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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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MESSAGE TO THE THIRTEENTH SESSION OF THE
WORLD URBAN FORUM

“Housing the world: Safe and resilient cities and communities.”

Baku, 18 May 2026

I send greetings to the 13th session of the World Urban Forum in Baku.

You meet amidst a surge of global crises — including conflicts, mounting energy costs, and the prospect of rising food prices.

Today’s agenda focuses on a challenge we talk about less often: the global housing crisis.

Nearly three billion people live in inadequate housing, often in informal settlements and slums.

No society is immune, from fast-growing cities in the developing world, to advanced economies with high rents and rising homelessness.

In my student days, volunteering in some of Lisbon’s poorest neighbourhoods, I saw how profoundly housing affects people’s health, education and future.

As Secretary-General, I am proud that the Pact for the Future and the Doha Political Declaration recognize housing as a priority.

And I welcome the upcoming ten-year review of the New Urban Agenda.

Now is the time to put housing at the centre of sustainable development.

By expanding access to housing that is adequate, safe and affordable;

Transforming informal settlements and slums;

And addressing inequalities that inflame social tensions.

Housing is a human right, and fundamental for human dignity.

Let this World Urban Forum be a catalyst to make it a shared reality.

Together, we can house the world — leaving no one behind.

Thank you.