



# General Assembly Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General  
19 March 2026

Original: English

**General Assembly**  
**Eightieth session**  
Agenda item 178

**Follow-up to the implementation of the New Urban Agenda  
and strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements  
Programme (UN-Habitat)**

**Economic and Social Council**  
**2026 session**

31 July 2025–22 July 2026  
Agenda item 18 (g)

**Economic and environmental questions:  
human settlements**

## **Progress in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda Report of the Secretary-General**

### *Summary*

The present report has been prepared pursuant to paragraph 3 of Economic and Social Council resolution 2017/24, and in accordance with paragraph 5 of General Assembly resolution 71/235, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report every four years on progress in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. In accordance with paragraph 175 of the New Urban Agenda, the report provides a midterm assessment of progress and challenges since 2016 and identifies further actions to accelerate implementation in the decade leading up to 2036.

In 2016, the New Urban Agenda recognized the transformative power of well-planned and well-managed urbanization, including for achieving the 2030 Agenda and other global targets. Since then, however, implementation has not kept pace with the growing scale and complexity of housing and urban challenges. While more countries have adopted urban and housing policies and mainstreamed New Urban Agenda principles, implementation gaps persist and the global housing crisis has deepened. Expansion of infrastructure and basic services has accelerated in many contexts, but significant gaps remain and the gains are highly unequally distributed, especially in informal settlements and slums. Cities and local and regional governments and related networks are increasingly at the forefront of solutions, but face financing and capacity constraints. With urban areas being home to most of the world's population, the stakes for the next decade of implementation could not be higher. Adequate housing and sustainable urban development remain essential foundations for a sustainable world.

## I. Introduction

1. The present report has been prepared pursuant to paragraph 3 of Economic and Social Council resolution 2017/24 and in accordance with General Assembly resolution 71/235. In accordance with paragraph 175 of General Assembly resolution 71/256, the report presents information on progress made and challenges faced in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda since 2016 and identifies priorities for the decade leading up to 2036.

2. The New Urban Agenda supports the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the urban dimensions of its Sustainable Development Goals, including Goal 11 on sustainable cities and communities, as well as the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Global Compact on Refugees, among others, by translating global commitments into place-based action. It also contributes to advancing the Pact for the Future, including the Global Digital Compact and the Declaration on Future Generations, and supports integrated delivery across the six Sustainable Development Goal transitions.

3. Since 2016, the implementation of the New Urban Agenda has unfolded amid profound demographic, spatial and geopolitical changes. Urban areas are now home to 58 per cent of the global population, with built-up areas expanding faster than population growth.<sup>1</sup> The climate crisis has intensified, affecting cities across the globe; armed conflicts have reached the highest levels since the end of the Second World War;<sup>2</sup> and the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic exposed structural and spatial inequalities. Those trends have coincided with tightening fiscal conditions, heightened global economic volatility and shifts in international development finance. Meanwhile, rapid technological change, including advances in artificial intelligence, has created both new opportunities and risks.

4. The report draws on national progress reports submitted in the 2022 and 2026 reporting cycles, as well as contributions from relevant stakeholders. For the 2026 reporting cycle, 69 national progress reports are expected to be submitted, up from 40 submitted in 2022. More than 1,300 participants from 115 countries, 51 per cent of whom were women, took part in a global New Urban Agenda learning series. Within the United Nations system, 22 entities provided input through dialogues and surveys, complemented by broad stakeholder consultations, including 120 survey responses and 144 writeshop participants.

## II. Progress made on transformative commitments for sustainable urban development (2016–2026)

### A. Sustainable urban development for social inclusion and ending poverty

5. Despite improvements in access to basic services, perceived safety and tenure security in some contexts, progress towards social inclusion and ending poverty in urban areas has been slow, uneven and inadequate. This is reflected in a deepening global housing crisis, persistent spatial inequalities, and threats to the rights and needs of persons in vulnerable situations.

6. Poverty has continued to decline globally, albeit at a slower rate than in previous decades. The COVID-19 pandemic contributed to this slowdown, with extreme poverty rising slightly in 2020 for the first time in more than two decades.<sup>3</sup> While poverty remains more prevalent in rural areas, rapid urbanization in low-income countries without commensurate gains in productivity, decent work or access to services means that poverty

---

<sup>1</sup> United Nations, *World Urbanization Prospects 2025: Summary of Results* (United Nations publication, 2025).

<sup>2</sup> United Nations, “Our Common Agenda policy brief 9: a new agenda for peace”, July 2023.

<sup>3</sup> World Bank, Poverty and Inequality Platform, available at [pip.worldbank.org](http://pip.worldbank.org) (accessed on 27 March 2026).

is also urbanizing.<sup>4</sup> Average within-country inequality has declined globally, but the share of the world's population living in high-inequality countries is largely unchanged<sup>5</sup> and in some places inequalities within and between cities are worsening.<sup>6</sup>

7. Housing remains a critical determinant of both poverty and inequality, with up to 3 billion people globally facing housing inadequacy. In Africa, rapid urbanization continues to widen housing deficits and expand informality, while in Latin America and the Caribbean high urbanization coincides with persistent informality and inequality, as earlier gains in slum upgrading have largely stalled since 2016. In Asia and the Pacific, affordability pressures are shaped by megacity and secondary-city growth and climate risk, while Europe and North America face acute affordability and homelessness pressures. In Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) member countries, housing conditions are strongly influenced by conflict, displacement and water stress. Affordability has deteriorated over the past decade, with real house prices rising by more than one third in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries<sup>7</sup> and households worldwide spending, on average, at least 30 per cent of their incomes on housing.<sup>8</sup>

8. Slums and informal settlements remain major challenges in low-income regions. Since 2016, the number of people living in slums or informal settlements has increased by more than 120 million, reaching more than 1.1 billion in 2022.<sup>9</sup> While the share of urban residents living in slums has declined or stabilized in several regions, absolute numbers continue to rise. Despite these trends, countries such as Colombia, Indonesia, Mongolia and Morocco have achieved sustained reductions in slum prevalence through long-term commitments to large-scale in situ upgrading and investments in affordable housing and urban infrastructure.

