



UN-Habitat's **STRATEGIC PLAN** 2026-2029



Foreword

We are living through a global housing crisis. Out of every eight persons today, at least three do not have access to adequate housing, and out of every four persons, at least one is living in an informal settlement or slum, and hundreds of millions live homeless. In this context, far too many people in our world are deprived of dignity, safety, stability, and opportunity. Without action, this crisis will inevitably undermine efforts to deliver global development agendas today and tomorrow.

That is why, at UN-Habitat, we are going back to the basics. Since UN-Habitat's establishment, housing has been at the core of our mandate. Over five decades, we have developed deep expertise and knowledge on housing, while also leading the delivery of impact in countries across all regions. Building on this, our strategic plan 2026-2029 has a central focus on housing, land and basic services as essential enablers for sustainable cities and communities. Unless we address gaps in these areas, it is not possible to tackle key global challenges including poverty, climate change and humanitarian crises.

Housing is recognized as a human right in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The New Urban Agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are also explicit in their focus on adequate housing. Member States have further renewed calls to action. Through resolutions adopted at the second United Nations Habitat Assembly in 2023, 193 countries asked UN-Habitat to deepen its work on advancing adequate housing for all and the transformation of informal settlements and slums. They established the Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group on Adequate Housing for All, a historic and unique platform to advance commitment and action, enabling Member States to confront the global housing crisis together. Further, through the Pact for the Future, Member States committed to ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing.

However, we must do more given the persistence and magnitude of the global housing crisis. We need to face it frontally and centrally, with bold and innovative solutions. How we plan and manage our cities is critical for access to adequate housing. Policies that recognize and preserve the economic, ecological and social functions of land as per the New Agenda are essential, including to unlock much needed finance and revenues and prevent sprawl. The role of local and regional governments within a multilevel governance approach is indispensable. We must also base decisions on robust knowledge, data and innovation, while transforming skills through capacity development. Change also requires us to join hands through stronger coalitions and partnerships. Importantly, resources must not only be mobilized but used better. All these ingredients are at the centre of the means of implementation of our strategic plan 2026-2029.

Adequate housing means more than walls and a roof – it is a powerful determinant of individual, community, and national well-being and a foundation of sustainable development. This is why we must see housing as a public good, anchored in sound policy and inclusive governance. Housing is the roof of the Sustainable Development Goals and a necessary means of achieving them. By placing housing at the centre of development, it is possible to create a virtuous cycle that uplifts individuals, empowers communities, and drives inclusive and sustainable growth at all levels. Let's join hands in making this possible. At UN-Habitat, we stand ready to walk this journey with all relevant stakeholders and partners through the implementation of our strategic plan 2026-2029.



Anacláudia Rossbach
Executive Director, UN-Habitat

A global housing crisis



An estimated 2.8 billion people worldwide are affected by different forms of housing inadequacy, which represents a massive development challenge shared by humanity. This number is expected to grow due to population growth, increasing urbanization, forced displacement and economic pressures, among other drivers. The plight of 1.1 billion people living in informal settlements and slums and more than 300 million homeless people calls for urgent and effective collective action. This strategic plan responds to the global housing crisis.

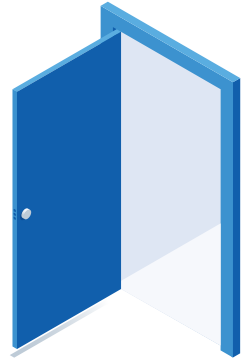
The global housing crisis is compounded by three converging global challenges: poverty and inequality, climate change, and crises – both natural and human-made. Today, 700 million people still live below the international extreme poverty line. Exposure to the effects of climate change is critical with 92 per cent of the people settled in low-elevation coastal zones living in urban centres. Meanwhile, conflict has displaced over 100 million people.

In this context, adequate housing is increasingly out of reach, especially for people living in vulnerable situations. The right to adequate housing, derived from the right to an adequate standard of living, is thus not realized for many throughout the world.

THE SEVEN ASPECTS OF ADEQUATE HOUSING



Why housing must be at the centre



Putting housing at the centre of policy responses at all levels is a must.

Many of the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development cannot be achieved if people lack adequate housing. Adequate housing is not just shelter – it is essential for health, education, dignity, safety and social inclusion and therefore a foundation for human dignity, security, and well-being.

Addressing the global housing crisis and challenges related to poverty, climate change and humanitarian crises is key to ensuring that cities and human settlements are sustainable, equitable and resilient spaces, and that we nurture communities where no one is left behind, as envisaged in SDG 11.



The change we seek



UN-Habitat's Strategic Plan 2026–2029 responds to the global housing crisis and the wider challenges of poverty, inequality, climate change, and crises. The plan seeks to transform lives by expanding access to adequate housing, land, and basic services, with particular focus on people in vulnerable situations, including those living in informal settlements and slums, and those affected by humanitarian emergencies and climate impacts. By advancing these priorities, UN-Habitat contributes to the realization of the New Urban Agenda and accelerates progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 11.

