



Expression of interest

Global Observance of World Cities Day 2025

30 November 2023

Background

UN-Habitat is inviting cities to express their interest in hosting the Global Observance of World Cities Day for 2025.

World Cities Day was established on 27 December 2013 by General Assembly resolution A/RES/68/239 in which the General Assembly “decides to designate 31 October, beginning in 2014, as World Cities Day,” and “invites States, the United Nations system, in particular UN-Habitat, relevant international organizations, civil society and all relevant stakeholders to observe and raise awareness of the Day and stresses that the costs of all activities that may arise from observing the Day should be met from voluntary contributions.”

World Cities Day is an annual occasion to promote and inspire action around sustainable urbanization by advancing international cooperation, celebrating successes, maximizing the opportunities, and addressing the challenges in innovation, technology, and investment created by the fast global pace of urbanization, among others, as well as addressing the challenges of urbanization such as housing, climate change, equitable access to basic services, security, and decent jobs. More information is available at <https://urbanoctober.unhabitat.org/wcd>.

The enduring theme of World Cities Day is “Better City, Better Life”. Each year a different topic of focus is chosen and a host city for the Global Observance is selected.

The first global celebration of World Cities Day was in Shanghai, China, on 31 October 2014, under the theme “Leading Urban Transformations”. In 2015, the theme was “Designed to Live Together” in Milan, Italy; in 2016, “Inclusive Cities, Shared Development” in Quito, Ecuador; in 2017, “Innovative Governance, Open Cities” in Guangzhou, China; in 2018, “Building Sustainable and Resilient Cities” in Liverpool, United Kingdom; in 2019, “Innovations and Better Life for Future Generations” in Ekaterinburg, Russian Federation; in 2020, “Valuing our Communities and Cities” in Nakuru, Kenya; in 2021, “Adapting Cities for Climate Resilience” in Luxor, Egypt; in 2022 “Act Local to Go Global” in Shanghai, China; and in 2023, “Financing Sustainable Urban Future For All” in Istanbul, Türkiye.

World Cities Day has been strongly supported by the People’s Republic of China through the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development and Shanghai Municipality.

UN-Habitat is inviting cities to express their interest in hosting the Global Observance of World Cities Day on Friday, 31 October 2025.

Objective

World Cities Day aims to raise international awareness of urbanization trends, challenges, and visions for sustainable urban development, promote international cooperation, and contribute to global efforts to build equitable, prosperous, sustainable, and inclusive cities that provide their communities with better living environments and quality of life.

Participation

UN-Habitat takes the lead in inviting and mobilizing the United Nations system, international organizations, civil society, and other relevant stakeholders to observe World Cities Day.

The host city and country of the Global Observance work with partners and UN-Habitat to organize the main event programme. The host may invite other stakeholders in the country and region such as ministers and mayors to take part and support the Global Observance. The general public in the city, country, and globally will be encouraged to get involved, including through global platforms on social media and live streaming.



The host provides a financial contribution to UN-Habitat for the mobilization of the international community and other stakeholders to ensure that the event receives global visibility.

Details on commitments, roles, and responsibilities of UN-Habitat and the host are outlined in a contribution agreement which will be signed by all parties involved.

Financial contribution

To hold the Global Observance of World Cities Day in 2025, the host is required to provide a cash contribution of USD 400,000 (United States Dollars Four Hundred Thousand) to UN-Habitat.

The contribution is used for planning, mobilizing stakeholders, outreach activities, website, social media, design, communication, editing, programme development, operations support, live streaming on UN Web TV, reporting, and evaluation as well as for the participation of UN-Habitat and other United Nations staff, international experts, and high-level guest and delegates from least developed countries. Ultimately, the contribution supports the overall advocacy and communication of World Cities Day within the framework of Urban October.

The host is required to provide an in-kind contribution consisting of the venue and its facilities; exhibition space; IT and other services; security within the city and around and within the venue; interpretation; and operational and logistical needs along with respective human resources (for more information, see Annex 1).

Selection process and application questions

The selection of the host will be made by a UN-Habitat internal committee guided by the principle of regional rotation and response to the following application questions:

- Provide examples of good practice within the host country and city on issues relating to the themes of World Cities Day
- Provide a short synopsis of the range of in-country programme or activities the country intends to roll out to celebrate World Cities Day nationally and the involvement of other countries within the region on the main day
- State experience of hosting international events, including events relevant to cities
- Advise on accessibility of the city/country for international delegates
- Confirm whether resources are available to provide the cash contribution of USD 400,000 (United States Dollars Four Hundred Thousand) to UN-Habitat and in addition to fund in-country activities, necessary premises, and requirements (see Annex I with responsibilities of the host)
- Provide the name of the city or ministry or office presenting the government's expression of interest with inclusion of contact details.