9. Although eviction filings have declined in many countries, partly owing to temporary moratoriums, expanded social protection and strengthened tenant protections, more than 2.5 million households in high-income countries still face eviction each year.<sup>10</sup> In informal settlements, the estimated number of people affected by demolitions and evictions decreased from a peak of 4.6 million people in 2010 to around 2 million in 2023.<sup>11</sup> Yet eviction levels remain high, and regional patterns diverge substantially. In Latin America and the Caribbean, evictions in informal settlements have declined steadily since 2012, alongside the expansion of compensation and regularization measures in countries such as Ecuador, Honduras, Panama and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.<sup>12</sup> In Africa, informal settlement evictions remain widespread, often without adequate rehousing or reinvestment.

10. Access to basic services has continued to expand, albeit unevenly. Electricity and improved drinking water now reach more than 95 per cent of urban residents.<sup>13</sup> Sanitation and clean cooking, while still lagging, have expanded more rapidly over the past decade, driven by large-scale urban sanitation programmes and sustainable on-site sanitation systems in countries such as Senegal, as well as clean cooking transitions in countries such as Malawi and Peru.<sup>14</sup> Internet access has grown faster than any other basic service,

<sup>4</sup> UN-Habitat, *World Cities Report 2022: Envisaging the Future of Cities* (Nairobi, 2022).

<sup>5</sup> World Bank, *Poverty, Prosperity, and Planet Report 2024: Pathways Out of the Polycrisis* (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 2024).

<sup>6</sup> OECD, *Divided Cities: Understanding Intra-urban Inequalities* (2018).

<sup>7</sup> OECD, Affordable Housing Database, available at <http://oe.cd/ahd> (accessed on 27 March 2026).

<sup>8</sup> United Nations, *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2025* (New York, 2025).

<sup>9</sup> UN-Habitat, *World Cities Report 2024: Cities and Climate Action* (Nairobi, 2024).

<sup>10</sup> OECD, "Indicator HC3.3. Evictions", OECD Affordable Housing Database, <http://oe.cd/ahd> (accessed on 30 March 2026).

<sup>11</sup> UN-Habitat, internal data on evictions from informal settlements (2025).

<sup>12</sup> Matthijs van Oostrum, "A regional assessment of two decades of informal settlement displacement, 2003–2022", *Habitat International*, vol. 162 (2025), article 103434.

<sup>13</sup> World Bank, World Development Indicators, "Access to electricity, urban (% of urban population)", available at <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EG.ELC.ACCTS.UR.ZS> (accessed on 30 March 2026).

<sup>14</sup> World Health Organization, Cooking fuel and technology database, available at <https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/themes/air-pollution/cooking-fuel-and-technology-database-by-fuel-category> (accessed on 30 March 2026).

with urban usage now exceeding 80 per cent globally.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, many low-income communities remain excluded from affordable, high-quality digital infrastructure.

11. Public transportation now reaches more than 60 per cent of the global urban population, but stark regional disparities persist. Access remains at only 37 per cent in least developed countries and 34 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa, compared with more than 80 per cent in high-income regions, despite major progress in the expansion of bus rapid transit, non-motorized mobility and rail systems in countries such as the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mexico and the United Republic of Tanzania.

12. Public space has gained renewed prominence as an enabler of inclusion, resilience, safety and social cohesion, reinforced by lessons from COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns. Still, access remains limited and uneven, with fewer than a quarter of surveyed cities allocating more than 20 per cent of their built-up area to public spaces, and only 45 per cent of urban residents living within 400 metres of an open public space.<sup>16</sup>

13. Urban safety has shown uneven progress. While global homicide rates have declined modestly since 2016, gender-based violence, including femicide, has increased, peaking in 2022.<sup>17</sup> Perceptions of safety have improved globally since 2016, although women are, by around 10 percentage points, less likely than men to report feeling safe walking alone at night.<sup>18</sup> Experiences from countries such as Spain demonstrate that reductions in gender-based violence are achievable where prevention, survivor services and gender-responsive urban design are pursued together, consistent with the political declaration of the sixty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, held in New York from 10 to 21 March 2025.

14. Discrimination remains a challenge, with levels reported in urban areas nearly twice those in rural areas.<sup>19</sup> Persons with disabilities face greater discrimination linked to barriers in the built environment, transport and services. Women and girls continue to experience unsafe public spaces and barriers to housing and land ownership. Children are disproportionately exposed to unsafe housing, pollution and service gaps, while older persons face exclusions related to inadequate age-friendly housing, mobility and social services. Indigenous Peoples and local communities face growing pressures on land, livelihoods and cultural practices in the context of urban expansion.

15. Migration, forced displacement and conflict intersect with urban poverty and housing insecurity. The number of forcibly displaced persons more than doubled over the past decade, reaching 123 million in 2024, including 74 million internally displaced by conflict, persecution and human rights violations, with pressures particularly acute in sub-Saharan Africa, which hosts the largest share of internally displaced persons.<sup>20</sup> Climate-related hazards contributed to nearly 46 million internal displacements in 2024 alone.<sup>21</sup> More than 40 per cent of internally displaced persons now settle in urban areas, often in informal or underserved neighbourhoods, where limited local capacity can heighten protection risks and social tensions. Countries such as Jordan and Türkiye have begun to move beyond temporary humanitarian responses by integrating displaced populations into national and municipal housing, services and social protection, while urban recovery and service restoration efforts in conflict-affected contexts such as Iraq, the Syrian Arab Republic, Yemen and the State of Palestine remain essential for voluntary, safe and dignified return.

