

# **Draft summary of the special events during the resumed second session of the UN-Habitat Assembly**

**29-30 May 2025**

## **1. Special Event: Press Briefing on Urban Climate and Environment – Roadmap to COP30 and WUF13**

### **a. Introduction to the Special event**

In the lead-up to COP30 (November 2025) and WUF13 (May 2026), UN-Habitat and partners hosted a press briefing on major urban climate and environment milestones. Cities and communities are on the frontlines of climate change, bearing significant impacts but also offering immense opportunities for mitigation and adaptation. As cities confront overlapping crises, from climate impacts to housing and inequality, the need for integrated, locally grounded solutions is more urgent than ever. A strong urban component is essential for effective global climate action.

The press briefing showcased what UN-Habitat and partners are doing to ensure a strengthened institutional framework for urbanization and multilevel climate action. Key updates were shared by members of the Baku Continuity Coalition, comprised of hosts of past and future COP Ministerial Meetings on Urbanization and Climate Change, including efforts to strengthen the urban dimension of the NDCs 3.0, UN-Habitat's and UNEP's leadership also announced priority actions under the renewed Greener Cities Partnership, focused on low emission and resilient buildings, inclusive infrastructure, and biodiverse urban planning. Co-led by the COP29 and COP30 Presidencies, the session provided partners and participants with early insights into how cities and partners are moving from commitment to implementation within the UNFCCC and WUF processes.

### **b. Panel Discussion (if applicable)**

The following panelists were present at the event:

- Ms. Anacláudia Rossbach, Executive Director, UN-Habitat (moderator)
- Ms. Inger Andersen, Executive Director, UNEP, represented by Martin Krause, Director, Climate Change Division, UNEP
- H.E. Mr. Anar Guliyev, Chairman of the State Committee on Urban Planning and Architecture (SCUPA) and WUF13 National Coordinator, Republic of Azerbaijan – COP29
- Dr. Abdelkhalek Ibrahim, Senior Minister Assistant, Ministry of Housing, Egypt – COP27 – SURGe
- H.E. Mr. Silvio Albuquerque, Ambassador of Brazil and Permanent Representative to UN-Habitat
- [Video message](#): H.E. Mr. André Corrêa do Lago, COP30 president
- [Video message](#): H.E. Mr. Jader Barbalho Filho, Minister of Cities, Brazil
- Mr. Gino van Begin, Secretary General, ICLEI

The panel discussions are summarized as follow:

UNEP and UN-Habitat renewed their long-standing collaboration by launching the Greener Cities Partnership, leveraging their shared Nairobi base and complementary mandates. Their expertise comprise housing, urban basic services, the socio-ecological value of land, sustainable cooling, mobility, urban food systems, and nature-

based solutions. Together, they aim to align efforts in addressing climate and biodiversity challenges in cities, which are both vulnerable and central to the solutions. With strong donor backing, the partnership seeks to scale integrated, low-emissions, and inclusive urban solutions, using platforms like COP and WUF to advance stakeholder engagement and a roadmap for the next phase of the New Urban Agenda.

The importance of continuity and shared learning across COP and WUF processes was emphasized. Recalling the launch of the SURGe Initiative and the first Ministerial Meeting on Urbanization and Climate Change at COP27 and WUF12, panelists called for stronger linkages between technical and financial resources and the need to root climate action in local realities. Panelists reiterated their commitment to the COP29 Multisectoral Action Pathways (MAP) as well as the Baku Continuity Coalition to connect efforts from COP27 through COP30. WUF13 was framed as a key moment to assess mid-term progress on the New Urban Agenda and forge new partnerships.

COP30 was framed as a platform for implementation, with cities at the center. With Belém, in the heart of the Amazon, as the host city, COP30 is guided by *mutirão*, the Indigenous concept of collective effort towards a shared goal. The urgency of climate action was emphasized, and panelists called for inclusion of civil society, Indigenous peoples, and marginalized groups. In a partnership between Brazil, UN-Habitat and ICLEI, a Cities Pavilion is created as a dedicated space for multilevel cooperation, dialogue, and real-life solutions. All levels of government were invited to the next Ministerial Meeting on Urbanization and Climate Change at COP30, and the collective effort of building a profoundly urban and inclusive COP.

