

Political Declaration on the Midterm Review of the New Urban Agenda
Elements Paper

I. Our shared vision, principles and call for action

1. The Political Declaration on the Midterm Review of the New Urban Agenda will recognize sustainable urban development as a key driver for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular Sustainable Development Goal 11 on sustainable cities and communities, while also acknowledging its cross-cutting role in advancing all Sustainable Development Goals, including poverty eradication, climate action, and reducing inequalities. In this context, it will reaffirm the New Urban Agenda, adopted at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (HABITAT III) held in Quito in 2016, as the agreed global framework for sustainable cities and human settlements.
2. The Declaration will reaffirm and reinforce the shared vision, commitments and principles of the New Urban Agenda, including the commitment to leave no one behind. It will acknowledge that the central challenge is not an absence of agreed principles, but persistent and widening implementation gaps. To this end, strengthening and scaling the means of implementation of the New Urban Agenda, particularly at the local level, will be a central pillar of the Political Declaration.
3. The Declaration will recognize the transformative impact of well-planned and well-managed urbanization to advance poverty reduction, sustainable economic growth, productivity, climate resilience, environmental sustainability and social inclusion. It will emphasize a balanced and integrated approach across the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable urban development, particularly considering the multiple and interconnected challenges facing cities, including widening inequalities, informality, climate and disaster impacts, fiscal constraints, food insecurity, displacement, rapid technological change, and overlapping global crises.
4. While addressing the unique and emerging urban development challenges facing all countries, given the magnitude of impacts the Declaration will adequately reflect the priorities and needs of developing countries, in particular of least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States. It will reaffirm respect for national ownership, national legal frameworks and institutional arrangements, while promoting subsidiarity and enabling environments that empower local and regional governments with adequate mandates, resources and capacities, as well as coordination and accountability mechanisms.

5. The Declaration will affirm that towns, cities, and local and regional governments are not only beneficiaries but also key partners, co-creators and implementers in addressing global challenges and delivering sustainable development outcomes.
6. The Declaration will reaffirm internationally agreed frameworks relevant to sustainable urbanization, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, the Pact for the Future, the Sevilla Commitment, and the Doha Political Declaration of the World Social Summit, as well as global multilateral processes such as the United Nations Water Conferences. It will stress the importance of coherence, alignment and mutual reinforcement across these frameworks to enhance effectiveness and avoid fragmentation.

II. Transformative commitments for sustainable urban development

a. Sustainable urban development for social inclusion and ending poverty

7. The Declaration will underscore that effective implementation of the New Urban Agenda requires addressing persistent economic, social and spatial inequalities, including in informal settlements, peripheral and peri-urban areas. It will recognize structural drivers of inequality, including unequal access to land, services, finance, and decision-making processes.
8. Recalling that the New Urban Agenda is grounded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Declaration will state that inclusive urban policies are critical to respond to the needs of, and respect, protect and fulfil the human rights of all, particularly those at risk of being left behind, including women, children and youth, older persons, persons with disabilities, refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants, persons experiencing homelessness, as well as Indigenous Peoples and local communities. These policies should be grounded in rights-based, people-centred approaches and supported through gender-responsive, age-sensitive and disability-inclusive planning and budgeting. The Declaration will recall the urgency of ensuring access to adequate housing for all as a human right, and underscore the central role of adequate, affordable and quality housing in achieving broader sustainable development outcomes and climate resilience.
9. The Declaration will promote safe, inclusive and accessible public spaces that are free from violence and harassment, particularly for women, girls and families, and that foster social cohesion, participation and community well-being.
10. The Declaration will recognize that the global housing crisis has reached unprecedented levels. Globally, around 3 billion people do not have adequate housing, including more than 1 billion

people living in informal settlements and slums.¹ It will acknowledge that, while progress has been made in policy development and service expansion, implementation has not kept pace with the scale and complexity of housing and urban challenges. It will further recognize the scale and urgency of the global housing challenge, noting that the number of people living in slums and informal settlements has increased by over 120 million since 2016, reaching more than 1.1 billion.² In this context, it will promote practical approaches including slum upgrading, incremental housing, improved land tenure security, and the prevention of forced evictions, supported by scaled-up and sustained investment in adequate housing, as well as enable legal, administrative and planning frameworks.