## **B. Sustainable and inclusive urban prosperity and opportunities**

16. Cities drive the global economy, generating more than 80 per cent of global gross domestic product and serving as hubs of employment and innovation. However, urban

---

<sup>15</sup> International Telecommunication Union, *Measuring Digital Development: Facts and Figures 2025* (Geneva, 2025).

<sup>16</sup> UN-Habitat, *Rescuing SDG 11 for a Resilient Urban Planet* (Nairobi, 2023).

<sup>17</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and UN-Women, *Femicide in 2024* (Vienna, 2025).

<sup>18</sup> Gallup, *The Global Safety Report: A Safer World in Unsafe Times?* (2025).

<sup>19</sup> United Nations, *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2025*.

<sup>20</sup> UNHCR, *Global Trends Report 2024* (Geneva, 2025).

<sup>21</sup> Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, *Global Report on Internal Displacement 2025* (Geneva, 2025).

labour markets are increasingly bifurcated by inequality. Wage growth has stagnated, formal employment has failed to absorb large numbers of workers, who resort to low-wage informal work, and displaced persons, women and young people face steep barriers to employment and consequent high rates of unemployment in many countries.

17. Urban labour markets have improved modestly since 2016, despite the setback caused by the COVID-19 pandemic,<sup>22</sup> but progress remains uneven. Real wage growth has yet to recover from pandemic-related losses, with many cities affected by rising housing, transport and service costs and widening labour market polarization. Spatial inequality within and between cities remains a major constraint on productivity and inclusion, with long commutes and limited transit access reducing labour market participation. Informal employment remains widespread, at roughly 57 per cent of non-agricultural work globally,<sup>23</sup> despite progress in countries such as Ghana and Thailand in improving legal protections, social security coverage and job quality for informal workers.

18. Youth unemployment remains more than three times the adult rate globally, while youth labour force participation has continued to decline.<sup>24</sup> While gender gaps in unemployment have narrowed in some regions, young women remain far more likely than young men to be without employment, education or training, and women's labour force participation continues to lag. Progress is made when labour and gender-equality reforms, childcare and urban job creation advance together, as demonstrated by substantial recent gains in Japan and long-standing progress in Sweden. Examples in countries such as Uganda also illustrate the benefits of expanding access to secondary education for girls, promoting women's participation in urban industries and strengthening social protection and support for women-led enterprises.

19. Labour market trajectories vary across regions. In Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean, high informality constrains inclusion and productivity, even where cities drive national growth. In Asia and the Pacific, dynamism remains concentrated in leading metropolitan areas, while secondary cities struggle to keep pace. In ESCWA member countries, jobs and recovery are linked to stability and diversification, while Europe and North America face ageing, skills transitions and widening gaps between leading metropolitan areas and smaller cities.

20. Countries are adopting digital and green industrial policies to stimulate new sectors, often anchored in metropolitan innovation clusters and industrial zones. Member States also report new investments in digital infrastructure, industrial parks and university-industry partnerships that support small and medium-sized enterprises. In countries such as Lebanon and Nigeria, creative industries and tourism have supported urban regeneration and employment through heritage revitalization, cultural districts and creative clusters. However, unless connected to the wider economy through investments in skills and infrastructure, the gains resulting from such initiatives tend to be narrowly concentrated. The productivity benefits of urbanization depend not only on growth-driving sectors, but also on how well cities integrate land use, infrastructure and labour market systems to build linkages and broaden economic opportunity.

### **C. Environmentally sustainable and resilient urban development**

21. The nexus between urbanization and environmental sustainability has become increasingly critical. Cities are central to climate action, biodiversity protection and pollution reduction; yet without adequate planning and investment they contribute to environmental degradation and expose populations to escalating climate risks.

22. Climate exposure and implementation capacity vary by region. Many cities in Africa, parts of Asia and the Pacific and small island and coastal locations in Latin America and the Caribbean face rising climate and disaster risk alongside infrastructure gaps, making risk-informed land use, upgrading and basic services central to resilience.

<sup>22</sup> ILOSTAT, data on unemployment and labour force participation by urban and rural area, available at <https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/> (accessed on 30 March 2026).

<sup>23</sup> International Labour Organization, *Women and Men in the Informal Economy: A Statistical Update* (Geneva, 2023).

<sup>24</sup> International Labour Organization, *World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2025* (Geneva, 2025).

The ESCWA region is, meanwhile, increasingly shaped by extreme heat and water stress, while Europe and North America advance mitigation through retrofits and clean mobility but still face equity and affordability constraints in the transition.

23. Cities account for more than 70 per cent of global energy-related greenhouse gas emissions, making them indispensable to climate mitigation.<sup>25</sup> Encouragingly, urban climate action has expanded significantly, with more than 13,800 cities and local governments, representing 1.2 billion people, participating in the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy.<sup>26</sup> Recent analysis indicates that city-led action could deliver annual emissions reductions of up to 4.5 gigatons of carbon dioxide by 2050 through investments in renewable energy, energy efficiency, green buildings and sustainable mobility.

24. Urban priorities are increasingly reflected in national climate policy. The share of nationally determined contributions including well-developed urban content rose from 49 per cent in the contributions submitted in 2021, to 81 per cent in 2025,<sup>27</sup> reflecting growing recognition of the role of cities and multilevel climate action. The same trend has been visible in the processes of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, including at the thirtieth session of its Conference of the Parties, held in Belém, Brazil, from 10 to 21 November 2025, where the fourth Ministerial Meeting on Urbanization and Climate Change underscored the importance of aligning climate commitments with housing policy, land-use planning and strengthened subnational finance for local delivery.

