



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **UN-Habitat and Alwaleed Philanthropies (Global) sign partnership to advance inclusive housing for persons with disabilities**

**Baku, 19 May 2026** – The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and Alwaleed Philanthropies (Global) formalized a strategic partnership through the signing of a contribution agreement during the thirteenth session of the World Urban Forum (WUF13) in Baku, marking a key milestone in advancing inclusive and sustainable housing solutions. The agreement supports a pilot project in Tunisia aimed at improving access to adequate housing for persons with disabilities.

The agreement was signed during a high-level networking side-event titled “Housing Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities and Mental Well-being for Sustainable and Inclusive Cities,” held as part of WUF13 engagements. The signing took place in the presence of Her Royal Highness Princess Lamia Bint Majed Al Saud, Secretary-General of Alwaleed Philanthropies and UN-Habitat Goodwill Ambassador for the Arab States, alongside UN-Habitat Executive Director Anacláudia Rossbach and UN-Habitat’s Regional Director for Arab States, Rania Hedeya. The session also brought together key stakeholders from across the region, including Aida Robbana, Head of the UN-Habitat Tunisia Office, and Reem Mallawi, Executive Manager of Global Initiatives at Alwaleed Philanthropies, among other participants.

“Housing is a human right that defines dignity, independence, and full participation in society. Through this partnership with UN-Habitat, we are advancing practical solutions that place persons with disabilities at the centre of housing policy and urban planning, demonstrating how inclusive design strengthens social cohesion and public well-being. This initiative reflects our belief at Alwaleed Philanthropies that investing in inclusive housing is an investment in resilient communities and a scalable approach that can inform national programmes, inspire broader regional adoption, and generate long-term sustainable impact aligned with the global agenda for inclusive cities,” said Her Royal Highness Princess Lamia Bint Majed Al Saud, Secretary-General of Alwaleed Philanthropies.

The agreement supports the implementation of a flagship project titled “Promoting sustainable and inclusive housing for persons with disabilities in the Arab region: a pilot project in Tunisia,” aimed at expanding access to adequate housing and strengthening social inclusion.

Anacláudia Rossbach, UN-Habitat Executive Director, said: “This partnership reflects a deliberate shift from commitments to implementation. In Tunisia, we are working with

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national partners to demonstrate what inclusive housing looks like in practice, adapting existing homes, influencing future developments, and embedding accessibility into the way cities are planned and built. Our objective is not only to improve living conditions for persons with disabilities, but to show that inclusive urban development is achievable, scalable, and essential to delivering on the promise of sustainable cities for all."

The project, in partnership with Alwaleed Philanthropies (Global), will be implemented over a two-year period from June 2025 to June 2027, with the objective of enhancing accessibility, inclusion, and quality of life for persons with disabilities through tailored housing solutions in Tunisia.

In a context where more than 500,000 people with disabilities face significant barriers in accessing adequate housing and urban services, the project responds to persistent gaps in inclusive urban planning and housing design. It will be implemented in pilot areas in Greater Tunis and Tataouine, supporting the adaptation of existing housing units as well as the integration of accessibility features into new social housing developments in coordination with national programmes.

In addition to infrastructure interventions, the project will include capacity-building activities targeting government institutions, urban practitioners, and persons with disabilities. A central component of the initiative is the design and adaptation of at least 100 housing units specifically tailored to the needs of persons with disabilities, integrating accessibility features and innovative solutions to enhance independence and well-being, and serving as a scalable model for inclusive housing in Tunisia.

"Across the Arab region, access to adequate and inclusive housing remains a real challenge for many communities, particularly for persons with disabilities. This partnership with Alwaleed Philanthropies gives us the opportunity to respond to that challenge in a concrete way. The Tunisia pilot is a chance to test solutions that are grounded in real needs, and to draw lessons that can inform how we work with governments and partners across the region. Our aim is for accessibility to become part of how housing programmes are designed from the start, not added on later, said Rania Hedeya, UN-Habitat's Regional Director for Arab States.

Alwaleed Philanthropies, as a key Saudi Arabian non-profit foundation, plays a central role in enabling the implementation of this initiative, reinforcing a long-standing collaboration with UN-Habitat to support inclusive urban development solutions.

The partnership reflects a shared commitment to advancing practical and scalable approaches that improve access to adequate housing for persons with disabilities and strengthen social inclusion across the region,

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The event served as a platform to highlight the launch of the Tunisia pilot project, share best practices, and promote inclusive housing solutions for persons with disabilities, while generating recommendations to strengthen policies and practices across the region.

“In Tunisia, we see every day how the lack of accessible housing limits independence and full participation for persons with disabilities. Through this partnership, we are working with national partners to test practical solutions on the ground, solutions that can be scaled and integrated into existing housing programmes to ensure that accessibility becomes a standard, not an exception,” said Aida Robbana, Head of the UN-Habitat Tunisia Office.

The initiative responds to persistent barriers faced by persons with disabilities in accessing suitable housing and urban services. By combining infrastructure interventions, capacity building, awareness-raising, and policy support, the partnership aims to contribute to more inclusive and resilient urban systems in Tunisia and serve as a scalable model for the wider region.

Aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 11 on inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities and human settlements, the initiative also supports Tunisia’s national housing priorities, including the Specific Programme for Social Housing and the National Programme for the Rehabilitation of Low-Income Neighbourhoods. By promoting inclusive design and improving access to adequate housing for persons with disabilities, the project contributes to strengthening national efforts to ensure more equitable and inclusive urban development, reinforcing the commitment to leaving no one behind.

### About the World Urban Forum

Established in 2001 by the United Nations, the World Urban Forum is the premier global conference on sustainable urbanization, designed to examine the impacts of rapid urbanization on cities, communities, economies, and climate change. Since its inception, WUF has been hosted in cities across the world, with the first session held in Nairobi, Kenya, in 2002.

### About UN-Habitat

UN-Habitat is the United Nations entity responsible for sustainable urbanization. It has programmes in over 90 countries supporting policymakers and communities to create socially and environmentally sustainable cities and towns. UN-Habitat promotes transformative change in cities through knowledge, policy advice, technical assistance, and collaborative action. To know more, visit [unhabitat.org](http://unhabitat.org) or follow us on social media @UNHABITAT.

### About Alwaleed Philanthropies

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For over four decades, Alwaleed Philanthropies has invested more than USD 5 billion in social welfare, launching over 1,000 projects across 190+ countries. Managed by 10 Saudi women, the foundation has reached more than 1.5 billion people worldwide, regardless of gender, race, or religion. It collaborates with various philanthropic, governmental, and non-governmental organizations to empower women and youth, develop communities, provide disaster relief, promote cultural understanding, and support environmental health.

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