



## Baku Call to Action

Inspired by the action-oriented nature of the thirteenth session of the World Urban Forum (WUF13) held in Baku, Azerbaijan, the Baku Call to Action is the result of a collective, co-produced, equitable, and inclusive process. It presents a set of diverse contributions from stakeholders across sectors and spheres of governance, including civil society organizations, women, older persons, children and youth, Indigenous Peoples, professionals, academia, researchers, local and regional governments, persons with disabilities, parliamentarians, the private sector, and other actors working in the housing domain.

This document is the result of months of work involving comprehensive stakeholder consultations ahead of the World Urban Forum. We welcome and celebrate the progress, calling for it to be adopted as standard practice across the World Urban Forum cycle with pre and post-consultations, guided by a structured multi-stakeholder engagement mechanism to ensure continuity and accountability.

We express sincere appreciation to the Government of Azerbaijan for hosting a pioneering WUF13 with more than 58,000 participants from 176 countries participating, making it the largest WUF to date. The first time in history, at the initiative of the host country, 27 Heads of State and Heads of Government participated in the Leaders' Statement Summit. Over hundred ministers, United Nations (UN) Deputy Secretary General (DSG) and several high-level dignitaries. The innovations of WUF13 include Baku Urban Award, Business and Innovation Hub, WUF Academy campus and Practices Hub.

### Preamble

The global housing crisis is reaching its tipping point. This crisis is not accidental but the result of deep structural, systemic, and governance failures. This polycrisis is driven by complex and interconnected factors, related to dispossession, colonization, racism, inequality and other historical and current contexts.

It is estimated that 3.4 billion people are affected by inadequate housing globally.

A home is not just four walls and a roof. It is a place of dignity, culture and identity, and most importantly, an anchor for a secure future. It is a central piece in an interconnected system to other public amenities and services such as public spaces, schools, transportation, health facilities, and others. Housing must therefore be recognized for its social and environmental function and prioritized as a human right at the heart of the development agenda integrated into a broader vision for the right to the city, social protection and economic growth.

- All over the world, the financialization and commodification of housing is deepening urban inequality and poverty. Homes are becoming unaffordable, compounded by gentrification and increasing insecure tenure that are pushing spatial inequities and homelessness;
- Poor land management and planning systems are at the heart of many housing challenges from spatial segregation, infrastructure inequalities and sprawl, often resulting in market speculation and displacement;



- Despite global and national commitments, public funding for housing is shrinking and conventional finance remains fragmented, short-term and poorly connected to the territories where housing is planned, serviced, upgraded, built and managed;
- Local and regional governments are at the frontline of urban transformation and delivery but often do not have the mandate, capacity or resources to address the global housing crisis;
- Conflict, war and uricide are directly impacting civilian infrastructure such as schools, hospitals, public amenities and homes as well as ecology and biodiversity rendering people homeless and often forcing them to become refugees or Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).;
- Urban centres, megacities and secondary cities are rapidly changing in demography. Most are struggling to meet the demands for intergenerational housing systems that support and care for persons with disabilities, youth, children, women, Indigenous Peoples and older persons;
- Forced evictions are increasing globally, directly resulting in displacement and exacerbating the housing crisis. Demolition of a home goes much beyond losing personal belongings. It carries long lasting mental, emotional and physical trauma;
- Globally, cities are deeply impacted by climate change including dramatic flooding, urban heating and poor air quality. The families and individuals living in inadequate housing face the disproportionate impact of the changing climate;
- Historically, women have carried the burden of care work yet still face structural barriers regarding housing, property ownership, employment, basic services and mobility, amongst others.
- The economic crisis and other contributing factors are rendering families and individuals homeless at an unprecedented pace. Many cities are choosing to criminalise the homelessness, often with little solutions or alternatives on the table;
- Globally, housing is not adequately integrated into broader economic and infrastructure systems such as water and sanitation, electricity, mobility, connectivity, public amenities, education and health. Uncoordinated delivery, maintenance and financing of infrastructure and basic services compound the impacts of housing inadequacy.
- Construction and building materials like concrete contribute close to one third of global greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) at the expense of using low-carbon alternatives, traditional and indigenous construction techniques.
- Inadequate professional capacity, data and evidence often breed poor decision-making, encouraging exploitative practices and corruption.

Despite these common features, each neighbourhood, city, country, region and continent is distinct. To truly understand the nature of this crisis, local and national context truly matters.