Theme

The general theme of World Cities Day is “Better City, Better Life”.

The theme of World Cities Day 2025 will be linked to people-centred smart cities. It will showcase how data-driven decision-making, technology, and AI can be used to improve urban life and recover from current shocks and crises. It will also focus on promoting smart city initiatives centred on people.

Activities

Activities related to the Global Observance will be developed in line with available human and financial resources from the voluntary contribution by the host. A programme will be jointly developed with the host. UN-Habitat will provide branded online advocacy tools and kits to support mobilization of partners and maximize outreach. Details of planned World Cities Day activities taking place around the world will be uploaded by UN-Habitat on its website and social media sites and the host and partners will be encouraged to publicize their activities widely.

Timeframe

The closing date for receiving the Expression of Interest to host World Cities Day 2025 is 31 March 2024. The table below outlines important milestones and dates.

Milestones	Dates
Call for Expression of Interest opened	November 2023
Call for Expression of Interest closed	31 March 2024
Outcome of selection process is communicated to cities	from 30 May 2024
Legal agreement finalized and signed (prerequisite for making an official announcement)	July 2024
Announcement of the host for the Global Observance of World Cities Day for 2025	To be agreed

Expression of Interest to host the Global Observance of World Cities Day in 2025

A city or country wishing to express its interest to officially host the Global Observance of World Cities Day is required to respond to the application questions and send an official communication in English on an organizational letterhead with an authorized signature addressed to the UN-Habitat Executive Director.

The official communication is to be transmitted within the deadline via the following email address:
unhabitat-wcd@un.org.

Any submission that does not meet the criteria, or not on official letterhead and duly signed, or received after the deadline, will not be considered.

Annex 1

Hosting the Global Observance of World Cities Day

The specific responsibilities of UN-Habitat will be as follows:

UN-Habitat will designate a focal point to work with the local focal point and organizing team.

UN-Habitat shall provide the necessary backstopping and support to ensure the successful hosting of the event by undertaking the following tasks:

1. Advice and support to operations and logistics

- Give guidance to the host on the preparation of the Global Observance of World Cities Day;
- Assist with invitations of international guests;
- Support logistics and travel arrangements relating to invited and sponsored international guests from outside the host country;
- Handle online registration of international participants;
- Engage with the host to agree on the venue and setting up of the same according to requirements;
- Shipment of information and promotional materials to the venue;
- Maintain the database and disseminate all international invitations.

2. Invitations

- Invite high-level representatives of the United Nations system and relevant international organizations, civil society, representatives of Member States, mayors, and other relevant stakeholders;
- Invite representatives of the diplomatic community;
- Disseminate all international invitation letters, which could be jointly signed.

UN-Habitat shall invite United Nations officials, mayors outside the host country, internationally recognized organizations and experts, representatives of foreign missions, and other partners in close collaboration and consultation with the host of the event. The host shall invite to the event, in close collaboration with UN-Habitat, the highest possible representative from the host government and representatives from ministries responsible for various aspects of urbanization including ministries of local governments, housing, infrastructure, urban development, regional planning and environment, and local experts, among others.

Where possible, the invitation will be jointly signed by UN-Habitat and the hosting entity using electronic signatures for this purpose only. The parties will consult and agree on whether the electronic signature of the host will be provided to UN-Habitat for purpose of signing the joint invitation letter.

3. Publicity

- Prepare online information kits and branding tools, a World Cities Day concept note, relevant statements, design posters and banners, invitation letters, and the programme of the day;
- Provide information to governments and stakeholders on the theme and location of World Cities Day through the Executive Director of UN-Habitat;
- Advertise World Cities Day global celebration events around the world through all available means, including targeted newsletters, social media, and internet adverts;

- Prepare and disseminate press releases and bring the event to the attention of the international media;
- Develop a dedicated World Cities Day page on the UN-Habitat Urban October website, in English;
- Streaming of the celebrations via UN Web TV.

4. Programme

- Provide guidance on the main programme for the Global Observance of World Cities Day;
- Provide guidance on the programme of side events, workshops, roundtables, breakout session at the venue on the day, or if applicable in the period leading up to and immediately after World Cities Day.

