac and others, “Conducting City Diplomacy: A Survey of International Engagement in 47 Cities” (Chicago Council on Global Affairs, Oct. 2020).

⁵¹ Nikolaos Kontinakis and Jinjing Zhang, “Cooperation Plans and Guidelines: Matching Cities” (URBAN-EU-CHINA Innovation Platform on Sustainable Urbanization, 2018).

⁵² United Nations Industrial Development Organization, “Bridge for Cities 2020 – Driving the Decade of Action through Urban Innovation 2021: Event Report” (5 Oct. 2020).

⁵³ Daniel Pejic, Anna Kosovac and Michele Acuto, “New Foreign Relations Bill Puts ‘City Diplomacy’ at Risk” (10 Sept. 2020).

⁵⁴ UN-Habitat and the New York City Mayor’s Office of International Affairs, “Leading Locally: The Origins and Impact of the Voluntary Local Review” (2021).

76. VLRs demonstrated how Member States can use the New Urban Agenda to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and meet their commitments under the Paris Agreement. While not all Member States have fully internalized the relevance of the New Urban Agenda, many of their cities have done so: fewer than 10 percent of Member States in Europe have submitted national reports on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, yet the region records the highest number of VLRs published.

77. Finland provides a good example of how national and local governments can harmonize political support for the New Urban Agenda at all levels of government using VLRs as a catalyst. Finland used VLRs to revitalize multilevel dialogue and generate input for its voluntary national review, which was updated to align with key drivers of the New Urban Agenda. It also promoted inclusive platforms to allow participation in planning and decision-making at all levels, rendering VLRs fully participatory and bringing local communities, minorities and vulnerable groups closer to the decision-making process.⁵⁵

VI. Progress and challenges in advancing an incremental and inclusive New Urban Agenda reporting system

78. At its June 2018 session, the Senior Management Group recognized urbanization as a “megatrend” and called upon UN-Habitat to facilitate cooperation among agencies in order to advance United Nations system-wide coherence for sustainable urbanization. This led to the development of the United Nations system-wide strategy for sustainable urban development (CEB/2019/1/Add.5) endorsed by the Chief Executives Board for Coordination in 2019.

79. In 2020, UN-Habitat established the Global Urban Monitoring Framework with support from Regional Economic Commissions, other United Nations entities, local governments, the private sector, grass-roots and professional organizations and academia. The framework uses trackers to reduce duplication with national and local data production efforts. It serves to quantify, rate or rank city-level performance, track progress and monitor alignment of the implementation of the New Urban Agenda with attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals and the targets of other global goals.

80. With its core set of urban indicators, the Global Urban Monitoring Framework seeks to be efficient, so as not to be a burden on cities; effective, to assist cities in tracking their progress in fulfilling their New Urban Agenda commitments and meeting the Sustainable Development Goal targets; and harmonized, to ensure that data is comparable.

81. UN-Habitat has worked jointly with the European Commission, the International Labour Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, OECD and the World Bank to harmonize definitions of cities and rural areas to improve global comparability. In March 2020, the Statistical Commission endorsed the proposed method and definitions⁵⁶ for use in assessing global and regional urban trends using earth observation and geospatial analysis techniques.

82. In response to General Assembly resolution 71/256, the secretariat has developed guidelines for reporting on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, to enable Governments and stakeholders to undertake periodic reviews to track progress, assess impact and ensure the effective and timely implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

83. The Urban Agenda Platform was launched in response to a recommendation in the 2018 quadrennial report to support Member States and partners in the adoption of universal norms and global frameworks for sustainable urban development. It is a UN-Habitat-facilitated online repository where Member States and stakeholders can update, in one location, progress in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. The platform hosts a portal for voluntary national reports on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, a tracking feature for the declared actions committed to at the 2020 World Urban Forum, an urban best practices repository and learning resources.

84. The Regional Economic Commissions were integral in the design of the systemwide strategy and the monitoring framework, ensuring alignment with regional specificities. The advent of VLRs has triggered the use of open data dashboards to display progress, including by the State of Hawaii (United States) and the cities of Los Angeles (United States) and Helsingborg (Sweden). Kenya, the

⁵⁵ This was also done in Mannheim (Germany), the State of Hawaii (United States) and São Paulo (Brazil).

⁵⁶ European Commission (Eurostat and the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy), “A recommendation on the method to delineate cities, urban and rural areas for international statistical comparisons” (March, 2020).

Philippines and Spain all have New Urban Agenda national coordination mechanisms, while Amman in Jordan and Agadir in Morocco have local collaborative initiatives.

85. During the reporting cycle (2018–2022), only 25 countries submitted progress reports on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. In the absence of comprehensive reporting by Member States, a mixed method is being used for evidence-based monitoring and reporting on the New Urban Agenda, consisting of supplemental regional reviews, participatory consultation with partners and review of local reporting, including VLRs.

VII. Recommendations

A. Implementation of the recommendations of the 2018 quadrennial report

86. The Secretary-General notes that Member States have made progress implementing the recommendations of 2018 quadrennial report but that work remains to be done and Member States will need to bolster efforts in the coming four years, particularly due to the situation created by the pandemic.

87. For the recommendation regarding the collection and analysis of disaggregated data, for example, the United Nations system has made progress harmonizing the definitions of cities and rural areas but adequate disaggregated data is still lacking at the local level, especially as countries and cities aim to decentralize.