25. The housing sector, as one of the largest contributors to both land consumption and greenhouse-gas emissions, deserves particular attention. While global construction sector emissions slowed during the COVID-19 pandemic, they rebounded shortly afterwards, increasing by 5 per cent over the decade and falling well short of the 28 per cent reduction needed to meet Paris Agreement targets.<sup>28</sup> In response, countries such as Czechia have advanced integrated urban planning and large-scale building retrofit programmes aligned with European Union frameworks.

26. Transportation remains a major source of urban emissions and pollution, accounting for roughly one fifth of global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. While per capita transport emissions have declined slightly in high-income countries over the past two decades, this has been offset by rising transport emissions in emerging economies, resulting in limited progress at the global level.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, examples from Costa Rica and France have demonstrated that sustained investment in cycling and pedestrian infrastructure, low-emission zones and proximity-based urban planning can reduce car use, improve air quality and curb the growth of transport emissions.

27. Air pollution remains a major urban public health and equity challenge, especially in Central and Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, where fine particulate matter concentrations have continued to rise over the past decade, driven primarily by transport, industry, power generation and waste burning. Indoor air pollution from inefficient cookstoves remains a major concern for 2.1 billion urban residents, despite a nearly 10 per cent increase in access to clean cooking fuels and technologies.<sup>30</sup> Parts of East and Southeast Asia and Europe have meanwhile achieved air quality improvements through higher air-quality standards, public transport upgrades, expanded monitoring, and public accountability.

---

<sup>25</sup> International Energy Agency, *Empowering Urban Energy Transitions* (Paris, 2024).

<sup>26</sup> Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy, *The Urban Advantage: Cities Global Climate Action — The 2025 Global Covenant of Mayors Impact Report* (2025).

<sup>27</sup> UN-Habitat, *Urban Content in NDC 3.0: A Global Snapshot for COP30* (Nairobi, 2025).

<sup>28</sup> United Nations Environment Programme and Global Alliance for Buildings and Construction, *Global Status Report for Buildings and Construction 2024/2025* (2025).

<sup>29</sup> Climate Watch, historical emissions data, transport sector, available at <https://www.climatewatchdata.org/ghg-emissions> (accessed on 30 March 2026).

<sup>30</sup> World Health Organization, Air Pollution Data Portal, available at <https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/themes/air-pollution> (accessed on 30 March 2026).

28. Municipal solid waste generation has increased by an estimated 30 to 50 per cent over the past two decades, reaching about 2.3 billion tons in 2020.<sup>31</sup> Only 61 per cent of this waste reached controlled facilities globally, and just 15 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa, leaving roughly 900 million tons uncollected, openly dumped or burned. In response, an increasing number of countries, such as Kenya, have adopted circular economy laws and policies to introduce or strengthen extended producer responsibility, expand recycling and reduce plastic waste.

29. At the same time, climate-related disasters pose a threat to adequate housing. Informal settlements and slums are especially vulnerable owing to their frequent location on hazardous land, such as floodplains, steep hillsides prone to landslides, or low-lying coastal areas. Urban risk exposure is rising rapidly, with more than 80 per cent of cities having warmed by at least 0.5°C over the past two decades and flood exposure growing faster in cities than in rural areas.<sup>32</sup>

30. Urban heat is an increasingly severe public risk, with urban areas often experiencing temperatures several degrees higher than in surrounding rural areas. Between 2000 and 2019, heat exposure is estimated to have caused approximately 500,000 deaths each year worldwide,<sup>33</sup> with the Secretary-General issuing a Call to Action on Extreme Heat urging protection of vulnerable groups and workers and stronger heat-risk management.<sup>34</sup>

31. Despite rising urban climate risks, adaptation remains significantly underfinanced, with the majority of climate finance continuing to flow towards mitigation. Closing the adaptation finance gap will require pro-poor, locally led approaches that strengthen community resilience and ensure equitable access to finance for local governments.

32. Disaster risk reduction remains critical as climate-related risks intensify. National disaster risk reduction strategies have more than doubled over the past decade, while similar local-level strategies now cover 72 per cent of municipalities in reporting countries.<sup>35</sup> Country experiences, including hurricane preparedness in Cuba, post-earthquake reconstruction and risk-informed settlement planning in Nepal, and typhoon and flood management in the Philippines, highlight the value of integrating risk reduction into urban planning. These efforts have been supported through initiatives such as “Making Cities Resilient 2030”,<sup>36</sup> which now includes nearly 2,000 participating cities.

33. Urban biodiversity, green spaces and nature-based solutions play a critical role in resilience and well-being. However, urban green space per capita has decreased from 67 m<sup>2</sup> to just 30 m<sup>2</sup> over the past three decades, with the steepest losses occurring in sub-Saharan Africa and South and Southeast Asia.<sup>37</sup> In response, countries such as Oman have advanced urban greening and tree-planting initiatives, while climate-vulnerable small island developing States such as Fiji have combined green and blue buffer zones with coastal adaptation, resilient infrastructure and, where necessary, planned relocation from high-risk areas. At scale, China’s “sponge city” approach demonstrates how nature-based solutions can be embedded in urban planning to manage flood risk and enhance climate resilience, while in Eswatini indicator-based green planning has helped translate resilience objectives into local investment decisions.

<sup>31</sup> UN-Habitat, *Rescuing SDG 11 for a Resilient Urban Planet* (Nairobi, 2023); World Bank, *What a Waste 2.0: A Global Snapshot of Solid Waste Management to 2050* (Washington, D.C., 2018).

<sup>32</sup> UN-Habitat, *World Cities Report 2024: Cities and Climate Action*.

<sup>33</sup> World Bank, UN-Habitat and United Nations Environment Programme, *Handbook on Urban Heat Management in the Global South* (Washington, D.C., 2025).

<sup>34</sup> United Nations, *Secretary-General’s Call to Action on Extreme Heat* (2024).