The long-standing collaboration between UN-Habitat and ICLEI – and its role in embedding the urban agenda in global frameworks like the Paris Agreement and the SDGs – was reaffirmed. As part of a Local-to-Global COP30 Strategy, ICLEI is mobilizing national action in “Townhall COPs” in 45+ countries and supporting national ministerials on urban climate action. At COP30, panelists committed to advocate for a permanent space dedicated to urban and multilevel action in the climate negotiations. Beyond COP30, it was stressed outcomes need to be integrated into multilateral processes, maintaining momentum across the Rio Conventions, and bringing forward the outcomes from UNHA2 to the Bonn climate talks and Daring Cities.

### **c. Conclusion**

The briefing on urban climate and environment emphasized the urgency of placing cities at the heart of climate and environmental action, highlighting their dual role as both vulnerable hotspots and drivers of solutions. Speakers underscored the need to move from commitments to implementation through integrated, locally driven, inclusive and multi-level approaches. Key announcements included the launch of the Greener Cities Partnership between UNEP and UN-Habitat, the roadmap toward COP30 and WUF13, and initiatives under the Baku Continuity Coalition to sustain the urban momentum across COPs. The session demonstrated a shared commitment to strengthening multilevel collaboration and ensuring that urban priorities are fully embedded in global climate processes.

## **2. Special Event: Quito + 10 towards the High-level meeting of the UN General Assembly on the New Urban Agenda**

### **a. Introduction to the Special event**

#### **Housing at the centre of the NUA**

Realising the vision of the New Urban Agenda and its transformative commitments is not possible without addressing the global housing crisis in which the world finds itself at present. Almost 3 billion people face various forms of housing inadequacy, of which 1.1 billion live in informal settlements and slums, and more than 300 million are homeless. World leaders recommitted to addressing this in the NUA, expressing their intent to “...*foster the progressive realisation of the right to adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living.*” Yet, the magnitude of the housing challenges presents critical barriers to securing a better quality of life for all across cities and communities globally. The mid-term review of the NA is therefore the right moment to revisit commitments to improve access to adequate housing, and to galvanise scaled action and impact from now on.

#### **Objectives**

Drawing on the experiences and insights of Member States with respect to the implementation, monitoring and reporting on the NUA, the event aims to:

- Consider the status of implementation of the NUA and key prospects ahead for acceleration
- Enhance awareness and engagement around the 2026 NUA mid-term review including the quadrennial report of the UN Secretary General and the high-level meeting of the United Nations General Assembly in 2026
- Mobilize and advance National Progress Reports and inputs by Member States for the 2022-2026 reporting cycle
- Consider key opportunities for UN-Habitat’s in supporting the implementation, monitoring and reporting of the NUA

### **b. Panel Discussion**

#### **Panellists:**

1. Mrs. Fatna Chihab, General Secretary of the National Council of Housing, Morocco
2. Hon. Nga Kor Ming, Minister of Housing and Local Government, Malaysia
3. Hon. Thembisile Simelane, Minister of Human Settlements, South Africa
4. Hon. Ellen Olounfe Pratt, Deputy Minister for Urban Affairs, Liberia
5. Hon. Raul Omar Acosta Gregorek, President of the National Institute of Territorial Planning and Urban Planning, Cuba
6. Ms. Anacláudia Roszbach, Executive Director, UN-Habitat
7. Ms. Edlam Yemeru, Director (a.i), External Relations, Strategy, Knowledge and Innovation, UN-Habitat (Moderator)

#### **Main Issues Raised:**

1. Financial constraints
2. Lack of capacity and skills
3. Poor integration with national and international plans
4. Urban financing
5. State policies
6. Natural disasters like cyclones
7. Need for proper collaboration
8. Land allocations

### c. Open Discussions

Member states acknowledged both progress and persistent gaps in achieving their goals and the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. While many countries have made advances in legal reforms, housing provision, and urban planning, widespread housing inadequacy, economic constraints, and implementation challenges continue to limit the full realisation of the NUA. It was highlighted that urbanisation is accelerating, and the future of sustainable development is tied to how cities evolve. As such, integrating the NUA into national development plans, improving multilevel governance, and securing consistent funding and technical capacity were highlighted as urgent needs. A shared sense of urgency shaped the discussions: governments must act now to localise policy, promote inclusive planning, and scale up solutions through cooperation and innovation, because, as emphasised, “the time is now.”

