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**Executive Board of the United Nations  
Human Settlements Programme  
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Nairobi, 28 and 29 March 2023  
Item 6 of the provisional agenda\*

**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**

1. The World Urban Forum was established by the General Assembly in resolution 56/206 of 21 December 2001. In paragraph 3 of section B of that resolution, the General Assembly affirmed that the Forum was a non-legislative technical forum in which experts could exchange views. The World Urban Forum was established to address one of the most pressing issues facing the world: rapid urbanization and its impact on communities, cities, economies, the environment and policymaking. Convened by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the Forum is a high-level, open and inclusive platform for addressing the challenges of sustainable urbanization in the world's cities. As it has evolved, the Forum has covered the concerns of developed countries in addition to those of developing and least developed countries, becoming a truly global forum. The World Urban Forum is aimed at further advancing the sustainable development agenda of the United Nations, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals, the outcomes of sessions of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the New Urban Agenda, which was adopted at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) in Ecuador in 2016.

2. The twelfth session of the World Urban Forum will be held in Cairo in the first quarter of 2024. The theme of the twelfth session of the Forum is under discussion by the Government of Egypt and UN-Habitat. The theme will be communicated to Member States upon confirmation, before March 2023, following the signing of a host country agreement.

3. In line with paragraph 7 of resolution 26/6 of the Governing Council of UN-Habitat, Member States will be actively consulted regarding the planning and organization of sessions of the Forum to ensure transparent, inclusive, effective and timely preparation. UN-Habitat will notably consult on the background paper for the twelfth session of the Forum, which will set the tone for the debate and discussion, including the sharing of best practices for replication, scale and adaptation to different contexts, within the theme. The background paper will convey the key ideas underlying the theme for the twelfth session of the Forum.

4. The theme will be selected by February 2023 in consultation with the host country, taking into consideration the recommendations of the Executive Director of UN-Habitat. The Executive Director intends to align the theme of the twelfth session of the Forum with the *World Cities Report 2024*.

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\* HSP/EB.2023/1.

The theme will also take into account the concerns highlighted by Member States at the high-level meeting on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, held in April 2022. The New Urban Agenda represents a shared vision for a better and more sustainable future, based on the strong belief that the solutions to our current problems – poverty, inequality, environmental degradation, climate change and conflict – will come from city leaders and managers, the private sector, civil society, grass-roots organizations and urban thinkers.

5. Cairo is the second African city to host a World Urban Forum after Nairobi in 2002. UN-Habitat is striving to raise the profile of urban stakeholders from the African region as well as all other regions and to ensure that the issues and solutions of the African region are considered, with examples of inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable human settlements and communities. Moreover, the next World Urban Forum will be inspired by the inclusivity model pioneered during the eleventh session of the Forum by the Government of Poland and Katowice, which ensured gender parity in terms of both general participation and panel composition, and accessibility and mobility improvements for physically-, visually-, and hearing-impaired participants.

6. Promoting strong participation from stakeholders, the Forum has a convening power to mobilize a wide range of participants from local, national and regional governments, civil society, grass-roots groups, local communities, the private sector, foundations and philanthropic organizations, international and regional organizations and academia, and including parliamentarians, older persons, women, young people, children, persons with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples, professionals and other stakeholders. UN-Habitat is working with the Government of Egypt and the group of African States, under the patronage of the African Union, on regional mobilization to ensure that we surpass the benchmarks set at the previous session.

7. In the build-up to the twelfth session of the Forum, UN-Habitat, through the regional mobilization initiative, is supporting Member States to review, formulate and focus on the implementation of urban policies through a forum-policy-practice shift. This shift is facilitated by multi-level urban forums which target both national and subnational urban policies as drivers of the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals and other international agendas. In 2016, urban policy was integrated into indicator 11.a.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals by the Statistical Commission. At the eleventh session of the Forum, the strength of national urban policies in fostering intersectoral and interregional coordination was emphasized. During the intersessional period, UN-Habitat has striven to make use of that strength to push for urban policy implementation, as called for in the Katowice Declared Actions.

8. The World Urban Forum Alumni Network held meetings in Katowice to streamline its activities aimed at supporting the implementation of the *UN-Habitat Strategic Plan 2020–2025* through legacy initiatives and advisory services to subsequent hosts of the Forum. Working with the host countries and cities in the Network, UN-Habitat aims to document and share the impacts of the World Urban Forum in host cities and countries, linking those impacts to the aspirations of the strategic plan, aligned with the objectives of the programme of the Forum. The Network is a fulfilment of the agreed outputs from the tenth session of the Forum, which was held in Abu Dhabi. A detailed agreement on how to move towards the twelfth session was reached by the World Urban Forum Alumni Network, and an activity plan is to be implemented during the intersessional period.

9. In the Katowice Declared Actions, the participants in the eleventh session of the Forum expressed concern about the lack of progress made towards the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement and called for urgent transformative action, underlining the need to focus on pathways to transformative change by instituting innovative and progressive policies and planning regimes. The participants urged urban leaders to move away from incrementalism and to work to achieve fundamental shifts in urban environments, systems of governance and forms of habitation, in line with human rights treaties. Against this background, the Forum will continue to call for action and mobilization and will track progress with regard to the Katowice Declared Actions. The goal will be to ensure that the actions to which participants in the eleventh session committed themselves are carried out, with positive results delivered to communities in the run-up to the twelfth session of the Forum in Cairo.

10. The deadline for expressions of interest in hosting the thirteenth session of the World Urban Forum in 2026 was 1 December 2022. A total of eight cities submitted expressions of interest. UN-Habitat shared the hosting bidding guidelines with those cities on 15 December 2022. In line with the schedule shared, cities are to send their official bids to UN-Habitat by 1 June 2023. The bids will be reviewed by a selection committee appointed by the Executive Director. The selection process will run until September 2023 and the selected city will be announced during Urban October in 2023. Inquiries and comments regarding this process should be sent to [unhabitat-wuf13bid@un.org](mailto:unhabitat-wuf13bid@un.org).