88. Following up on the recommendation for Member States to adopt a national sample of cities and spatially disaggregate data, UN-Habitat in 2019 submitted a request to the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators to adopt these elements. National sampling provides a representative sample of cities, in line with their territory, geography and history, for more efficient national reporting. Since 2018, over 90 national statistical offices have been trained on the application of the national sample of cities approach.

89. Regarding the recommendation to strengthen the capacities of national and subnational governments, the international community has embarked on new initiatives, as noted in section IV above. While a comprehensive assessment is difficult, it is evident that many countries still lack awareness of how implementing the New Urban Agenda can help to accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and other global goals. There is a need to scale capacity to use the drivers of the New Urban Agenda, especially in countries with rapid urbanization.

90. The international community has made progress regarding the recommendation to strengthen existing multi-stakeholder platforms that facilitate participation and engagement. United Nations entities have launched platforms to build capacity and share tools and experiences to support implementation of the New Urban Agenda. The Cities Platform has brought together the eight city programmes of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the United Nations Development Programme's Cities and Urbanization Network, deployed across 170 countries and territories that have identified best practice, through the online City2City Network platform. Additional platforms are the Global Platform for Sustainable Cities; the Fast-Track Cities initiative, aimed at accelerating HIV response in cities; and the United for Smart Sustainable Cities initiative. Also important are the Urban Food Agenda and Green Cities Initiative of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the ECE Forum of Mayors and the #WithRefugees initiative of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which has 275 city signatories.⁵⁷

91. The 2018 recommendation to develop inclusive, evidence-based and integrated national urban policies has led to a significant increase in the number of countries that now have such policies. The adoption by the United Nations Statistical Commission in 2020 of the number of national urban policies as an indicator for Sustainable Development Goal 11 (indicator 11.a.1) has spurred the interest of national and local governments in developing urban policies. There nevertheless remain challenges in implementing national policies in order to have an impact on the ground.

92. The recommendation to create long-term and predictable financing mechanisms for the implementation and monitoring of the New Urban Agenda remains largely unimplemented. Local revenue capacity continues to be strained, especially in small and intermediary cities. More progress is needed on promoting investments in local and national infrastructure to ensure data collection, verification, analysis and dissemination. Member States will need to involve all relevant levels and sectors of government in decisions on investment. Successful decentralization of responsibilities to

⁵⁷ <https://www.unhcr.org/withrefugees/cities/>.

subnational levels, even if supported by fiscal devolution and authorization to allow sub-sovereign borrowing, have been highly dependent on existing governance systems and traditions.

B. Recommendations for accelerating the implementation of the New Urban Agenda

93. In addition to encouraging Member States to make further efforts to implement the recommendations of the 2018 quadrennial report, which remain valid and offer policy direction for the next four years, the Secretary-General wishes, as part of the present report, to make the following recommendations to accelerate implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

(a) Member States are encouraged to make a deliberate effort to elevate the New Urban Agenda, positioning its transformative commitments and key drivers as ready-made tools to enable countries to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, meet their commitments under the Paris Agreement and other global agendas and reflect those accomplishments in their reporting under global agreements. Such “means-ends” configuration should be accompanied by practical action plans. Pragmatic advocacy of this kind is essential to increase Member States’ focus on sustainable urbanization, incorporate the New Urban Agenda in international resolutions, accelerate implementation and improve the level of national reporting.

(b) To support the above, it is recommended that the United Nations continue to generate evidence-based and practical guidance for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the related dimensions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and update the action framework for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, in close consultation with Member States, local governments and stakeholders, as called for in General Assembly resolution 72/226, paragraph 5.

(c) It is recommended that governments and all local and non-State actors harness the lessons of the COVID-19 pandemic to reorient and accelerate the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. Cities have been at the forefront of the response and will drive the recovery. The pandemic has deepened existing inequalities and created new vulnerabilities. It has underscored the importance of public goods and the public institutions that deliver them and raised awareness of the fiscal autonomy local governments require to finance them.

(d) Following from the above, it is recommended that housing and associated basic services be integrated with health, income, education and access to basic services as five elements of the social contract, as outlined in *Our Common Agenda*. By advancing this package of social protections, Member States will address multiple forms of inequality and reduce poverty. An integrated approach will be crucial: the New Urban Agenda offers Member States an opportunity to leverage investment in affordable housing to improve health outcomes, generate employment, enhance home-based learning and increase digital access.

(e) Member States are encouraged to use the New Urban Agenda in a more intentional manner to strengthen efforts to protect our planetary ecosystems. By advancing the transformative commitments and applying the key drivers, countries can accelerate climate action, protect biodiversity and reduce pollution. Dedicated efforts to strengthen the urban dimension of nationally determined contributions, climate resilience and adaption, nature-based solutions and marine pollution should be explored.

(f) Member States are urged to amplify implementation of the New Urban Agenda in countries in post-conflict and post-disaster situations. Urban displacement is an increasingly common feature of disaster and conflict, with growing numbers of refugees, migrants and internally displaced people living in cities. Participatory planning and co-creation of basic service programmes with displaced and indigenous populations increases social cohesion and thus promotes peace and security, while also improving living conditions.

(g) Finally, Member States are urged to consider institutional mechanisms to engage local and regional governments in intergovernmental and national planning processes. This recommendation builds on the New Urban Agenda and its call for strengthening coordination among levels of government, a commitment made relevant by the COVID-19 pandemic. It also speaks to Member States’ aspirations to promote inclusive, networked multilateralism, as outlined in *Our Common Agenda*.