A central theme was the critical importance of housing, not just as a basic need, but as a foundation for all aspects of sustainable urban development. With 3 billion people globally facing housing inadequacy, members stressed that housing must be placed at the heart of the NUA. Examples shared included initiatives to guarantee youth homeownership, policies for land provision at no cost, and targets for large-scale affordable housing developments. Innovative financing models, such as government-backed mortgage guarantees, were seen as essential to improve affordability and access. Some states are also integrating new legislation and rural housing strategies, balancing land efficiency with the need to serve diverse populations. Social housing, in particular, was highlighted as a powerful tool to reduce inequality and bridge rural-urban divides. Across all regions, the call was clear: housing must be recognised as a human right, and efforts to ensure its centrality must be intentional, inclusive, and backed by concrete action.

### d. Conclusion

The session concluded with a strong consensus that the next 10 years of implementing the New Urban Agenda (NUA) must prioritise housing as a central pillar of national and urban development strategies. Emphasis was placed on institutionalising the NUA within national development plans and urban policies, supported by a whole-of-society approach that integrates housing with education, healthcare, and economic systems. Participants highlighted the need for clear goals, sustainable financing, and a people-centred approach to ensure housing provides not only shelter, but also security and resilience in the face of climate change. It was widely agreed that while solutions exist, the challenge lies in scaling them effectively. Collaboration, capacity-building, and the mobilisation of both financial and knowledge resources were identified as fundamental. The session closed with a collective call to action: to act with urgency, build solidarity, and reconvene in 2026 to critically assess progress—because, as reiterated, “the time is now, it’s now or never.”

### e. Quotes

- Ms. Anacláudia Rossbach, Executive Director, UN-Habitat:  
"If we look at our cities today, the challenges we face remain as significant, if not more, compared to 2016 when the world adopted the New Urban Agenda in Quito."  
"We must put housing at the centre of the next 10 years of implementing the New Urban Agenda."
- Hon. Nga Kor Ming (Minister of Housing and Local Government, Malaysia):  
"We believe that we are all stronger together—first together in knowledge, second together in resources, third together in action, and fourth together in tools."  
"We must ensure that all city dwellers have access to a decent home — and it starts with affordability."  
"The time is now. It’s now or never."

- Hon. Ellen Olounfe Pratt (Deputy Minister for Urban Affairs, Liberia):  
 "We need to go beyond policy to actual implementation."  
 "By 2050, 35% of the global youth population will be in Africa. Many of these youth face unemployment, extreme poverty, and are vulnerable to becoming triggers or victims of conflict."  
 "Housing is a key incentive for development. But in most countries, it cannot stand alone without complementary services like education, healthcare, socio-economic development, and especially infrastructure."
- Hon. Thembisile Simelane (Minister of Human Settlements, South Africa):  
 "We need committed areas and leadership to prioritise climate change issues in housing development, particularly on a global scale."  
 "Social housing to close the gap of inequalities."
- Hon. Raul Omar Acosta Gregorek (President of the National Institute of Territorial Planning and Urban Planning, Cuba):  
 "En Cuba adoptamos la Nueva Agenda Urbana como un plan de estado." (In Cuba, the New Urban Agenda is a National Plan)
- Ms. Edlam Yemeru, Director (a.i), External Relations, Strategy, Knowledge and Innovation, UN-Habitat  
 "Future of humanity being Urban"

### **3. Special Event: High-level panel on refugees and urban displacement**

#### **a. Introduction to the Special event**

This High-level panel on refugees and urban displacement launches the collaboration between the World Bank, UNHCR and UN-Habitat to support countries that intend to advance the human settlement approach to promote development and improve the living conditions for refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and host communities. It builds on the 2023 Global Refugee Forum (GRF) pledge and the framework "Towards Inclusive Solutions to Urban Internal Displacement."

The session lays the groundwork to develop and finance solutions at scale for sustainable human settlements in the context of forced displacement, setting out the roadmap leading to the technical Deep Dive taking place in September 2025. The focus is on planning, governance, housing, land, services, and infrastructure to achieve inclusive outcomes.

