



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **UN-Habitat briefs Arab media ahead of the thirteenth session of the World Urban Forum (WUF13) in Baku**

**Nairobi and Cairo, 12 February 2026** – UN-Habitat convened its first online regional media briefing for journalists and correspondents across the Arab States to share the latest updates on preparations for the thirteenth session of the World Urban Forum (WUF13), to be held in Baku, Azerbaijan, from 17 to 22 May 2026 under the theme “Housing the world: Safe and resilient cities and communities.”

The briefing is part of a broader series of regional engagements aimed at strengthening media awareness of WUF13 and presenting its relevance to regional urban priorities. Moderated by the UN-Habitat Regional Office for the Arab States, the session brought together senior representatives from UN-Habitat, the host country Azerbaijan, and Egypt, host of the previous session of the World Urban Forum.

Through a recorded video message, UN-Habitat Executive Director Anacláudia Rossbach underscored the importance of WUF13 at a key moment for the urban agenda, noting that “WUF13 will place housing at the centre of global discussions – not only as a basic human right, but as a foundation for inclusion and climate and crisis-responsive development.”

Representing the host country, Elkhan Polukhov, Ambassador of the Republic of Azerbaijan to Egypt, outlined Azerbaijan’s preparations for WUF13 and reaffirmed the country’s commitment to delivering an inclusive, action-oriented Forum. He noted that hosting WUF13 marks an important milestone for Azerbaijan and reflects its growing engagement in global urban dialogue.

Highlighting the country’s experience in smart villages, smart cities and green energy zones, he added: “We are ready to share our experience and learn from others. We invite you to come to Baku, expand your networks and work together on advancing urban solutions.”

Reflections were also shared by Egypt, host of WUF12 held in Cairo in November 2024. Ambassador Hosam AlKaweesh, Assistant Minister of Local Development for International Cooperation, highlighted how WUF12 reinforced the role of local governments in advancing sustainable urban development and strengthening international cooperation.

He noted that Egypt is preparing to actively contribute to WUF13 through dedicated events and knowledge exchange, sharing national experiences and building partnerships with other

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countries. “We remain committed to supporting regional and international urban dialogue and to translating shared visions into practical projects that deliver sustainable urban development on the ground,” he said.

### **A decisive urban moment for the Arab region**

Over the past three decades, the population of the Arab States region has doubled to around 500 million people and is projected to reach one billion by 2060. Rapid urbanization, climate pressures and protracted crises are intensifying demands on housing, infrastructure and basic services, placing cities at the centre of stability, recovery and human dignity.

UN-Habitat’s regional and country representatives highlighted how WUF13 will provide a space to advance solutions aligned with Arab States’ urban development priorities, including housing affordability, informal settlements, climate resilience, crisis recovery and inclusive urban growth.

“These realities make one message clear: urban development is no longer a sectoral issue. It is central to stability, inclusion, resilience, and human dignity. At the heart of this is adequate housing – not only as shelter, but as a foundation for health, education, livelihoods, and social cohesion,” stressed Rania Hedeya, UN-Habitat Regional Director for Arab States.

Building on the legacy of WUF12 in Cairo, WUF13 offers a timely opportunity to connect regional experience with global dialogue and action. Ahmed Rezk, UN-Habitat Egypt Country Representative, noted: “WUF12 convened over 25,000 participants from 182 countries. This year, we are expanding that experience through Egypt’s Urban Week, broadening engagement at the national level and connecting diverse activities that contribute to the lead-up to WUF13.”

### **From global dialogue to urban implementation**

Across six days, WUF13 will bring ministers, regional governors, mayors, urban planners, policymakers, the private sector, community leaders, civil society, academics and UN agencies from around the world.

Marking the midpoint of the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, WUF13 will include a high-level segment and ministerial meeting on the New Urban Agenda, offering governments a space to reaffirm commitments and align national policies with global priorities.

Featuring more than 300 events, the Forum’s programme will span high-level dialogues on the global housing crisis, informal settlements, crisis recovery and reconstruction, climate-

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housing linkages, the social and economic power of housing, and housing finance, alongside assemblies, special sessions, partner-led events, and the Urban Expo.

The Forum will conclude with the Baku Call to Action, an outcome document aimed at accelerating global progress on adequate housing and sustainable urban development.

### **About the World Urban Forum**

Established in 2001 by the United Nations, the World Urban Forum is the premier global conference on sustainable urbanization, designed to examine the impacts of rapid urbanization on cities, communities, economies, and climate change. Since its inception, WUF has been hosted in cities across the world, with the first session held in Nairobi, Kenya, in 2002.

### **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](http://unhabitat.org) or follow us on social media @UNHABITAT.

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