11. The Declaration will recognize homelessness as a matter of urgency and a profound violation of human dignity, and call for comprehensive and integrated national and local responses across housing, health, employment and social protection systems, with a focus on prevention, reduction and long-term sustainable solutions, taking into account relevant existing United Nations guidance and recommendations, including those contained in the Secretary-General's 2025 report on homelessness.³
12. The Declaration will recognize eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, as one of the greatest global challenges and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development.
13. It will further emphasize universal and equitable access to essential services, including safe drinking water and sanitation services, food security and nutrition, public health, social protection and care systems, with a focus on affordability, quality and resilience to shocks. Particular attention will be given to the interlinkages between water and sustainable urbanization, including integrated water management and water-sensitive urban development.

b. Sustainable and inclusive urban prosperity and opportunities for all

14. The Declaration will recognize the central role of urbanization in driving economic growth, job creation and innovation. It will promote inclusive urban economies, recognizing that informal employment accounts for approximately 57 per cent of non-agricultural employment globally⁴ and that policies are needed to support decent work and livelihoods for all, including through support to micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises. It will further recognize that youth

¹ Paragraphs 7 and 8, *Report of the Secretary-General on progress in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda* (2026)

² Paragraph 8, *Report of the Secretary-General on progress in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda* (2026)

³ Paragraph 70(d), *Report of the Secretary-General* (2026)

⁴ Paragraph 17, *Report of the Secretary-General* (2026)

unemployment remains more than three times the rate globally, underscoring the need for expanded education, skills development and urban job creation.⁵

15. It will emphasize the importance of transitioning towards green, blue and digital economies that generate sustainable and future-oriented employment opportunities. It will also address barriers faced by women, informal workers, unpaid care workers and migrant workers, including through formalization pathways, labour protections and expanded social protection systems.
16. The Declaration will recognize that forced displacement has reached unprecedented levels, with 123 million forcibly displaced persons globally in 2024. This includes 74 million internally displaced by conflict, persecution and human rights violations, with more than 40 per cent residing in urban areas. It will call for integrated urban responses that embed displacement considerations into housing, services and local development planning.⁶
17. The Declaration will express deep concern over the impacts of armed conflict and crises on urban areas, including the destruction of infrastructure and the disruption of essential services. It will highlight the need for sustainable, inclusive and climate-resilient approaches to recovery, reconstruction and rehabilitation, while ensuring the protection of civilians and cultural heritage, in accordance with international law.
18. It will place renewed emphasis on developing affordable, quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, including in energy, transport, information and communications technologies, and water and sanitation, particularly in developing countries. This includes mobilizing adequate financing and investment and promoting low-carbon and digitally enabled services and infrastructure systems. The Declaration will prioritize safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems, including public transport and walking and cycling infrastructure, aligned with integrated land-use planning and transit-oriented development.
19. The Declaration will promote sustainable and inclusive industrial development, and sustainable consumption and production patterns, and foster an enabling environment for businesses and innovation, as well as livelihoods.
20. The Declaration will recognize that sustainable, inclusive and resilient food systems are integral to sustainable urban development and the key role of cities and human settlements in shaping food production, distribution and access, and further integrating food systems into urban planning and policies.
21. It will recognize the interdependence of urban and rural areas and promote integrated territorial approaches that strengthen connectivity, national and regional value chains, including market

⁵ Paragraph 18, *Report of the Secretary-General* (2026)

⁶ Paragraph 15, *Report of the Secretary-General* (2026)

linkages between urban and rural areas, while supporting balanced and inclusive spatial development across metropolitan areas, intermediate cities, small towns and rural areas.

22. The Declaration will promote sustainable spatial planning that prevents displacement, mitigates gentrification, ensures equitable land use, preserves cultural heritage and local identity, and promotes inclusive growth.
23. It will support the development of smart cities that leverage digital technologies to enhance service delivery, accessibility and economic opportunities, while ensuring that such technologies are inclusive, ethical and respectful of privacy and human rights.

c. Environmentally sustainable and resilient urban development

24. The Declaration will recognize cities as indispensable actors in addressing climate change, noting that cities account for more than 70 per cent of global energy-related greenhouse gas emissions while facing rapidly increasing exposure to heat, flooding and climate-related disasters.⁷ It will emphasize their critical role in both mitigation and adaptation efforts, and in advancing climate resilience and net-zero pathways.
25. It will promote the translation of nationally determined contributions and national biodiversity strategies and action plans into concrete urban action, including through investments in housing, integrated land-use planning and strengthened subnational finance system. It will encourage high-level attention to sustainable urbanization and multilevel governance in relevant global climate and biodiversity processes.⁸
26. It will further recognize that urban heat exposure contributes to approximately 500,000 deaths annually and requires targeted heat-risk management measures, particularly for vulnerable populations.⁹
27. The Declaration will promote integrated urban and territorial planning that incorporates ecosystem-based approaches, nature-based solutions, and just transition pathways that prevent the deepening of inequalities. It will recognize that disasters, climate impacts, biodiversity loss, environmental degradation and pollution disproportionately affect persons in vulnerable situations and can undermine sustainable urbanization.
28. It will strengthen commitments to resilient and risk-informed urban development, including disaster risk reduction, anticipatory action, multi-hazard early warning systems, and resilient recovery. It will further note that local disaster risk reduction strategies now cover 72 per cent