<sup>35</sup> United Nations Statistics Division, SDG indicator database, indicators 13.1.2 and 13.1.3, available at <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/> (accessed on 30 March 2026).

<sup>36</sup> United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, *Making Cities Resilient 2030 (MCR2030)*, participating cities, available at <https://mcr2030.undrr.org/> (accessed on 30 March 2026).

<sup>37</sup> UN-Habitat, *World Cities Report 2024: Cities and Climate Action*.

### III. Effective implementation

#### A. Building a governance structure and establishing a supportive framework

34. Over the past decade, multilevel approaches to urban governance have increasingly been adopted in preference to fragmented sectoral arrangements, consistent with paragraph 29 of the New Urban Agenda. Many countries, such as Finland, report progress in decentralization of governance, accompanied by clearer accountability and performance frameworks between national and local governments, while others, such as Mali, highlight efforts to strengthen municipal institutions and sustain service delivery at the city level. Local and regional governments have meanwhile assumed expanded responsibilities in areas such as land-use planning, service delivery and climate action.<sup>38</sup>

35. Expansion of local governance responsibilities has not, however, been matched with equivalent fiscal autonomy. The Sevilla Commitment reaffirmed the importance of strengthening subnational finance where appropriate, including through enhanced technical, technological and human resource capacities for local and regional authorities. Yet fiscal decentralization across OECD countries has largely stagnated, with local governments still heavily reliant on intergovernmental transfers and limited own-source revenue.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, experiences in Cameroon, Germany and Ukraine illustrate how legal reforms, predictable intergovernmental transfers and local capacity-building can strengthen coherence between national priorities and local delivery.

36. National urban policies have become widely recognized as a key instrument for urban governance. As at 2024, around 160 countries had adopted or were developing urban policy frameworks or had embedded them within national development strategies, increasingly addressing climate resilience, regional inequalities and economic transformation. Since 2014, UN-Habitat, the Cities Alliance and OECD have supported more than 68 national and subnational governments in the preparation of urban policies.<sup>40</sup>

37. Urban governance beyond municipal boundaries is increasingly pursued through metropolitan authorities, inter-municipal cooperation and regional coordination mechanisms. Examples from Egypt and South Africa highlight the role of statutory metropolitan authorities in coordinating planning and service delivery across municipalities, while cross-border cooperation frameworks illustrate how formalized institutional arrangements can strengthen coordination of shared urban functions across jurisdictions.

38. Participatory governance mechanisms, including participatory planning and budgeting, have become increasingly recognized as critical to effective, accountable and inclusive urban decision-making, with notable progress in countries such as the Dominican Republic, Tunisia and Zimbabwe. However, only 19 per cent of surveyed cities in 2024 demonstrated strong civil society participation in urban planning, compared with 64 per cent of cities which showed low, very limited or no participation.

39. At the regional, national and local levels, urban forums and national habitat committees have become increasingly important mechanisms for ensuring that diverse voices are reflected in urban policy formulation and implementation. Since 2018, more than 30 countries have convened national urban forums as recurring, institutionalized platforms linking national and local governments, development partners, civil society and academia. The results of a 2025 UN-Habitat survey of 120 stakeholders indicate that while the platforms are valued, perceived influence in implementing the New Urban Agenda remains limited, indicating that there is scope to strengthen quality and inclusion.

40. Regional frameworks and platforms furthermore help translate the New Urban Agenda into context-specific action and strengthen coherence across levels of

<sup>38</sup> OECD, *Making Decentralisation Work: A Handbook for Policy-Makers* (Paris, 2019); OECD, *A Territorial Approach to Climate Action and Resilience: Policy Highlights* (Paris, 2023); United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Multi-level Government and SDG Localization in Africa* (2025).

<sup>39</sup> OECD, OECD Fiscal Decentralization Database, available at <https://www.oecd.org/en/data/datasets/oecd-fiscal-decentralisation-database.html> (accessed on 30 March 2026).

<sup>40</sup> UN-Habitat and OECD, *Global State of National Urban Policy 2024* (Nairobi, 2024).

government. Key examples include the Harmonized Implementation Framework for the New Urban Agenda in Africa and the Africa Urban Forum; the Asia-Pacific Urban Forum; the Arab Strategy for Housing and Sustainable Urban Development 2030; the Urban Agenda for the European Union and the Territorial Agenda 2030; and the regional action plan for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean and the Forum of Ministers and High-level Authorities of Housing and Urban Development of Latin America and the Caribbean.

## **B. Planning and managing urban spatial development**

41. Urban land consumption has continued to outpace population growth since 2016, though at a slower rate than during the preceding decades,<sup>41</sup> resulting in sprawling cities with higher infrastructure and service costs and increasing emissions and pressures on peri-urban land and ecosystems. By contrast, most cities in sub-Saharan Africa have become denser, potentially signalling either land-use efficiency or, where infrastructure lags, growing conditions of crowding and informality.

42. Well-managed and well-planned urbanization can leverage urban growth to advance inclusive, resilient and low-carbon development. Interest in compact, connected and proximity-based neighbourhoods has increased in recent years, particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic, yet implementation remains uneven and often insufficient to influence urban form at scale. While some cities have expanded green and quality public spaces, more efforts are needed to address the decreasing global average share of urban green space and increase transit-oriented development.

43. Zoning reforms and mixed-use development have emerged as critical enablers of more compact and inclusive urban growth; however, outdated zoning regulations, limited enforcement capacity and weak coordination between housing, transport and land-use planning constrain affordability and inclusion. Experiences in countries such as Lesotho and Slovakia highlight how incremental planning reforms, expanded serviced land and more compact, mixed-use development can help manage urban growth and limit the long-term costs of sprawl.

44. Urban regeneration has also gained traction as a tool to address spatial inequality and revitalize urban areas. Countries such as Malta and Romania have advanced area-based regeneration, illustrating how brownfield redevelopment and compact, land-efficient strategies can be adapted across urban contexts.

