The second session of the United Nations Habitat Assembly

Against a backdrop of global crises that are having particularly severe effects on cities, the Second Session of the United Nations Habitat Assembly was launched on 2 October 2023 in Baku, Azerbaijan and the global observance of the World Cities Day on 31 October 2023 in Istanbul, Turkey. Thematic review of Sustainable Development Goals 6 on clean water and sanitation at the High-Level Political Forum in New York in July 2023. The High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) is a key platform for Member States to adopt domestic action plans, track progress, and engage in peer learning to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Almost half of them are significantly off track, and more than 30% have either stagnated or regressed below the 2015 baseline. Unless a substantial transformation occurs, the SDGs are unlikely to be met by 2030. Discussions at the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) in New York in 2023 focused on the need for urgent action for sustainable urban development and secure a better quality of life for everyone, everywhere. The report does not paint an optimistic picture, but UN-Habitat’s role as the Secretariat and co-chair of the Local2030 Coalition, a UN-wide platform, underscores its commitment to SDG advancement, showcased at the upcoming European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus (EFSD+) in October 2023.

Ensuring universal access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy presents the potential to transform lives by creating fresh economic prospects, jobs, and empowering women, children, and youth. The SDGs also call for a paradigm shift towards sustainable urbanization and the effective localization of the SDGs. The SDG Cities flagship project was launched in June 2023, bringing together a comprehensive approach to SDG localization, incorporating normative and knowledge work, implementing the Urban Planning and Sustainable Infrastructure framework, and equitable financing models. Supported by MADADFUND, UN-Habitat provided 323 core-housing units, accommodating 2897 returnees; upgraded 25 schools, rehabilitating four primary schools; drilled and rehabilitated three water boreholes; and rehabilitated a marketplace and football park.

By implementing these tools where they are most applicable, local authorities are empowered to weather the prevailing global crises and align their efforts toward the twin goals of peace and prosperity. UN-Habitat’s 2023 Annual Report highlights the achievements of the agency in contributing to the global effort to achieve the SDGs and supports the theme of the 2023 World Cities Day, which focuses on cities as catalysts for economic recovery and resilience in the face of global crises.

The world is already off-track in achieving SDG 7. The report of the second session of the United Nations Assembly, a gentlemen with a garden, will offer a blueprint for how to gain traction, narrow the gaps of access, and align the SDGs with the energies of the digital and physical worlds.

“Here on my land, hope has returned to me. I have planted trees and created a small garden, picking fresh apples that I sell in my city. By engaging closely with local and regional governments, the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda are being transformed in cities across the globe. The Foley Foundation is a key partner in this effort, anchoring its efforts in the sustainable urbanization agenda. As the Foley Foundation marks its 30th year, it is committed to mobilizing, bridging, and facilitating long-term partnerships and knowledge generation to move the world toward a more sustainable future.”
During the event, the government of Kenya through the Cabinet Secretary reiterated the need for sustainable development in the future. UN-Habitat ensures that communities can fully engage in the decision-making process and supports the adoption of sustainable practices. In Pakistan, UN-Habitat and the Ministry of Climate Change initiated a project to 'strengthen the capacities of the national, regional, local authorities, and communities' for addressing climate change. The project focuses on developing an enabling environment for low-emission development and the carbon market, funded by the Korea Land and Housing Corporation (LH). This initiative aims to support Pakistan's NDC plan under the Paris Agreement with a special focus on the urban sector.

The initiative's accomplishments include enhancing capabilities in five provincial micro-regions for implementing Agenda 2030 and the New Urban Agenda at the grassroots level. The achievements of this project have notably enhanced the quality of life within local communities. This showcases the feasibility of implementing Agenda 2030 and the New Urban Agenda at the grassroots level. The project has resulted in numerous benefits to over 80,000 beneficiaries, including poor informal settlements in Karachi. Promoting low-carbon housing, energy-efficient streetlights, and renewable energy electrification in Karachi are expected to help reduce GHG emissions, improve air quality, and create more sustainable and livable cities for a greener urban future. The initiative engaged 39 provincial entities, 31 civil society organizations, and private sector entities, ultimately providing training to over 600 individuals. The project is expected to result in an estimated 59,300 tonnes of CO₂-equivalent emissions avoided, which is a significant contribution to the global effort to combat climate change.

UN-Habitat supports Pakistan to become an engine of climate innovation and action. The initiative focuses on developing participatory municipal plans, while others are making progress in the evaluation of public spaces. "Sustainable Cities: A New Urban Agenda for the Province of Neuquén, Argentina" is a transformative initiative led by UN agencies such as UN-Habitat, UNOPS, and UN Women supported by the Federal Investment Council, CFI Argentina. The project aims to strengthen inclusive, integrated, and sustainable urban planning within the province. The SDG Commitment of the Neuquén, Argentina Initiative will help reduce GHG emissions, improve air quality, and create more sustainable and livable cities for a greener urban future. The project is expected to result in an estimated 41,682 tonnes of CO₂-equivalent emissions avoided.

UN-Habitat and the Ministry of Climate Change in Pakistan and the Cabinet Secretary in Kenya are collaborating to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the New Urban Agenda (NUA). The project is expected to result in an estimated 41,682 tonnes of CO₂-equivalent emissions avoided. The initiative focuses on developing participatory municipal plans, while others are making progress in the evaluation of public spaces. The project is expected to benefit over 80,000 beneficiaries, including poor informal settlements in Karachi. Promoting low-carbon housing, energy-efficient streetlights, and renewable energy electrification in Karachi are expected to help reduce GHG emissions, improve air quality, and create more sustainable and livable cities for a greener urban future. The initiative engaged 39 provincial entities, 31 civil society organizations, and private sector entities, ultimately providing training to over 600 individuals. The project is expected to result in an estimated 59,300 tonnes of CO₂-equivalent emissions avoided, which is a significant contribution to the global effort to combat climate change. UN-Habitat supports Pakistan to become an engine of climate innovation and action. The initiative focuses on developing participatory municipal plans, while others are making progress in the evaluation of public spaces. "Sustainable Cities: A New Urban Agenda for the Province of Neuquén, Argentina" is a transformative initiative led by UN agencies such as UN-Habitat, UNOPS, and UN Women supported by the Federal Investment Council, CFI Argentina. The project aims to strengthen inclusive, integrated, and sustainable urban planning within the province. The SDG Commitment of the Neuquén, Argentina Initiative will help reduce GHG emissions, improve air quality, and create more sustainable and livable cities for a greener urban future. The project is expected to result in an estimated 41,682 tonnes of CO₂-equivalent emissions avoided.