Through this Strategic Plan, UN-Habitat aims to improve people's lives by tackling three key global challenges through enabling:

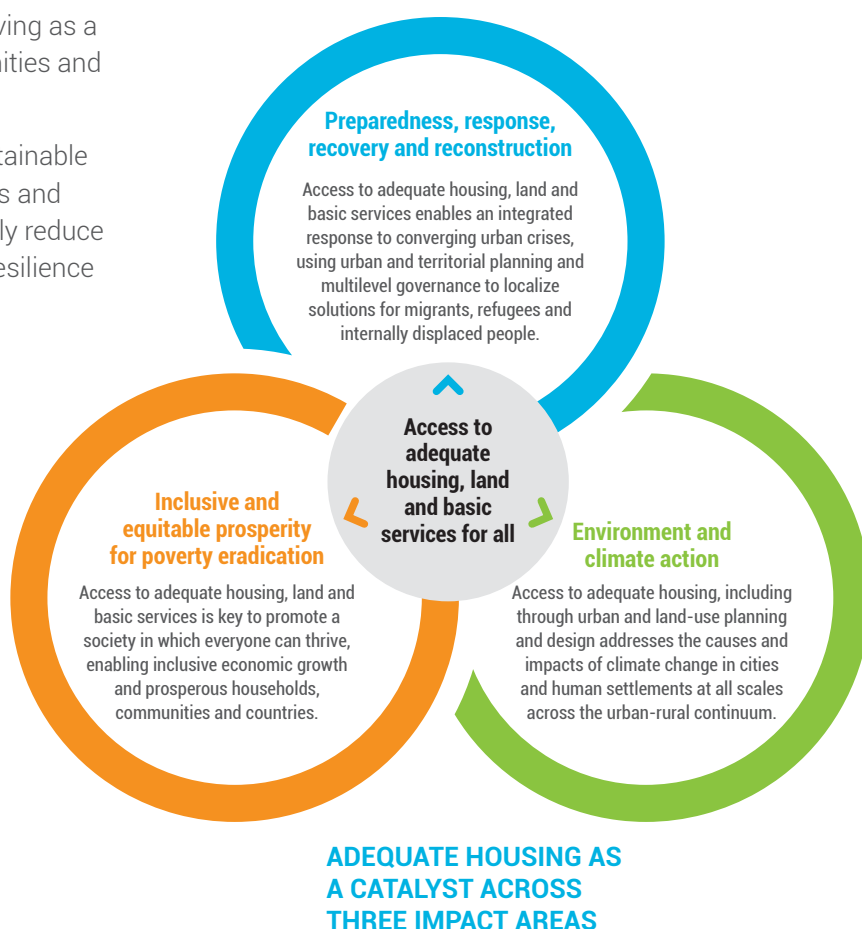
▣ **Equitable and inclusive prosperity for poverty eradication:**

Adequate housing opens the path out of poverty, giving people access to opportunities and a stable foundation to thrive across generations while serving as a powerful economic asset for communities and countries.

▣ **Environment and climate action:** Sustainable housing design, construction materials and land use have the power to significantly reduce cities' carbon footprint and enhance resilience to environmental shocks, positioning urban areas as engines of climate action and ecological sustainability.

▣ **Preparedness, response, recovery, and reconstruction:**

Better access to adequate housing, basic services, land, and property rights for affected, migrants, refugees, and internally displaced persons – integrated into urban and territorial planning – are essential for preventive risk reduction, effective post-crisis response and inclusive long-term recovery.