#### **b. Panel Discussion**

##### **Panelist names:**

- H.E. Ms. Teyiba Hassen, Director General, Refugees and Returnees Service, Government of Ethiopia (virtual)
- Mr. Michal Mlynár, Deputy Executive Director, UN-Habitat
- Ms. Angelica Nunez, Practice Manager Urban/Land, World Bank
- Mr. Sajjad Malik, Director, Division of Resilience and Solutions, UNHCR (virtual)
- H.E. Mr. Elmi Mohamoud Nur, Minister of Public Works, Reconstruction and Housing, Somalia
- H.E. Mr. Said Athman, Housing Secretary, Ministry of Lands, Public Works, Housing and Urban Development, Kenya
- Mr. Filiep Decorte, Emergency Director, UN-Habitat (Moderator)

The panel emphasized the urgent need to reframe displacement as a development challenge rather than solely a humanitarian crisis. This shift in mindset, as underscored by several speakers, allows for the design of transformative and durable solutions that move beyond temporary shelter towards inclusive, climate-resilient, and sustainable urban settlements. The multistakeholder pledge launched at the Global Refugee Forum (GRF) 2023 reflects this new paradigm, integrating climate adaptation, environmental governance, and spatial inclusion into the long-term vision for human settlements. Ethiopia's example was cited, showcasing how refugee camps have been gradually integrated into urban systems, granting displaced populations access to public services, economic inclusion, and enhanced community cohesion through a structured roadmap.

Several speakers highlighted the central role of local governments, despite often lacking the capacity and clear mandates to respond to displacement at scale. The World Bank noted its integrated "people-in-place" approach, combining results-based financing with support to municipalities and private sector incentives, with examples from Uganda and Kenya. This model aligns short-term response with longer-term planning, especially where the fluidity between camps and cities challenges traditional humanitarian boundaries. UNHCR stressed that the millions of forcibly displaced people worldwide cannot be served through emergency response alone and called for early integration of displacement planning into urban development frameworks. Somalia's and Kenyan Ministries presented national strategies that build institutional capacity, equitable service delivery, and economic empowerment for both refugees and host communities. These examples reinforced that durable solutions are not only necessary, but achievable and scalable.

### **c. Open Discussions**

During the open discussion, Ministries from Malawi and Mali echoed these messages, emphasizing the importance of inclusive planning in refugee-hosting urban centers. Malawi reflected on the tension between containment policies and the reality of refugee mobility, committing to exploring urban integration. Mali underlined the need for partnerships with actors like UN-Habitat, the World Bank, and UNHCR to build upon and replicate best practices across the fragile Sahel.

### **d. Conclusion**

The session concluded by recognizing that integrated human settlement approaches in displacement settings are both complex and essential. It emphasized the value of continuous learning, cross-country exchange, and the growing commitment of development actors and governments. As displacement becomes increasingly urban and protracted, panelists called for sustained collaboration and joint responsibility to deliver durable, inclusive, and scalable solutions that meet both immediate needs and long-term aspirations.

## **4. Special Event: UNHA Donor Appreciation & Resource Mobilization Luncheon**

### **a. Introduction to the Special event**

This special donor luncheon was organized to recognize and appreciate the continued commitment of donor countries to the work of UN-Habitat, especially amid the current funding challenges. The event aimed to not only express gratitude for past and ongoing support but also to encourage sustained and expanded collaboration, particularly in addressing the growing urban crisis. It provided an opportunity to reflect on shared achievements and to discuss the path forward for strengthened partnerships in urban development.

The UN-Habitat Executive Director (ED) opened the event by welcoming participants and expressing appreciation for the continued support of donor countries. She acknowledged the importance of UN-Habitat's work amid growing urban crises and highlighted how, despite funding constraints, project teams have worked diligently within limited budgets to deliver results and support national policy development. Underscoring the challenges posed by shifting Official Development Assistance (ODA), she urged donors to stand firm in their commitments: "Yes, it's changing, but we need to overcome, we need donors to step up and fill the gap." She concluded by calling for greater alignment of project portfolios with the new Strategic Plan to ensure a more comprehensive and impactful approach to urban development. Additionally, the Deputy Executive Director delivered a donor landscape presentation, highlighting the importance of being "more nimble and adaptive" in a rapidly changing global environment. He emphasized the need for a balanced funding structure and underscored that *"there is no such thing as a small contribution, every show of support matters"*.