⁷ Paragraph 23, *Report of the Secretary-General* (2026)

⁸ Paragraph 70(h), *Report of the Secretary-General* (2026)

⁹ Paragraphs 30, *Report of the Secretary-General* (2026)

of municipalities in reporting countries and encourage expanded support for local preparedness and resilience.¹⁰

29. The Declaration will promote the protection and restoration of urban biodiversity through green and blue infrastructure, including urban forests, wetlands and other ecosystem-based approaches that enhance public health, resilience and environmental sustainability.
30. It will support the transition to circular economy models, promoting resource efficiency, sustainable consumption and production, waste reduction, recycling, and local circular value chains, including waste-to-energy solutions where appropriate.
31. It will also promote integrated and sustainable water management, including water-sensitive urban design and nature-based water solutions, ensuring the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

III. Effective implementation, follow-up and review

32. Effective implementation of the New Urban Agenda requires adequate, sustainable, predictable and accessible means of implementation, including finance, capacity-building, technology transfer on mutually agreed terms, and strengthened international and multilevel cooperation.

Finance

33. The Declaration will call for enhanced and innovative and sustainable financing frameworks and instruments, including subnational finance. It will emphasize the role of domestic resource mobilization, including through land-based financing instruments, fiscal decentralization where appropriate, and strengthened municipal finance systems. It will further call on international financial institutions to expand direct access to finances for cities and local authorities and to improve access to development finance through multilateral development banks, private investment, and blended finance mechanisms, in accordance with the Sevilla Commitment.¹¹
34. It will encourage the use of innovative and context-appropriate financing instruments, such as green and SDG-linked bonds, results-based financing, risk-sharing mechanisms, and public-private partnerships, supported by enabling environments that mobilize capital while safeguarding the public interest.
35. Particular attention will be given to ensuring that financial resources effectively reach the local level, including through direct access mechanisms for subnational governments, strengthened local capacities, and improved project preparation and investment pipelines.

¹⁰ Paragraph 32, *Report of the Secretary-General (2026)*

¹¹ Paragraph 70(e), *Report of the Secretary-General (2026)*

Multi-level governance

36. The Declaration will encourage Member States to integrate urban development into national and local development strategies through coherent national urban policies and territorial frameworks that align planning, budgeting and implementation, recognizing that the effective implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the 2030 Agenda is inseparable from localization at the city and territorial levels, with local and regional governments as key partners, co-creators and implementers of sustainable urban development.
37. It will recognize the growing adoption of national urban and housing policies over the past decade, with over 160 countries having adopted or in the process of developing national urban policy frameworks, while emphasizing that stronger implementation, coordination and resourcing remain critical to translating policy into implementation progress, including through national habitat committees for improved coordination and accountability in implementation. It will further encourage the use of national urban forums and reviews of the New Urban Agenda as mutually reinforcing platforms for coordination, accountability, peer learning and follow-up across levels of government.¹²
38. It will emphasize inclusive, multilevel governance systems that empower regional and local authorities through appropriate legal, institutional and fiscal frameworks, ensuring their effective participation in decision-making, implementation and reporting processes, and strengthening local delivery capacity.
39. The Declaration will recognize the role of mayors and local and regional authorities as key partners, co-creators and implementers of sustainable urban development. It will encourage stronger structured engagement with local and regional governments and authorities in intergovernmental and United Nations processes, particularly in support of SDG localization and implementation of the New Urban Agenda. In this regard, it may reflect, as appropriate, the complementary and mutually reinforcing options outlined in the Secretary-General's report on structured engagement with local and regional authorities, including strengthening existing institutional mechanisms for engagement, revitalizing consultative arrangements within the United Nations system, and enhancing engagement through United Nations country teams and reporting processes.¹³
40. It will promote whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches that foster coordination across all levels of government, as well as engagement with civil society, communities, academia, and the private sector.
41. The Declaration will recognize the role of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in the follow-up and review of the implementation of SDG 11 and the urban

¹² Paragraph 36, *Report of the Secretary-General (2026)*

¹³ Paragraph 70(f), *Report of the Secretary-General (2026)*

dimensions of all Sustainable Development Goals, and support its continued strengthening and effective utilization, including in advancing the outcomes of Sustainable Development Goals Summit in 2027 and informing the post-2030 development agenda¹⁴.