The scale of the global housing challenge calls for an assertive, concerted, and urgent response. At the heart of this Call to Action is a plea for housing to be reprioritized, guided by the stewardship of integrated housing policies, supported by organized multi-stakeholder action, long-term context specific financing, improved implementation capacity, multilevel governance, sustained public investment, and measurable accountability mechanisms.

## Moving from diagnosis to action

We recognize the continued commitments that have shaped multilateral action on housing, from inclusion of Adequate Housing as an internationally recognized human right, to the Habitat processes and leading up to the 2030 Agenda and the Pact for the Future. In a year that marks the tenth anniversary of the New Urban Agenda, we call on Member States to accelerate implementation and strengthen UN-Habitat's catalytic function as a partnership and convening agency in addressing the global housing crisis.

UN-Habitat's Strategic Plan 2026–2029 offers a blueprint for accelerating action on housing through diverse mechanisms such as the Open-Ended Intergovernmental Expert Working Group on Adequate Housing for All (OEWG-H). Member States and stakeholders are encouraged to engage actively in the working group, nominating experts and practitioners and promoting inclusive participation by ensuring inclusion of underrepresented groups.

There is a clear opportunity to position the next decade, and subsequent five sessions of the World Urban Forum (2026–2036), as a decade of action to accelerate implementation of the New Urban Agenda and deliver measurable progress on SDGs. WUF outcomes should include trackable commitments, document successful programmes and projects and share implementation pathways to inform the post-2030 agenda.

Local and national processes contribute towards building strong political momentum towards the housing agenda. The summaries of the Ministerial Meeting on the New Urban Agenda (NUA), the Nairobi Declaration of the Second Africa Urban Forum (April 2026) and many regional agreements set out ambitious priorities on adequate, affordable, inclusive and climate-resilient housing. This document also opens the possibility of new forms of south-south and north-south collaboration, learning and cooperation.

These calls to action are organized into three areas: recognizing the underlying rights and drivers of the housing crisis, responding to its direct manifestations and transform housing systems for a just, inclusive, resilient and sustainable future for all.

## Recognize underlining rights and drivers

### 1. **Protect, respect and fulfil our human rights!**

Across contexts, housing continues to be treated as a commodity rather than as a right, with evictions, demolitions, conflicts and displacement undermining dignity, security and livelihoods. We call for the full adoption and enforcement of a human rights approach to housing, including safeguards against forced evictions, stronger tenure and tenant protections, as well as access to justice. With support from international organizations, national and local governments must embed this call into legal, policy, land use planning and institutional frameworks that recognize and protect the social and environmental function of housing. We call for institutionalizing community-led and participatory approaches within regional, national and local housing systems.



## **2. Protect our homes!**

Families, individuals and internally displaced people are often pushed into insecure or substandard housing, exposing them to further displacement, insecurity and exclusion. We call for integrated housing approaches that link humanitarian response, recovery and long-term development, advancing climate-resilient and people-centred urban recovery in fragile and post-conflict settings and facilitating their access to development and climate finance. National and local governments, humanitarian and development actors, and international institutions must protect housing and essential civilian infrastructure, strengthen safeguards against displacement and destruction, and uphold mechanisms that ensure these protections are effectively enforced. There are significant global precedents for post-conflict reconstruction including from host government of Azerbaijan. We urge a coordinated approach to prioritise reconstruction and recovery efforts and ultimately the return of internally displaced people (IDPs) to their homes. Free and prior informed consent should be guaranteed by all national governments.

## **3. Recognize our diversity!**

Housing systems continue to overlook the local contexts and the intersection of gender, ethnicity, culture, age, disability, legal status and citizenship that foster exclusion and unequal access to land and housing. We call for intergenerational, and intersectional approaches to housing that place people at the centre of policy and delivery, recognizing diverse groups as co-creators. Civil society and grassroots movements must lead together with government, private sector and professionals embedding and protecting diversity in housing policies.

## **4. Make our homes climate resilient!**

Climate impacts are accelerating housing insecurity and displacement, disproportionately affecting communities already facing social, economic and environmental precarity across neighbourhoods, cities and regions. Repeated floods, droughts, biodiversity loss, pollution, extreme heat, and worsening air quality are having devastating impacts on public health, ecosystems, livelihoods, livability, and overall quality of life. We call for housing systems that strengthen climate resilience, preserve biodiversity and mitigate harmful impacts through nature-based, community-led and locally grounded solutions, committed to climate justice and supported by environmentally conscious urbanization and planning. We call for strengthening people-led localized, indigenous and traditional practices along with national and local government interventions towards resilient infrastructure, renewable energy, basic services, disaster preparedness and prevention, livelihoods and social networks.