### **b. Panel Discussion**

#### **Panelist:**

- H.E. Ms. Cristina Díaz Fernández-Gil, Ambassador and Permanent Representative, Spain
- H.E. Mr. Anar Guliyev, Chairman of the State Committee on Urban Planning and Architecture of the Republic of Azerbaijan
- H.E. Mr. Silvio Albuquerque, Ambassador and Permanent Representative, Brazil
- Mr. Khaled Saeed AlZahrani, Deputy Ambassador, Saudi Arabia
- Ms. Cerin Kizhakkethottam, (Moderator)

There was a common emphasis on the need for collaboration in supporting UN-Habitat's work, with several countries highlighting the value of aligning efforts across national, regional, and local levels. Across all interventions, there was strong endorsement of the new Strategic Plan and appreciation for UN-Habitat's role in guiding sustainable urban transformation. Azerbaijan highlighted its active engagement through National Urban Forums and expressed a desire to deepen collaboration around future global platforms like the World Urban Forum. Brazil echoed concerns around the challenges of over-reliance on earmarked funding and urged increased voluntary core contributions to give the Executive Director and her team greater flexibility. Saudi Arabia emphasized the alignment of its Vision 2030 with UN-Habitat's mission, particularly through efforts to promote sustainable, safe, and high-quality urban living. Overall, there was a united call to reinforce partnerships, resource UN-Habitat adequately, and jointly advance sustainable urban development.

### **c. Open Discussions**

The following four guiding questions were presented to facilitate focused dialogue among donor representatives:

1. How can we enhance both the level and predictability of core funding to UN-Habitat?



2. What opportunities exist for multi-year and flexible funding within the earmarked portfolio—especially in housing, land, and basic services?
3. How can Member States help position UN-Habitat within their countries and networks to expand engagement with national governments, private sector actors, and goodwill ambassadors?
4. What are your expectations for the resource mobilization strategy, and how can it be shaped to reflect your priorities?

One representative reflected on the realities faced by Least Developed Countries (LDCs), emphasizing that the critical question is not whether ‘*UN-Habitat is relevant*’ which it undoubtedly is—but rather, ‘*how much can it achieve if we cannot provide the necessary funding?*’. He called on countries with the capacity to step up and contribute meaningfully to UN-Habitat, noting that such support is vital for LDCs to benefit from the agency’s work. He highlighted the value addition of UN-Habitat in supporting countries with limited capacity in advancing their urban governance and planning, which makes the resources going to UN-Habitat more effectively used than bilateral development aid. He underlined that development efforts must be practical and results-driven, aiming to make a tangible difference in the lives of vulnerable urban communities.

One representative acknowledged the growing pressure on traditional donors due to shrinking Official Development Assistance (ODA) budgets. The representative stressed the importance of demonstrating UN-Habitat’s relevance not only in countries of implementation but also in donor countries, especially in the context of global challenges like migration and climate change. He recognized the strength of UN-Habitat being a lean and efficient organization that clearly links inputs to measurable impact. While reaffirming its political commitment to UN-Habitat—including voluntary core contributions, support for initiatives like GWOPA and UNITAC, and the continued funding of a Junior Professional Officer (JPO). He noted the need to keep multiple funding channels open. He emphasized that UN-Habitat, like many institutions, is now competing within a context of decreasing global resources.

Another representative called for Member States to join force to support UN-Habitat.

#### **d. Conclusion**

The Donor Luncheon provided a valuable platform for reaffirming support for UN-Habitat’s mandate amid ongoing global challenges. Speakers emphasized the agency’s critical role in addressing urbanization, housing, and sustainability, especially in vulnerable communities. There was a shared call for stronger ‘collaboration, more predictable and flexible funding, and increased visibility of UN-Habitat’s impact across donor and implementing countries alike. Participants welcomed the new Strategic Plan and encouraged practical, results-oriented partnerships that align with national and global development priorities. The event concluded with a collective sense of commitment to strengthening UN-Habitat’s role in driving transformative urban development worldwide.

#### **e. Quotes**

Ms. Anacláudia Rossbach, Executive Director, UN-Habitat:

*“Our teams on the ground have worked exceptionally hard to stay within budget delivering strong outputs and finding innovative ways to contribute to national policies.”*