



UN-HABITAT

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FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

PRESS RELEASE

“We need a new approach to managing cities” — UN-Habitat presents Annual Report 2023

Nairobi, 16 May 2024 — UN-Habitat released its Annual Report for 2023, revealing the critical need for cities and local leaders to stand at the forefront of crises such as climate change, conflict, and economic instability.

With more than 70 per cent of the global Gross Domestic Product coming from urban areas, the report reveals the immense power of cities in driving progress and creating solutions. The report also reveals a need for transformation due to deepening inequalities and overlapping challenges facing cities, such as rising living costs, unaffordable housing, and the lack of basic services. These challenges, in addition to more frequent and severe climate shocks and compounded with economic challenges, continuously lead to devastating consequences for the most vulnerable.

The report highlights critical issues cities faced in 2023, including 3.5 billion people lacking safely managed sanitation services, 2.8 billion people affected by housing inadequacy (including 1.1 billion people living in slums and informal settlements), and 2.2 billion people lacking safely managed drinking water services.

“The traditional paradigms of urban development no longer fit the complexities of today’s world. We need a new approach to planning, building, and managing cities,” said Michal Mlynár, United Nations Assistant Secretary-General and Acting Executive Director of UN-Habitat. “In line with our strategic plan, UN-Habitat works to reduce inequality, promote prosperity, act for climate and nature, and respond to crises, providing a foundation to approach these global challenges, which is needed now more than ever.”

Working with partners in over 90 countries and with funding from over 100 donors, UN-Habitat’s impact in 2023 included:

- 958,000 people benefiting from improved connectivity and green mobility
- 395,000 people benefiting from the rehabilitation of 40 public spaces globally
- Over 280,000 people in poor and vulnerable communities gaining increased access to basic services and sustainable mobility
- Over 88,000 households in partner countries with increased secure tenure rights to land documentation
- 162 countries reporting having national-level urban policies.

- 25 countries supported in collecting data on the Sustainable Development Goals and implementing the globally harmonized approach to defining cities and human settlements endorsed by the UN statistical commission in 2020.

2023 also saw the second United Nations Habitat Assembly reaffirming UN-Habitat's commitment to adequate housing as a fundamental human right by adopting a historical resolution on housing, in addition to nine other resolutions notably aimed at transforming informal settlements, accelerating localization of the Sustainable Development Goals, preserving urban biodiversity, and crafting guidelines for people-centred smart cities.

“Our future is undeniably urban, and the time for action is now. By strengthening the voices of cities in global discourse and driving change on the ground, we lay the groundwork for a more equitable and sustainable world,” said Michal Mlynár.

Looking ahead, UN-Habitat will continue to work with Member States to integrate the perspectives of local and regional governments, notably into the UN Summit of the Future, to be held in September 2024. The twelfth session of the World Urban Forum, to be convened by UN-Habitat in November 2024, will amplify this message with the theme ‘It all starts at home: Local actions for sustainable cities and communities.’

DOWNLOAD THE REPORT

<https://unhabitat.org/annual-report-2023-local-action-in-a-time-of-crises>

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About UN-Habitat

UN-Habitat is the United Nations entity responsible for sustainable urbanization. It has programmes in over 90 countries supporting policymakers and communities to create socially and environmentally sustainable cities and towns. UN-Habitat promotes transformative change in cities through knowledge, policy advice, technical assistance, and collaborative action. To know more, visit unhabitat.org or follow us on X @UNHABITAT.

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