



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **UN-Habitat briefs Eastern Europe and Central Asia media ahead of the thirteenth session of the World Urban Forum (WUF13) in Baku**

**Baku, Azerbaijan, 14 March 2026** – UN-Habitat convened an in-person regional media briefing on the margins of the Global Baku Forum for journalists from across Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus and Central Asia, providing updates on preparations for the thirteenth session of the World Urban Forum (WUF13), which will take place in Baku from 17 to 22 May 2026 under the theme “Housing the world: Safe and resilient cities and communities.”

The briefing forms part of a global series of regional media engagements aimed at strengthening awareness of WUF13 and highlighting its relevance to regional urban priorities. The briefing brought together senior representatives from UN-Habitat, the host country Azerbaijan and the United Nations system outlining key programme elements and opportunities for participation and media coverage in the lead-up to the Forum.

Opening the briefing, UN-Habitat Executive Director Anacláudia Rossbach underlined the growing urgency of addressing the global housing crisis. She noted that “WUF13 will provide a platform to connect policy discussions with practical solutions, placing housing at the centre of efforts to build more inclusive and climate-resilient cities and communities.”

Representing the host country, Anar Guliyev, Chairman of the State Committee for Urban Planning and Architecture of the Republic of Azerbaijan and WUF13 National Coordinator, highlighted national preparations and emphasized Azerbaijan’s commitment to delivering an action-oriented Forum that brings together global and regional stakeholders.

“WUF13 will be a historic milestone as the first World Urban Forum held in Central Asia and the South Caucasus, highlighting our region's growing importance in global urban

1

**PRESS  
RELEASE**

**Contact information:**

Katerina Bezgachina Chief of  
Communications, UN-Habitat  
Email: [ekaterina.bezgachina@un.org](mailto:ekaterina.bezgachina@un.org)  
Website: [www.unhabitat.org](http://www.unhabitat.org)



development and our commitment to bridging heritage with modernity,” Guliyev said. “Housing lies at the centre of our agenda; beyond physical structures, it is fundamental to dignity, well-being, and resilience. WUF13 will explore solutions to expand access to affordable, resilient housing while addressing climate and socioeconomic pressures.”

Igor Garafulic, UN Resident Coordinator ad interim in Azerbaijan, stated: “[WUF13] is fundamentally linked to public policy. Our actions in Baku are not intended to create a ‘once-in-a-lifetime’ event, but to drive medium-term objectives that integrate into an ambitious global development agenda.”

Maria Espinosa, Board Member of NGIC, stressed that “the results of WUF13 will be instrumental in feeding into the 10-year review of the New Urban Agenda, ensuring that the discussions in Baku shape the next decade of global urban policy.”

Erfan Ali, UN-Habitat Regional Director for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, stressed that cities across the region are addressing complex urban challenges ranging from housing affordability and infrastructure modernization to climate resilience and sustainable economic growth. He noted that strong regional engagement in WUF13 will help ensure that these experiences contribute to global dialogue and inform practical solutions.

## **Housing, recovery and resilience shaping the urban agenda in Eastern Europe and Central Asia**

Across Eastern Europe and Central Asia, cities are addressing a combination of aging and energy-inefficient housing, uneven access to basic services, and growing exposure to climate risks. In several countries, post-crisis recovery and reconstruction needs are also placing additional pressure on urban systems and institutions. As governments work to modernize infrastructure and expand access to adequate housing, strengthening local governance, improving spatial planning and increasing investment in resilient urban development have become key priorities.

In this context, housing is increasingly recognized as an entry point for wider action on climate resilience, social inclusion and sustainable economic development. The thirteenth session of the World Urban Forum (WUF13) will provide an opportunity for

2

**PRESS  
RELEASE**

**Contact information:**

Katerina Bezgachina Chief of  
Communications, UN-Habitat  
Email: [ekaterina.bezgachina@un.org](mailto:ekaterina.bezgachina@un.org)  
Website: [www.unhabitat.org](http://www.unhabitat.org)



stakeholders from across the region to share experience, highlight practical solutions and strengthen cooperation in support of national and local urban development priorities.

### **From regional dialogue to global action**

Taking place at the midpoint of the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, WUF13 will serve as a global checkpoint for reviewing progress on Sustainable Development Goal 11 and strengthening commitments to sustainable urbanization.

The Forum will feature a high-level segment and a ministerial meeting on the New Urban Agenda, alongside over 300 events including dialogues, assemblies, partner-led events and an Urban Expo. With housing at the centre of the agenda, discussions will address the global housing crisis, informal settlements, crisis recovery and reconstruction, climate-housing linkages and housing finance.

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.

**Contact information:**