45. Despite widespread adoption of national urban policies, translating policy commitments into spatial planning coordination, infrastructure investment and sustainable land-use outcomes remains a challenge. Gaps between national urban policies, national development plans and municipal planning instruments persist, while local capacity constraints, fragmented institutional mandates and limited monitoring frameworks remain key barriers.

## **C. Financing the implementation of the New Urban Agenda**

46. Adequate and predictable financing remains one of the principal constraints on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. While investment needs in housing, infrastructure and basic services continue to grow, fiscal pressures have intensified in many contexts, hindering pro-poor financing approaches that prioritize affordability, inclusion and access for low-income populations. The COVID-19 pandemic, followed by inflationary pressures, rising debt servicing costs and constrained revenues, placed additional pressure on social services and infrastructure.

47. Land-based financing such as land and property taxation, development charges and betterment levies are critical for their potential to increase locally generated resources and finance services, infrastructure and housing. In Saudi Arabia, reforms to the white land and vacant real estate tax regime link charges to assessed property value, illustrating how stronger land registration and valuation practices underpin effective land-based financing, while reforms in Burkina Faso and Somalia highlight how strengthening land

<sup>41</sup> United Nations, *World Urbanization Prospects 2025: Summary of Results*.

and property registration and administration lays the institutional foundations for land-based financing options.

48. Countries are also diversifying housing finance beyond direct public provision, combining regulatory reform with performance-based financial incentives and enabling frameworks to leverage public and private investment. In Bahrain, the Government Land Development Rights Programme illustrates how national housing programmes can leverage public land and private developer financing to accelerate housing delivery and advance affordability objectives, while Algeria highlights diversification of housing finance to sustain large-scale delivery as public resources tighten.

49. Climate-related urban investment has expanded rapidly over the past decade, driven by multilateral development banks, bilateral providers, climate funds and mobilized private finance, yet cities in low- and middle-income countries continue to capture only a small share of global climate finance.<sup>42</sup> Access is often mediated through national governments, and financing remains fragmented across mitigation, adaptation and development objectives, underscoring the need for more integrated financing aligning climate, urban and local action.

50. Cities continue to face significant barriers to accessing sustainable finance, including weak project preparation capacity, high perceived risk and limited creditworthiness, restricting access to long-term capital. Strengthening local revenue mobilization remains critical, including through improved tax administration, digitalization, compliance and incremental reforms to expand own-source revenues.

#### **D. Strengthening capacity to promote sustainable urbanization**

51. Amid tightening fiscal conditions and rising implementation demands, capacity development has re-emerged as a critical lever for advancing sustainable urbanization. Across regions, Member States report that limitations in institutional capacity constrain progress more than the absence of policy frameworks. Skills constraints, rather than lack of policy intent, remain significant barriers to effective urban planning, service delivery and investment preparation.<sup>43</sup> Gaps are most acute in secondary and intermediary cities, absorbing much of current urban growth.

52. Data capacity gaps continue to limit evidence-based decision-making. While reporting on some urban indicators has expanded, including progress in measuring homelessness in several countries, large gaps remain in the availability of disaggregated, timely and comparable urban data. Recent reductions in international development assistance for household surveys and geospatial data systems pose further risks. Addressing these gaps will require sustained investment and stronger global coalitions.

53. Partnerships and digital innovation are playing an increasingly important role in strengthening capacity. Multi-stakeholder partnerships, such as the Global Urban Data Coalition established by UN-Habitat, are supporting data-sharing, peer learning and the diffusion of good practices, while advances in geospatial technologies, remote sensing and artificial intelligence offer new opportunities to improve urban data collection and analysis at lower cost.

#### **E. Using digital technology to support sustainable urban development**

54. Digital technologies have become increasingly central to how cities are planned, managed and governed, and to how residents access services, education and economic opportunities. Many governments have expanded digital service delivery, remote work tools and data-driven management, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic. Cities are also increasingly using geospatial and climate data platforms to inform risk mapping, early warning and resilience planning.

55. A key challenge over the past decade has been ensuring that digital transformation is inclusive and rights-based rather than technology-led. Persistent digital divides within and between countries continue to shape who benefits from digital services, while many

<sup>42</sup> Climate Policy Initiative, *Global Landscape of Climate Finance 2025* (2025).

<sup>43</sup> UN-Habitat and OECD, *Global State of National Urban Policy 2024*.

local governments face constraints in legal frameworks, digital infrastructure, skills, funding and data capacity, as well as meaningful community engagement.

56. People-centred approaches to smart cities have gained traction in response, emphasizing the role of technology to advance inclusion, sustainability and shared prosperity. This approach prioritizes equitable access, participatory design and the use of safeguards to manage risks, including privacy, data protection, cybersecurity and responsible use of artificial intelligence, consistent with the principles and commitments of the Global Digital Compact. Experiences in Botswana, Kuwait, Malaysia and the Republic of Korea illustrate how digital government and national smart city frameworks can support more inclusive, people-centred digital transformation.

#### **IV. Adequate housing as a catalyst for the next decade of urban transformation**

57. Respecting, protecting and fulfilling the right to adequate housing is central to accelerating implementation of the New Urban Agenda. Housing is an accelerator for the Sustainable Development Goals, driving progress in resilience, climate, health, the economy and equity, among others. Despite its systemic and multidimensional importance, however, the social function of land and housing is often overlooked, with housing frequently treated as a commodity or financial asset rather than as a public good essential to poverty reduction, resilience and sustainable development.

58. More than two thirds of countries have now adopted national housing policies, with affordability the most commonly addressed dimension. Housing and homelessness have increasingly featured in electoral debates in many countries, especially in Europe and North America, prompting the establishment of dedicated housing ministries and new institutional arrangements. This renewed priority is also reflected in the UN-Habitat strategic plan for the period 2026–2029, in which Member States mandated the organization to prioritize access to adequate housing, land and basic services, including through the transformation of informal settlements.

