



Expression of Interest

Global Observances of World Habitat Day and World Cities Day in 2026

September 2024

Introduction

UN-Habitat is inviting countries to express their interest in hosting the Global Observances of World Habitat Day and/or World Cities Day in 2026.

Background

World Habitat Day (WHD) was established in 1985 by General Assembly resolution 40/202 and first celebrated in 1986. The purpose of World Habitat Day is to reflect on the state of our towns and cities, and on the basic right of all to adequate shelter. It is celebrated on the first Monday of October each year.

World Habitat Day focuses on inspiring all levels of governments and other stakeholders to raise international awareness of urbanization trends, challenges, visions and sustainable solutions or best practices and to remind the world that we all have the power and the responsibility to shape the future of our cities and towns with a better living environments and quality of life. This includes action to advance the New Urban Agenda and the urban dimensions of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG11 which aims to make cities and human settlements safe, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable.

World Cities Day (WCD) was designated by the United Nations in 2013 by General Assembly resolution 68/239 to be observed annually every 31 October. The resolution 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. The general theme of World Cities Day is Better City, Better Life, while each year a different sub-theme is selected.

World Cities Day has been strongly supported by the People's Republic of China through the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development and the Shanghai Municipality and the first global celebration of the World Cities Day was in Shanghai, China on 31 October 2014, under the sub-theme Leading Urban Transformations.

UN-Habitat Scroll of Honour Award

A major highlight of World Habitat Day is the presentation of the UN-Habitat **Scroll of Honour award** to recognize best urban practices. Launched in 1989, the UN-Habitat Scroll of Honour Award is one of the most prestigious human settlements awards in the world. It celebrates initiatives which have made outstanding contributions such as actions to improve affordable housing and equitable access to basic services, climate change mitigation initiatives, and those to provide better livelihoods for the vulnerable including the displaced and people living in poverty in cities, towns and human settlements. The award is given to a maximum of five winners each year, following a call for nominations by UN-Habitat.

In addition to the UN-Habitat Scroll of Honour Award, the host is encouraged to use the occasion of the Global Observance to recognize best urban practices and promote significant new urban policies, programmes and initiatives towards sustainable urbanization in the country.

Theme

Each year a particular theme is selected by UN-Habitat for each of the days to highlight an aspect of sustainable urbanization as well as to encourage the sharing of global and local actions and innovations by partners to improve the quality of lives in urban areas and human settlements. The host is encouraged to use the occasion of each of the Global Observance to recognize best urban practices and promote significant new urban policies, programmes and initiatives towards sustainable urbanization in the country.

While urban communities around the world are encouraged to celebrate World Habitat Day and World Cities Day using the [Urban October](#), there is a particular focus on the theme of each of the Global Observances for national, local and city celebrations.

The topic of the 2026 World Habitat Day and World Cities Day will be related to “Adequate Housing for All”. The global housing crisis whereby an estimated 2.8 billion people face various forms of housing inadequacy, in which close to 1.1 billion reside in slums and informal settlements, calls for urgent and scaled action at all levels. World Habitat Day and World Cities Day will consider how to realize the ambition of ensuring access to adequate housing and basic services for all as a corner stone of achieving the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda.

Objective

Both Global Observances aim to raise international awareness of urbanization trends, challenges, visions and sustainable solutions in urban development. They promote international cooperation and contribute to global efforts to build equitable, prosperous sustainable inclusive cities that provide their communities with better living environments and quality of life and to remind the world that we all have the power and the responsibility to shape the future of our cities and towns.

Participation in the Global Observance

Each day is celebrated with high level attendance from the international community, United Nations agencies, host country, theme specialists and other partners. UN-Habitat will take the lead in inviting governments and in mobilizing the United Nations system at high level, international organizations, civil society, academics and other relevant stakeholders to attend the Global Observances. The host city/country will take the lead in inviting governments at high level, special guest, stakeholders and experts in the region, as well as ministers and mayors. The general public in the city, country and globally will be encouraged to get involved, including through global platforms, social media and live streaming.

More information on past World Habitat Day and World Cities Day Global Observations is available on the [Urban October](#) website.

Activities and Programme

Activities related to the Global Observance will be developed in line with available human and financial resources from the voluntary contribution by the host. The host country is encouraged to provide examples of good practice within the host country and cities on issues relating to the themes of day during the thematic discussion after the high-level opening ceremony. 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 activities taking place around the world will be uploaded by UN-Habitat on the World Habitat Day and World Cities Day website, social media sites and the host will be encouraged to publicize their activities widely.

Financial contribution

To host the Global Observance of World Cities Day or World Habitat Day in 2026 the host country is required to provide a minimum cash contribution of USD 500,000 (United States Dollars Five Hundred Thousand) for each of the days, or the total amount of minimum of USD 1,000,000 (United States Dollars One Million) for hosting both days to UN-Habitat.