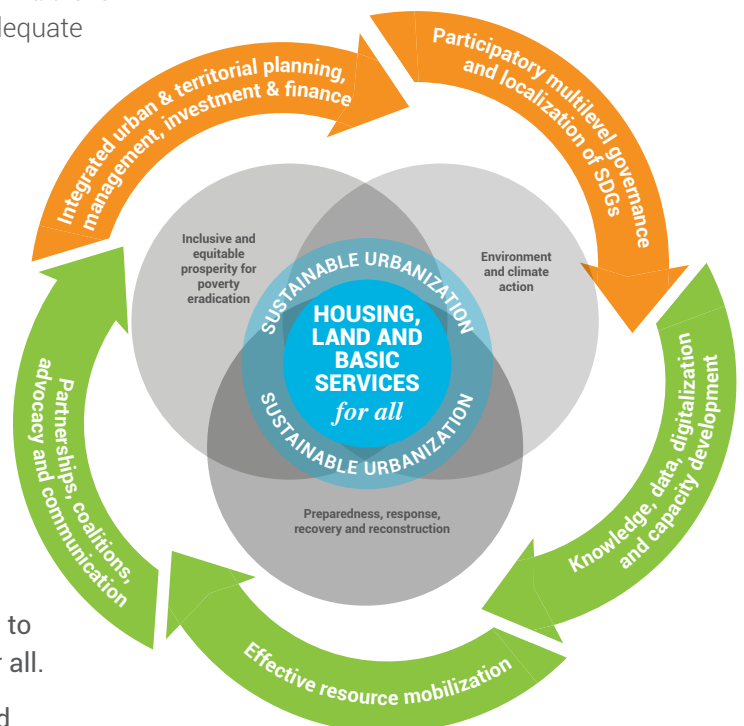
How we get there



The world faces a storm of converging crises related to poverty eradication, crises emerging from climate change, disasters and conflict, and the environment. UN-Habitat makes a unique contribution by addressing the urban and territorial dimensions of these challenges, as well as their solutions. It supports Member States and other actors to respond to these global challenges by enabling sustainable urbanization, leveraging the central role of adequate housing and of the transformation of informal settlements and slums.

At its core, UN-Habitat's approach is people-centred and anchored in international human rights law, guided by the New Urban Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, and focuses on five main priorities to implement the strategic plan.

- 1. Integrated urban and territorial planning, management, investment and finance:** Spatial development plans, policies and legislation, planning systems and finance frameworks foster the social and ecological functions of land and catalyse public and private investments for access to adequate housing, land and basic services for all.
- 2. Participatory multilevel governance and localization of the Sustainable Development Goals:** Participatory multilevel governance mechanisms support access to adequate housing, land and basic services for all, the mainstreaming and achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, and accelerate the localization of the Sustainable Development Goals.
- 3. Knowledge, data, digitalization and capacity development:** Improved knowledge and capacities inform evidence-based, innovative policies on access to adequate housing, land and basic services for all.
- 4. Partnerships, coalitions, advocacy and communication:** Increased awareness and transparency and strengthened collaboration among relevant stakeholders promote access to adequate housing, land and basic services for all.
- 5. Effective resource mobilization:** Increased and predictable resources for UN-Habitat and its partners advance access to adequate housing, land and basic services for all.



Our offer



UN-Habitat invites all relevant stakeholders to partner and collectively shape a better future where everyone everywhere has access to adequate housing, land and basic services. For this, UN-Habitat offers an opportunity to:

- ▣ **ACT:** With advisory services, norms and standards to help design and implement policies and programmes.
- ▣ **LEARN:** Through capacity development, knowledge exchange co-creation and peer learning to enhance skills, leadership, and institutionalization.
- ▣ **SHARE:** Through the dissemination and uptake of practices and solutions to address complex challenges.
- ▣ **PARTNER:** By mobilizing and collaborating with relevant stakeholders to coordinate efforts and maximize impact.
- ▣ **ADVOCATE:** By raising awareness, amplifying voices and informing policy debates for action.
- ▣ **TRACK:** By leveraging data and evidence to understand key trends and opportunities and inform policy choices.

A CATALYST FOR CHANGE: THE WORLD URBAN FORUM



Held every two years in cities around the world, the World Urban Forum (WUF) is a critical platform to mobilize stakeholders and advocate for housing, land and basic services for the implementation of UN-Habitat's strategic plan 2026–2029. WUF is a core mechanism through which stakeholders provide input into UN-Habitat's normative work and leverage expertise and partnerships for global impact. As such, it is a powerful platform that can drive action, commitment and change to solve the global housing crisis.

Established by the United Nations General Assembly in 2001 and convened by UN-Habitat, the World Urban Forum – the world's premier conference on sustainable urbanization – is a unique platform to connect, learn and share best practices on adequate housing and sustainable cities and communities.

Delivering for impact

UN-Habitat will deliver impact aligned with the ambitions of the New Urban Agenda and the SDGs. An impact-driven approach will be applied through deliberate and continuous integration of impact considerations across the lifecycle of programming. This implies moving from a linear post-facto approach to impact tracking to a more dynamic, holistic, and continuous process. It further requires stronger collaboration with relevant stakeholders in strengthening the impact focus of programme delivery.



Making it happen: Our global reach

UN-Habitat has its headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya, as well five regional offices – one for Latin America and the Caribbean in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, one for Asia and the Pacific in Fukuoka, Japan, one for the Arab States in Cairo, Egypt, one for Africa in Nairobi, Kenya, and one for Eastern Europe and Central Asia in Istanbul, Türkiye. UN-Habitat also has liaison offices in New York, Geneva and Brussels.

Globally, UN-Habitat works in over 100 countries to promote transformative change in cities and human settlements through knowledge, policy advice, technical assistance and collaborative action. Through country offices in 69 countries and activities in 42 countries, UN-Habitat is a leading partner for national, local and regional governments and all relevant stakeholders on advancing solutions for sustainable cities and communities and adequate housing for all.

