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FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

PRESS RELEASE

UN-Habitat calls for urgent action on textile waste as cities join World Cleanup Day 2025

Nairobi, 19 September 2025 — As mountains of discarded clothes pile up in landfills and rivers worldwide, UN-Habitat is warning that textile waste is fast becoming one of the biggest urban challenges. Preparing to mark the global observance of World Cleanup Day 2025 on 20 September, UN-Habitat is calling for circular solutions to transform fashion waste into opportunities for more sustainable and inclusive cities.

This year's World Cleanup Day theme spotlights textile and fashion waste — an overlooked driver of urban pollution, inequality, and climate stress. Across the globe, over 100 cleanup events are taking place, registered under the World Cleanup Day celebrations, recognized by UN General Assembly resolution.

In Nairobi, UN-Habitat convened policymakers, youth leaders, waste picker associations, circular fashion designers, and diplomats for a fireside chat at the United Nations Office in Nairobi, followed by a community cleanup with local residents. The discussions underscored how fast fashion and throwaway consumption are fuelling inequality, while circular economy solutions can cut waste, reduce pollution, and support livelihoods.

“Reusing and recycling textiles can cut landfill pressure on cities and build cleaner, healthier neighbourhoods — especially in informal settlements and slums,” said Anacláudia Rossbach, Executive Director of UN-Habitat. “It’s about systemic change that protects people and the planet. It’s about delivering on the Sustainable Development Goal for cities, which calls on us to cut waste, reduce pollution, and build cleaner, healthier, and greener urban spaces for everyone.”

On Saturday, Nairobi volunteers will put these words into practice by joining the global movement for a hands-on community cleanup. The action aims to strengthen community ties, inspire zero-waste lifestyles, and highlight the role of citizens in tackling one of the fastest-growing waste streams in the world.

UN-Habitat emphasized that solving the textile waste crisis requires partnerships across governments, civil society, businesses, youth groups, and households. Together, they can drive a shift towards circular economies that rethink consumption and protect both people and the planet.

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About World Cleanup Day

World Cleanup Day was established in 2023 by the United Nations General Assembly as an international day to be observed annually on 20 September to address the global waste management challenges through coordinated voluntary action and improved collaboration and awareness for reduced waste pollution.

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 www.unhabitat.org or follow us on social media @UNHABITAT

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