The specific responsibilities of the host will be as follows:

1. The host will designate a focal point and organizing team who will be working with UN-Habitat;
2. The host shall provide UN-Habitat with the list of international participants whom the host wishes to invite to the Event for onward dissemination by UN-Habitat;
3. The host may invite all identified personalities, i.e. mayors or experts from the host city to attend the event while sharing contacts with UN-Habitat;
4. The host shall invite representatives of the diplomatic community in the host country;
5. The host shall provide UN-Habitat with financial support of a minimum of 400,000 USD (United States Dollars Four Hundred Thousand) 30 days after the legal agreement has been finalized for the support provided by UN-Habitat for the event hosted in 2025;
6. The host shall provide all required logistical and IT services for a stable Wi-Fi connection within the venue and cover all local costs related to the preparation and organization of the Global Observance of World Cities Day;
7. The host shall, at no cost to UN-Habitat, provide the necessary material and logistical support, including printing of merchandise, printing of badges, and provision of an agreed number of photographers and videographers for the event;
8. The host shall, at no cost to UN-Habitat, provide the necessary premises for the event and related activities, which shall take place in the host city, including the conference and workshops rooms, working areas, office space and equipment, and media and press conference rooms;
9. The host shall ensure stable Wi-Fi connection at no cost throughout the venue, including all premises dedicated to the event, for all participants, and provide internet high-speed LAN connection to enable linking to other locations via the internet for live transmission, as well as all technical equipment for live streaming via UN Web TV, Zoom, or similar software. It shall further make arrangements to provide free interpretation services (including equipment) to all event meetings in English and the other five official UN languages (Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian and Spanish) and local language if different from English. The host shall make available, as appropriate and for the opening and closing sessions, other language(s) in case of high-level attendance from a specific country. The host is also required to provide international sign language in English to make the event fully inclusive;
10. The host shall work in partnership with UN-Habitat in all aspects related to the realization of the event and will provide at no cost to UN-Habitat a venue, which should be accessible for persons with disabilities, for the celebration of the Global Observance of World Cities Day with the following facilities:
 - Main hall for the celebration of the Global Observance with sufficient seating for invited guests and a raised podium for speakers;
 - At least two, and up to four rooms for roundtables, technical discussions or side events at the venue – if this is included in the day's programme – with live streaming capacity via UN Web TV, as well as Zoom or similar software;
 - Press conference room;

- Photography and video coverage of the event and other bilateral meetings of the Executive Director with dedicated photographer;
 - Space for the exhibition;
 - Registration, information desk and branded photo wall;
 - An office, with front office and waiting area, for use by the UN-Habitat Executive Director for bilateral meetings, set up with executive furniture (desk, swivel chair, sofa set/chairs, coffee table) for meetings with up to six people including coffee/tea/snacks served throughout;
 - An office with similar setup as the Executive Director's in case of a confirmed high-level guest;
 - A designated suitable car with driver for the Executive Director for the duration of event;
 - An office for UN-Habitat staff (eight people) with a large boardroom table and three to four offices for four people each (with stationery and printer) including coffee, tea and snacks served throughout;
 - An office for host and other UN-Habitat staff and a dedicated office for UN Web TV staff (all with standard setup);
 - Lunch for invited guests and international guests, and refreshments (e.g. water) during meetings; coffee/tea snacks during breaks;
 - Public announcement system and equipment for PowerPoint, video presentations and internet connectivity in each room;
 - World Cities Day branding throughout the venue and built as backdrop in the main hall and other rooms;
 - Security for delegates;
 - Five flag poles with the provision of UN flag and country flag, especially if a minister (or higher) from the host country is in attendance.
11. The host shall provide adequate medical facilities with English/local language speaking personnel for first aid in case of emergency within the event's area. For serious emergencies, the host shall ensure immediate transportation and admission to a hospital. All medical expenses incurred thereafter shall be borne by participants. UN-Habitat as an invitee to the event shall not in any way be liable for any medical expenses of any participant;
 12. The host shall ensure the availability of adequate public or private transportation on a reasonable commercial basis for all the event's participants and UN-Habitat officials to and from the airport before, during and after the event, as well as to and from the principals' hotels and event premises for the duration of the event;
 13. The host shall ensure the availability of adequate hotel accommodation on a reasonable commercial basis for all event participants;
 14. The host is committed to implementing the activities and providing the services outlined under the agreement through its organizational structure and by using appointed professionals in accordance with its specific needs as identified by the host;
 15. The host shall engage and provide, at its expense, local staff and volunteers, who will work in close collaboration with the staff of UN-Habitat and under the overall coordination of the Executive Director of UN-Habitat or persons designated by them;
 16. The host shall ensure that local staff shall be available for work throughout the entire period of the event and, where necessary, before the event;
 17. The host may, at the request of the Executive Director of UN-Habitat or any person designated by them, arrange for additional numbers of local staff as may be required by UN-Habitat;
 18. The host may put up street banners and branding at strategic locations.