



UN-HABITAT

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FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

## **Closing Remarks by Ms. Anaclaudia Rossbach, Executive Director and Under-Secretary-General, UN-Habitat Thirteenth session of the World Urban Forum (WUF13), Closing Ceremony, 22 May 2026**

Her Excellency Ms. Amina Mohammed Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations,

His Excellency Mr. Jeyhun Bayramov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

His Excellency Mr. Hikmat Hajiyev, Head of the Foreign Policy Affairs department in the Presidential Administration

His Excellency Mr. Anar Guliyev, WUF13 National Coordinator and Chairman of the State Committee for Urban Planning and Architecture.

Excellencies,

Heads of State and Governments present,

Ministers, Honourable Representatives of Member States and Local Authorities;

Distinguished colleagues and guests – all protocols observed:

WUF13 brought together a record number of participants, 57,000 people from 176 countries here in Baku, including more than 3,000 joining online – has delivered a powerful and unified message:

We are at a decisive moment for the future of housing.

We can no longer afford the luxury of inaction.

The world must move from marginal progress to systemic transformation.

Housing systems across the globe are under immense pressure – strained by inequality, speculation, weak governance, rapid urbanization, displacement, and the escalating impacts of the climate crisis.

Housing markets are clearly failing to meet people's needs.

Billions are being pushed into inadequate, unsafe and unaffordable living conditions.

Yet amid this urgency, there is also clarity. And there is momentum.

This week, 11 Heads of State and Government, 88 ministers, 130 mayors, local and regional governments, civil society organizations, private sector leaders and communities came together around one fundamental truth:

Housing is not a commodity alone.

Housing is a human right.

It is the foundation of dignity, inclusion, opportunity, and climate resilience.

And it is one of the most powerful entry points for achieving the SDGs, including inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities.

As we mark the implementation midpoint of the New Urban Agenda, the message from Baku is clear:

The next decade must be defined by accelerated implementation, scaled delivery, and measurable impact in people's lives.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The six Dialogues, ten Special Sessions, more than 350 partner-led events and the vibrant EXPO have all reinforced the same call:

We need collective action grounded in people-centred urban development.

First, we must restore housing as a public responsibility.

Second, we must empower cities and communities.

Third, we must end forced evictions and protect vulnerable communities.

Fourth, we must transform housing finance.

Fifth, we must strengthen data systems and ensure decisions are guided by reliable, community-informed evidence.

And finally, we must build implementation systems that deliver – with clear targets, measurable accountability and genuine co-creation with communities.

Excellencies,

Dear friends,

As we carry this momentum forward, my message is simple:

From Baku to New York – through the High-Level Political Forum on SDG 11 and the UN General Assembly Midterm Review of the New Urban Agenda this July – we must place housing at the centre of the second decade of implementation and recognize it as a key accelerator of the Sustainable Development Goals.

From there, to Türkiye for COP31 and to the UAE for the UN Water Conference, we must ensure that housing is fully integrated into both the climate and water agendas.

As we move forward, please count on UN-Habitat's support through our presence in more than 90 countries and through global initiatives such as the Open-Ended Expert Working Group on Adequate Housing and the UN Local2030 Coalition.

We now look ahead with excitement to WUF14 in Mexico.

Before closing, allow me to once again express my deepest gratitude to the Government of Azerbaijan – and in particular to the State Committee on Urban Planning and Architecture, the Office of the President and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs – for hosting us so graciously here in Baku.

Azerbaijan, you demonstrated resilience, vision and extraordinary commitment.

You showed the world not only the capacity to build, but the capacity to rebuild and transform.

To the UN-Habitat team:

For the past two years, you have worked tirelessly to deliver a Forum that was substantive, innovative and impactful. Your professionalism, passion and dedication have been truly remarkable.

To our UN colleagues: Your strong presence here reflected the true spirit of One UN.

To the UN Department of Safety and Security: Thank you for taking care of us with both firmness and kindness.

To the WUF13 Azerbaijan Operations Company, volunteers, interpreters, caterers, service providers and partners. Our gratitude is immense.

To the media: Thank you for helping carry the message from Baku to the world.

The world needs to hear this Call to Action.

And finally, to the global urban community: You brought knowledge, experience, creativity, and inspiration to a Forum that belongs to you.

You demanded action – but you also reminded us that housing the world is possible.

And here we are, ready to answer that call.

Thank you.