NORTHERN
AMERICA

LATIN AMERICA
AND
THE CARIBBEAN

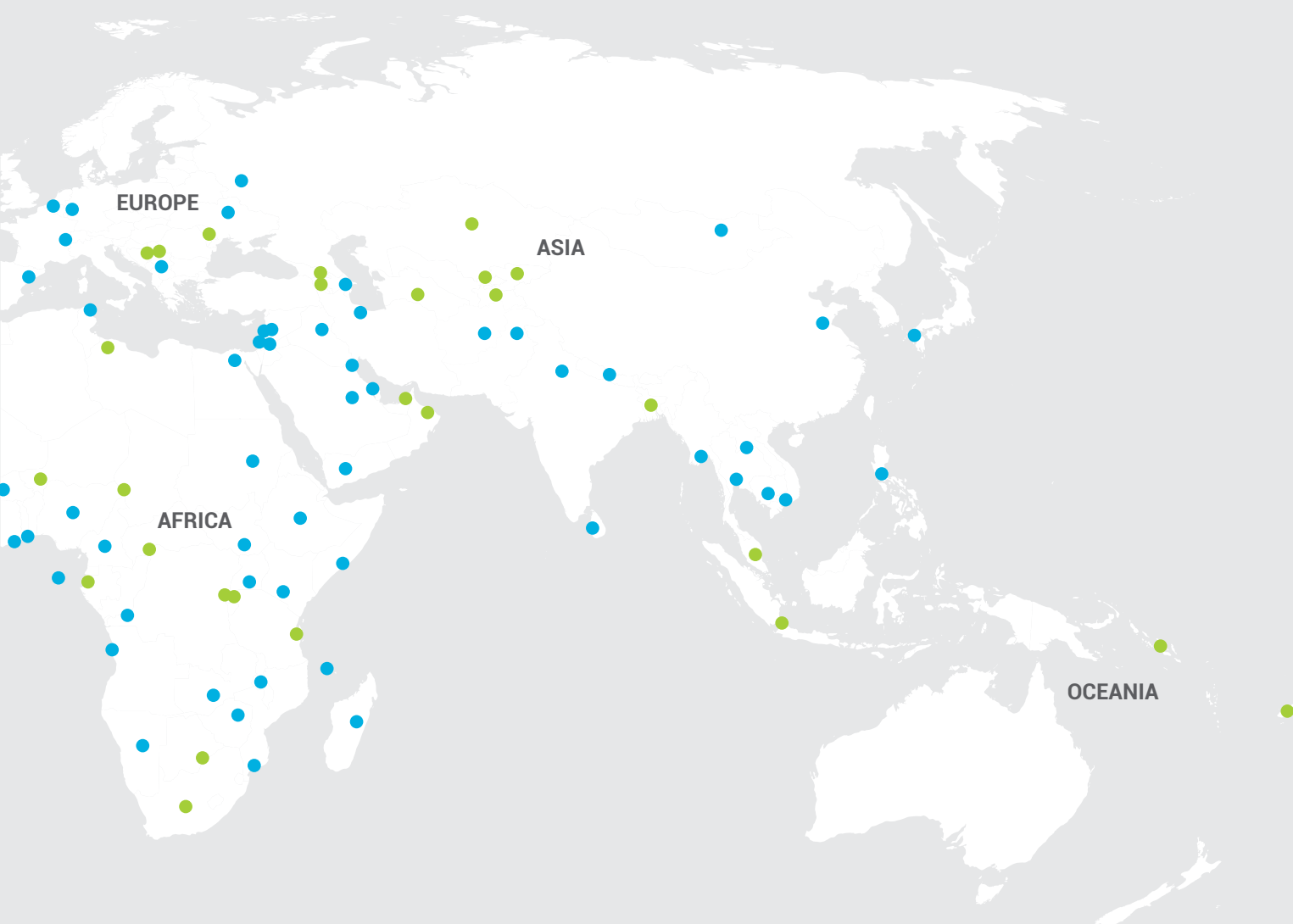
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Uzbekistan

*Any reference to Kosovo in UN documents and UN websites, whether to the territory, institutions or population, is to be understood in full compliance with Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo. Kosovo is therefore not listed as a country.

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Final boundary between the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan has not yet been determined. Final status of the Abyei area is not yet determined.

BASE MAP Map, No. 4170 Rev. 19 UNITED NATIONS - October 2020 Office of Information and Communications Technology | Geospatial Information Section
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Join us

to make a tangible difference
in creating a world where
everyone has a safe and
affordable place to call home.
Partner with us and be a part
of the solution.



UN-HABITAT

**UNITED NATIONS HUMAN
SETTLEMENTS PROGRAMME**

P.O. Box 30030, Nairobi 00100, Kenya
E: unhabitat-info@un.org



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