59. Transformative action in slums and informal settlements has particular potential to accelerate implementation of the New Urban Agenda. Large-scale, integrated upgrading can deliver simultaneous gains in tenure security, service access, climate resilience, public health, safety, and livelihoods, while reducing spatial inequality and preventing further informality. When anchored in inclusive planning, community participation and incremental investment, such interventions can generate multiplier effects that extend beyond housing, strengthening social cohesion, enhancing local economic activity and improving environmental outcomes at the city-wide scale.<sup>44</sup>

60. Housing is also increasingly recognized as an area requiring strengthened international cooperation, including through the Pact for the Future, the Doha Political Declaration and dialogues at the sixty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development and the thirtieth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

61. Importantly, this recognition was also reflected in the establishment of the Open-Ended Intergovernmental Expert Working Group on Adequate Housing for All in 2023, which brings together Member States and national experts to advance policy dialogue, share experiences, develop proposed recommendations on key housing policy areas,<sup>45</sup> and improve measurement of key housing challenges.

#### **V. Localizing the New Urban Agenda: empowering local and regional governments for accelerated delivery**

62. The effective implementation of the New Urban Agenda is inseparable from its localization, as cities and territories are where its commitments are translated into tangible outcomes. Experience since 2016 has underscored the central role of local and

<sup>44</sup> [HSP/OEWG-H.2025/INF/4](#).

<sup>45</sup> [HSP/OEWG-H.2025/2](#).

regional governments in advancing implementation, but also the need for adequate delivery capacity, multilevel governance and strengthened local institutions as prerequisites for achieving global development goals through local action.

63. Voluntary local reviews have emerged as a core tool for Sustainable Development Goal localization and accelerated delivery. As at the end of 2025, nearly 300 cities and subnational governments had published voluntary local reviews, which have evolved from reporting instruments into mechanisms for aligning local action with national priorities and global frameworks, integrating climate and equity considerations, and strengthening coherence and accountability across levels of government.

64. Local and regional governments are also increasingly shaping global policy processes through city networks and collective platforms, contributing local experience to global norms and implementation. Such engagement has shifted from advocacy towards policy co-production, guidance development and peer learning, enabling local practice to inform global frameworks and accelerate implementation at scale. The Secretary-General's report on recommendations on how engagement with local and regional authorities could advance the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular the localization of the Sustainable Development Goals,<sup>46</sup> prepared pursuant to action 55 (e) of the Pact for the Future, underscores complementary and mutually reinforcing options for more systematic and structured engagement, including through strengthened institutional mechanisms within the United Nations system.

65. Localization continues to depend on coherent multilevel alignment and addressing persistent gaps in institutional clarity and fiscal decentralization. For United Nations system coordination, platforms such as the Local2030 Coalition help by connecting local and regional governments with national authorities and partners, supporting implementation and monitoring, and translating global commitments into measurable impact on the ground.

## **VI. Strengthening United Nations system support through UN-Habitat and partnerships for the decade ahead**

66. The need for coherent United Nations system efforts to translate global housing and urban commitments into place-based action is urgent. In this context, UN-Habitat, within the scope of its mandate, serves as the focal point for sustainable urbanization and human settlements, accelerating action through evidence-based guidance, capacity development, operational support and stakeholder mobilization, as emphasized in paragraphs 128, 129, 165 and 171 of the New Urban Agenda. Stakeholder engagement has been critical, with the World Urban Forum serving as a global convening platform for dialogue, partnerships and knowledge exchange.

67. Effective coordination across the United Nations system remains critical for reducing fragmentation and aligning delivery. The system-wide strategy on sustainable urban development provides a framework for inter-agency collaboration, while reforms under the UN80 initiative further emphasize coherence and results-focused support at the regional and country levels, including through strengthened collaboration with international financial institutions.

68. Strengthening implementation also depends on improved urban data systems and coalitions, including through the Global Urban Monitoring Framework and the Global Urban Data Coalition, which support collaboration among cities, national statistical offices, development partners, international organizations and research institutions to improve urban data, methodologies and monitoring of Sustainable Development Goal 11 and the New Urban Agenda.

## **VII. Recommendations**

69. Implementation of the recommendations of the 2018 and 2022 quadrennial reports of the Secretary-General on progress in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda<sup>47</sup> remains uneven and partial. Advances are most evident in the adoption of national urban

---

<sup>46</sup> [A/79/968](#).

<sup>47</sup> [A/76/639-E/2022/10](#).

and housing policies, the harmonization of urban data and reporting methodologies, the expansion of stakeholder engagement platforms, and the growing recognition of cities as critical actors for achieving global development goals. At the same time, gaps remain in local implementation capacity, predictable financing, multilevel coordination, urban data disaggregation, and the translation of policy commitments into sustained investment and measurable impact, particularly in rapidly urbanizing, crisis-affected and resource-constrained contexts.

70. The following key actions are recommended to further accelerate implementation of the New Urban Agenda over the next decade, especially in the period before the next quadrennial report in 2030, and in accordance with the Pact for the Future:

(a) Member States are encouraged to position well-managed and well-planned urbanization as a powerful driver of social inclusion, economic productivity and environmental sustainability, including towards the Sustainable Development Goals Summit in 2027 and the post-2030 agenda. They are urged to enact national urban policies and establish national habitat committees as coordination and accountability mechanisms at the national level, addressing housing, land, basic services and informal settlements, and to use national urban forums and reviews of the New Urban Agenda as mutually reinforcing platforms for coordination and accountability.