42. It will highlight the importance of strengthening voluntary national and local reporting mechanisms, including Voluntary Local Reviews, as key tools for accountability, monitoring and knowledge-sharing, noting that nearly 300 cities and subnational governments have already adopted them to align local action with national priorities and global framework and strengthen coherence and accountability across levels of government.¹⁵
43. The Declaration will reaffirm support for the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and its role as the focal point within the United Nations system for adequate housing, sustainable urban development, and implementation of the New Urban Agenda. This includes strengthening its normative and operational capacities, enhancing system-wide coordination on sustainable urbanization and human settlements, and strengthening collaboration with international financial institutions. It may also recognize the importance of predictable and sustainable resourcing for UN-Habitat so that it can provide normative leadership, operational support and convening functions in support of implementation of the New Urban Agenda, including beyond 2030.¹⁶
44. It may also call for renewed emphasis on the United Nations system-wide strategy on sustainable urban development in order to 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 support continued reflection on updating the strategy to better address housing and sustainable urbanization across the development, humanitarian and peacebuilding pillars¹⁷.
45. The Declaration will also recognize relevant intergovernmental platforms, such as the Open-Ended Intergovernmental Working Group on Adequate Housing for All as important spaces for policy dialogue, recommendations and exchange of experience. It will further encourage Member States to take into account, as appropriate, the recommendations of the Open-Ended Intergovernmental Expert Working Group on Adequate Housing for All in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, and to strengthen support for the Working Group and its follow-up, including through predictable financial, technical and in-kind contributions, as well as stronger regional intergovernmental platforms on housing and sustainable urban development.¹⁸

¹⁴ Paragraph 70 (a), *Report of the Secretary-General (2026)*

¹⁵ Paragraph 63, *Report of the Secretary-General (2026)*

¹⁶ Paragraph 70(j), *Report of the Secretary-General (2026)*

¹⁷ Paragraph 70 (k), *Report of the Secretary-General (2026)*

¹⁸ Paragraph 70(c), *Report of the Secretary-General (2026)*

46. The Declaration will acknowledge that integrated planning, national level urban regulations and legislation are bundled across different directorates and departments. To accelerate delivery, the declaration encourages governments to align and localize regulations across planning, engineering, transportation, infrastructure delivery, economic development etc.

Partnerships

47. The Declaration will emphasize the importance of partnerships in advancing sustainable urban development. It will recognize the World Urban Forum, within the scope of its existing mandate, as the global platform for follow-up to the New Urban Agenda and for multi-stakeholder engagement, serving as an inclusive and action-oriented space for dialogue, peer learning, partnership-building and periodic stocktaking.¹⁹
48. It will support stronger coordination of existing global and regional partnerships, including South-South, North-South and triangular, regional and international cooperation, that promote localization of the Sustainable Development Goals and multilevel collaboration, including the Local2030 Coalition, the Partnership Platform on Localizing the SDGs and the Coalition for High Ambition Multilevel Partnerships.
49. The Declaration will note the crucial role of civil society organizations, particularly grassroots and community-led organizations, in advancing the New Urban Agenda by co-designing, implementing and monitoring urban policies, and in promoting participatory governance and local democracy. It will reaffirm the importance of such organizations to enhance the delivery of housing, basic services and related amenities.
50. It will further recognize the important contribution of academia and research institutions in generating evidence, supporting innovation, strengthening data systems and informing evidence-based policymaking, capacity development and technology transfer on mutually agreed terms.
51. The Declaration will recognize that professional and related associations are a critical part of translating policy into practice. The declaration will reaffirm and promote strong role for improving professional capability towards delivery mechanisms such as planning, architecture, engineering, finance, sustainability, climate adaptation etc.
52. It will also promote transparent, accountable and inclusive public-private partnerships that contribute to the sustainable development, operation and maintenance of urban infrastructure and services, while safeguarding the public interest.

¹⁹ Paragraph 70(l), *Report of the Secretary-General* (2026)

Data and technology

53. The Declaration will recognize data, technology and innovation as strategic public goods that enable evidence-based urban planning, policymaking and service delivery, while acknowledging persistent gaps in the availability of disaggregated, timely and comparable urban data.²⁰
54. It will further recognize that capacity constraints, particularly at the local level and in secondary and intermediary cities, remain key barriers to the effective use of data and technology, and will call for strengthened institutional and technical capacities.
55. The Declaration will acknowledge the digital divide and related infrastructure and financial gaps, particularly in developing countries, and will call for enhanced technical and financial support to strengthen data systems, digital infrastructure and inclusive digital transformation.
56. It will call for strengthening national and local statistical systems, including through the Global Urban Monitoring Framework and the collaboration via the Global Urban Data Coalition, and will emphasize the importance of accessible, high-quality disaggregated data to support inclusive decision-making, monitor progress and ensure that no one is left behind.²¹
57. The Declaration will promote the responsible use of digital technologies, including artificial intelligence, geospatial information systems, remote sensing and the Internet of Things, to improve urban planning, service delivery and risk management, while ensuring robust data governance, privacy protection, cybersecurity and ethical standards.

²⁰ Paragraph 52, *Report of the Secretary-General* (2026)

²¹ Paragraph 70(g), *Report of the Secretary-General* (2026)