



**UNITED  
NATIONS**

**HSP/EB.2024/7**



**UN-HABITAT**

**United Nations  
Human Settlements  
Programme**

Distr.: General  
23 February 2024  
Original: English

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**Executive Board of the United Nations  
Human Settlements Programme  
First session of 2024**

Nairobi, 6–8 May 2024

Item 8 of the provisional agenda

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

## **Report of the Executive Director on the status of preparations for the twelfth session of the World Urban Forum**

### **I. Introduction**

1. One of the key roles of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) is to mobilize 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 (WUF) has become the primary knowledge, advocacy, and partnership platform for urban transformation, bringing together leading urban actors to address the most pressing issues relating to urbanization and its impact on cities, communities, economies, and the environment. Participants range from international organizations, governments (local, national, regional), civil society, grassroots communities, private sector, and academia.

2. The Forum allows UN-Habitat to strengthen its global mandate, achieve expected results and leverage action towards implementation of the New Urban Agenda, and the Sustainable Development Goals. The WUF is also recognized in the UN-Habitat strategic plan for the period 2020–2025 as a key vehicle for strengthening collaboration and partnerships with diverse stakeholders.

3. UN-Habitat will also continue to advocate and track progress for the commitments included in the Katowice Declared Actions<sup>1</sup>, 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 from 4 to 8 November 2024, at the Egypt International Exhibition Centre, in the city of Cairo, Arab republic of Egypt. In preparation, UN-Habitat has been working with Member States, local governments, and stakeholders to ensure wide consultation on the background paper, programme, and engagement opportunities.

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

5. The revised WUF programme design, as updated during the 3<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Executive Board 2023 is now being finalised by UN-Habitat's programme review committee.
6. The theme of the twelfth session is “**It all starts at home: Local actions for sustainable cities and communities.**” WUF12 will focus on localizing the Sustainable Development Goals and on the local actions and initiatives required to curb the current global challenges affecting the daily life of people, including unaffordable housing, rising living costs, climate change, the lack of basic services, and ongoing conflicts.
7. WUF12 will also follow up on actions commitments and Pact for the Future of the General Assembly's Summit of the Future in September 2024, convened by the President of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) during its 78th session, aimed at accelerating efforts to meet our existing international commitments, and taking concrete steps to respond to emerging challenges and opportunities. The Forum will also present the World Cities Report 2024 on Cities and Climate Action.
8. To ensure that the World Urban Forum remains inclusive, the first draft of the WUF12 background paper developed via expert group workshops. At the expert group meetings on the background paper, 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.
9. A first draft was shared with the host country, and Member States on the 22 January 2024, and subsequently to external partners through the UN-Habitat Stakeholder Advisory Group Enterprise (SAGE). All feedback was received by 02 February 2024, collated, and incorporated into the final version of the Background paper now available at the WUF12 website. UN-Habitat has consulted on the Background paper with all permanent missions as well as with an estimated 2600 partner organisations.
10. The UN-Habitat Taskforce on WUF12, was inaugurated on 19 December 2023, and held a second session on the 30 January 2024. It has been providing guidance on all aspects of the preparatory process and will be meeting recurrently on a monthly basis.
11. The final WUF12 logo has been co-developed between the host country and UN-Habitat, and was completed in January 2024, formally paving way for branding and development of advocacy materials.
12. On the 01 February 2024, the WUF12 registration process was opened. This was officially communicated to Member states and broadcasted to all partners on the UN-Habitat website. The World Urban Forum Coordination team conducted two information sessions aimed at amplifying the call for registration and general preparatory updates, for internal and external partners on 18 January and 08 February 2024 respectively. The registration is being contacted through the UN-Habitat Global Events Management System (GEMS). The registration for participation will remain open until 30 October 2024 at 6 p.m. (UTC+02:00).
13. The partner-led events opened on the 20 February and closed on the 15 April 2024. The partner-event selection committees have been nominated by the WUF12 taskforce, trained on GEMS, and are currently undertaking the review of all events submitted. The outcome of the selection shall be communicated to all organizers from 31 May 2024.
14. On WUF12 programme, the Main Sessions will be curated by UN-Habitat and facilitated by thought leaders and high-profile experts. They will include an opening and closing session, dialogues, assemblies, roundtables, and special sessions. The Main Sessions will be curated to showcase examples, practices, and concrete solutions that can display positive and transformative impact. Closely linked to the theme, six dialogue areas have been identified. The dialogues will structure WUF12 events and serve as conceptual anchors for activities and discussions. They are curated by UN-Habitat and facilitated by global thought leaders and experts.
  - **Dialogue 1, “Housing our future,”** opens with one of the most important challenges for cities and communities: adequate housing. This dialogue explores solutions to the decades-long and ever-growing housing crisis and rising inequalities that spur from it, including opportunities for a renewed social contract.
  - **Dialogue 2, “Cities and the climate crisis”** addresses the pressing challenge of climate change and cities, emphasizing the importance of localized adaptation, mitigation, and resilience in ensuring that urban areas can thrive in a future with unprecedented climatic conditions.

- **Dialogue 3, “Stronger together,”** shifts focus to strategies essential for partnerships to bridge global goals with local realities, highlighting the power of collaboration in driving localized progress.
- **Dialogue 4, “Financing localization and localizing finance”** explores the importance of financial empowerment, examining mechanisms to ensure that resources are readily accessible at the local level to fuel sustainable development and localization.
- **Dialogue 5, “Putting people first in a digital era”** ventures into the sphere of digital technology and innovation, and its potential to drive localized solutions and promote inclusive development, while noting the risks posed to cities and communities.
- **Lastly, Dialogue 6, “The loss of home,”** invites reflections on the meaning of "home" amid urban crises, examining how urban stakeholders, communities and authorities respond to turmoil.

15. The five-day event will end with the Cairo Declared Actions, where representatives from all stakeholder groups will bring recommendations for further discussion and implementation back to their respective homes. These actions are anticipated to build on commitments from the September 2024 Summit of the Future in New York and contribute to commitments at the November 2024 UN Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC COP 29) in Baku, Azerbaijan. This process is expected to provide messaging for the 2025 World Social Summit in New York, coinciding with the 30th anniversary of the 1995 World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, a significant milestone in sustainable development history.

16. Looking forward, UN-Habitat will focus on regional mobilization through a wide array of advocacy platforms which include but not limited to multi-level urban forums, Urban October, HLPF, seventy eighth session of UNGA, and other partner-led advocacy platforms. With regards to Multi-level Urban Forums, UN-Habitat has developed a practical guide on how to leverage urban forums to advocate for policy formulation, review, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, which is now available in the UN-Habitat website.

17. UN-Habitat has also started working with the host city to realize the legacy initiatives of the twelfth session. The Government of Egypt and the Governorate of Cairo, with support from UN-Habitat, have begun to undertake a programme that shall see the curation of “Cairo’s Urban Week” in the lead up to WUF12, as a demonstration of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda at the local level.

18. The WUF12 program and participation model aim to enhance accessibility and inclusivity, building on achievements from WUF11 in Katowice. An UN-Habitat team planned inclusive events management in Cairo in anticipation of continued support for accessibility in UN conferences. Egypt commits to meeting all logistical requirements, ensuring 100% universal accessibility, sign language, real-time captioning, and live streaming. UN-Habitat, the host country, and the host city are committed to ensuring WUF12 is inclusive, accessible, sustainable, and digitally available to all.