(b) Member States are urged to adopt and implement housing policies that prioritize persons in vulnerable situations and low-income groups, especially people living in informal settlements and those experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Such policies should be delivered through integrated, time-bound national housing acceleration programmes that support incremental and in situ approaches, help prevent evictions, promote a range of housing options and delivery methods, and are supported by commensurate investment and enabling legal, administrative and planning frameworks.

(c) To progressively realize the human right to adequate housing and enable its role as an accelerator of the Sustainable Development Goals, Member States are urged to prioritize housing within national development agendas and to integrate the recommendations of the Open-Ended Intergovernmental Expert Working Group on Adequate Housing for All into implementation of the New Urban Agenda. Member States are further encouraged to strengthen support for the Working Group and its follow-up, including through predictable funding and technical and in-kind contributions, and to strengthen regional intergovernmental platforms on housing and urban development.

(d) Member States are encouraged to advance a coordinated response to homelessness as a growing global development challenge in both developed and developing countries, aligned with the recommendations of the Secretary-General's report on homelessness of 2025,<sup>48</sup> in order to strengthen prevention and reduction efforts.

(e) Member States are urged to strengthen innovative and sustainable financing frameworks and instruments, including subnational finance, in accordance with the Sevilla Commitment. These should enhance municipal finance and local fiscal systems, and better integrate urban planning with land-based finance. Multilateral financial institutions, regional development banks, development finance institutions and cooperation agencies are encouraged to expand access to efficient international finance for adequate housing and sustainable urbanization.

(f) Recalling the indispensable role of local and regional governments, and action 55 (e) of the Pact for the Future, Member States and the United Nations system are encouraged to strengthen structured engagement with local and regional authorities to advance the 2030 Agenda, particularly through localization of the Sustainable Development Goals. This includes strengthening existing institutional mechanisms for engagement in intergovernmental processes, including the institutionalization of the Local and Regional Governments Forum under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, with a potential connection with the Forum of Mayors; recognizing the contribution of the self-organized constituency of local and regional governments to sustainable development, consistent with Economic and Social Council modalities established in General Assembly resolution 67/290; and revitalizing the United Nations Advisory Committee of Local Authorities to perform a consultative function at the United Nations system level in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and

<sup>48</sup> A/80/316.

the New Urban Agenda, as outlined in document A/79/968. The options set out in document A/79/968 are complementary and mutually reinforcing, and, taken together, provide a coherent approach for structured engagement across the United Nations system. Member States may also consider additional options, including an annual hearing of local and regional governments and authorities convened under the auspices of the General Assembly and stronger engagement through United Nations country teams and reporting processes.

(g) Given the persistent urban data gaps, Member States are urged to strengthen national and local statistical systems, drawing on the Global Urban Monitoring Framework. They are further encouraged to leverage emerging digital technologies, including geospatial data, earth observation and artificial intelligence, in alignment with the human rights principles of the Global Digital Compact, and to collaborate through initiatives such as the Global Urban Data Coalition to improve the production, timeliness and comparability of disaggregated and time series housing and urban data.

(h) Recognizing that climate and nature action increasingly depends on effective local delivery, Member States are urged to translate the urban content of their nationally determined contributions and national biodiversity strategies and action plans into concrete urban action. Member States are furthermore encouraged to give high-level attention to sustainable urbanization and multilevel governance in relevant global processes, including through the ministerial meetings on urbanization and climate change convened at sessions of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, in accordance with resolution HSP/HA.2/Res.5, to help accelerate the implementation of the Paris Agreement, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the environmental dimensions of the New Urban Agenda.

(i) In recognition of the growing scale and duration of forced displacement and urban crises, Member States and United Nations system entities are encouraged to integrate refugees and internally displaced and stateless persons into national systems and embed sustainable solutions to displacement within urban and territorial development strategies, planning and financing, with a focus on housing, land and basic services and on strengthening self-reliance. They are further encouraged to expand human settlements approaches that support social, economic and territorial integration with host communities in displacement-affected contexts, and to ensure that fiscal transfers enable local governments to deliver solutions that strengthen social cohesion and respect human rights.

(j) Member States are called on, within the scope of available resources, to strengthen and reaffirm the role and expertise of UN-Habitat as the focal point within the United Nations system for adequate housing and sustainable urban development, including through enhanced system-wide coordination at the regional and country levels and strengthened collaboration with international financial institutions, consistent with the objectives of the UN80 initiative. This also includes elevating the Local2030 Coalition as a system-wide backbone for localization and multilevel governance. Furthermore, Member States are encouraged to ensure predictable and sustainable resourcing for UN-Habitat so that it can provide normative leadership and operational support, and play a convening role in support of implementation of the New Urban Agenda, including beyond 2030.

(k) In accordance with the evaluation of the Office of Internal Oversight Services,<sup>49</sup> United Nations system entities are requested to re-emphasize the United Nations system-wide strategy on sustainable urban development<sup>50</sup> and improve coherence across the United Nations system; strengthen territorial governance and delivery as a cross-cutting approach to localizing the 2030 Agenda and implementing the Pact for the Future, the Sevilla Commitment and the Doha Political Declaration; and update the strategy to strengthen coherence and coordination regarding housing and sustainable urbanization across the development, humanitarian and peacebuilding pillars at all levels, in support of United Nations reform.

---

<sup>49</sup> Office of Internal Oversight Services, “Mid-term evaluation of the UN-Habitat strategic plan for the period 2020–2025” (8 April 2024).

<sup>50</sup> [CEB/2019/1/Add.5](#).

(1) Member States are encouraged to leverage the World Urban Forum, within the scope of its existing mandate, as the global platform for New Urban Agenda follow-up and multi-stakeholder engagement, serving as an inclusive and action-oriented platform to advance implementation through peer learning, partnership-building and periodic stocktaking, including with youth and future generations, in accordance with the Pact for the Future and the Declaration on Future Generations.

---