The cash 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 and Zoom connection, reporting, and evaluation as well as for the participation of UN-Habitat and other UN staff, international experts, high-level guest and delegates from least developed countries and the UN-Habitat Scroll of Honour Award winners. Ultimately it supports the overall advocacy and communication of both days within the framework of Urban October.

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

Timeframe

The table below outlines important milestones and dates.

Milestones	Date
Call for Expression of Interest open	September 2024
Deadline for receiving Expressions of Interest	31 March 2025
Outcome of selection process is communicated	May 2025
Legal agreement finalized and signed (prerequisite for making an official announcement)	July 2025
Announcement of the hosts for the Global Observances of World Habitat Day and World Cities Day for 2026	To be agreed

Selection Process and Criteria

The selection of the host will be made by an UN-Habitat internal committee guided by the response to the following application questions:

1. Provide examples of good practice within the host country and city related to sustainable urbanization and the theme;
2. Provide a short synopsis of the range of in-country programme or activities the country intends to roll out to celebrate the day nationally and the involvement of other countries within the region on the main day;
3. State experience of hosting international events including events relevant to urban issues;
4. Advise on accessibility of the city/country for international delegates;
5. State which day the host expresses its interest for or state that it is for both Global observances in 2026 with stating the respective city or cities for hosting the day;
6. Confirm whether resources are available to provide the cash contribution of minimum USD 500,000 (United States Dollars Five Hundred Thousand) for hosting one Global observance or a minimum USD 1,000,000 (United States Dollars One Million) for hosting both days to UN-Habitat in addition to the commitment of funds for in-country activities, necessary premises and requirements (see Annex I with responsibilities of the host);

7. State willingness to sign the necessary agreement within 3 months of the official response from UN-Habitat to the Expression of Interest letter from the Government and agree not to officially announce hosting the day(s) before the necessary agreement is signed.
8. Provide the name of the city or ministry or office presenting the expression of interest with inclusion of contact details.

Expression of Interest to host the Global Observances

A country wishing to submit an offer to officially host the Global Observances of World Cities Day and/or World Habitat Day in 2026 is required to send an official communication with responding to the application questions in English on an official letterhead with an authorized signature addressed to Ms. Anacláudia Rossbach, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director, UN-Habitat.

The official communication is to be transmitted within the deadline via the following email address:

unhabitat-events@un.org copy unhabitat-cos@un.org.

Any offer that does not meet the guiding principles, or not on official letterhead and duly signed will not be considered.

Annex 1

Hosting the Global Observances

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 each 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 registration 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 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 the day through the Executive Director of UN-Habitat;
- Advertise both 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 and World Habitat Day page on the UN-Habitat Urban October website, in English;
- Streaming of the celebrations via UN Web TV and Zoom (or similar platform).

4. Programme

- Provide guidance on the main programme for the Global Observance of the 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 day.

5. Branding and Design

- Provide branding guidelines for outreach purposes, delegates bags, presents, badges and other materials as required and requested by the host;
- Provide branding designs for offices, roll-up and other areas in the venue for the day;
- Design and layout of programme, concept note, and other information material, i.e. social media cards, etc.
- Assist the host in any other branding or design aspects in relation to the Global Observances.

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 with UN-Habitat;
3. The host may invite all identified personalities, i.e. mayors or experts from the host country, or neighbouring countries to attend the event while sharing the list 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 USD 500,000 (United States Dollars Five Hundred Thousand) for hosting one Global observance or a minimum of USD 1,000,000 (United States Dollars One Million) for hosting both days 30 days after the legal agreement has been finalized for the support provided by UN-Habitat for the events;
6. 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;
7. The host shall, at no cost to UN-Habitat, provide local transport for staff, 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;
8. The host shall provide all required logistical and IT services to 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;
9. 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 Observances 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 desk with printing badges, 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 including coffee, tea and snacks served throughout;
 - Three to four offices for four people each (with stationery and printer) including coffee, tea and snacks served throughout;
 - A dedicated office for UN Web TV staff (all with standard setup and requirements as will be informed);
 - Lunch for invited guests and international guests, and refreshments (e.g. water) during meetings; coffee/tea snacks during breaks;
 - Dinner or reception as decided by the host
 - Public announcement system and equipment for PowerPoint, video presentations and internet connectivity in each room;
 - Branding about the days 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.
10. 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;
 11. 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;
 12. The host shall ensure the availability of adequate hotel accommodation on a reasonable commercial basis for all event participants;
 13. 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;
 14. 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;
 15. 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;
 16. 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;
 17. The host shall brand the venue of the day, the city at strategic locations and airport with a welcome desk provision;
 18. The host shall produce at no cost to UN-Habitat the UN-Habitat Scroll of Honour Award Plaque for those winners who travel to the World Habitat Day Global Observance;
 19. The host shall provide necessary support at the airport with arriving and departing guest and provide standard protocol support for high level attendees – also as informed by UN-Habitat.