## **Responding to direct manifestations**

### **5. Home as the catalyst for integration!**

Housing is too often located in isolation from infrastructure, essential services and economic opportunities, with urban sprawl, spatial segregation and poorly coordinated land-use planning pushing low-income households into peripheral and exclusionary areas far from jobs, services and opportunities. We call for an integrated and participatory spatial planning approach, with a gender lens, that connects housing with transport, services, livelihoods, and natural and cultural heritage, while promoting mixed, inclusive and well-serviced intergenerational neighbourhoods. We call upon professionals, academia and



research institutions to develop a shared vision with government and civil society calling for integrated urban planning and targeted subsidies that include housing, economic opportunities and transport.

#### **6. Ensure homes are affordable for all!**

Housing is becoming increasingly unaffordable due to rising land values, property speculation, short-term rentals, insecure labour markets, limited housing supply and unequal access to finance, forcing many households into homelessness and inadequate living conditions. We call for sustained measures to improve affordability, including expanding access to rental and social housing, advancing inclusionary zoning, strengthening subsidies and cost-reduction strategies, regulating speculative practices, improving property taxation systems and access to finance across income groups. We encourage Parliamentarians and National government to introduce legislative measures that protect affordability, while encouraging increased delivery through public housing programmes, Development Finance Institutions (DFI's), private sector & self-built housing initiatives.

#### **7. Ensure housing without discrimination!**

Neighbourhoods go beyond their physical shape and location; they are spaces of care, social connection, culture, safety and collective life that enable human capabilities, wellbeing and community belonging to flourish. We call for housing approaches that recognize gender, diversity, sexual orientation and promote accessibility, proximity, safety, wellbeing and social inclusion by addressing gender-based violence, strengthening public and shared spaces, and advancing universal and inclusive housing design. We urge government, professional bodies and civil society to develop clear guidelines that foster inclusive and mixed-use neighbourhoods strengthening social cohesion, reduce segregation and improve safety, health and dignity for all.

#### **8. Stop forced evictions!**

Forced evictions and displacement constitute gross violations of internationally recognized human rights, undermining housing security, destroying livelihoods, aggravating the climate crisis, eroding dignity and weakening community systems, often without adequate safeguards or alternatives. We call for stronger protections against forced evictions and displacement, including legal safeguards, monitoring mechanisms and preventive approaches that ensure security of tenure, while prioritizing in-situ upgrading, community-led approaches, and adequate compensation and alternatives wherever relocation cannot be avoided. Parliamentary committees, government departments, human rights institutions and international organizations supported by United Nations (UN) agencies must strengthen accountability and establish permanent multi-stakeholder mechanisms to monitor, map and address global patterns of forced evictions and displacement.

### **Transforming housing systems**

#### **9. Diversify housing approaches!**

Millions are already shaping cities through self-built, incremental and informal housing systems, yet these realities remain excluded from policy and legal recognition. We call for an approach that is diverse and



locally grounded that includes incremental housing, city-wide informal settlement upgrading, regularization, rental and social housing, cooperatives, community land trusts, inclusionary housing and community-led homes. We encourage stronger collaboration between national and local government, civil society, housing providers and operators, private sector finance institutions and banks that innovate and incentivise demand-driven programmes through a combination of public, private, community, micro and blended financial instruments.

#### **10. Secure land for homes!**

Rising urbanization, mounting financialization and weak land governance systems are driving increasing land costs, property speculation, spatial inequality and insecurity of tenure. We call for stronger public and local stewardship of land systems through appropriate regulation of land markets, curbing speculation, property taxation, inclusionary housing, development charges and land value capture that ensure equitable access to serviced and de-risked land. We appeal to parliaments and national departments to decentralize land management to local authorities and local governments, land institutions, communities and development actors must strengthen tenure rights and protections while advancing inclusive and accountable land governance systems.

#### **11. Provide money where the need is!**

Housing finance systems remain fragmented, uncoordinated and inaccessible, with limited public investment, unequal access to credit and mechanisms that fail to reach low-income households and communities. We call for the reimagining of housing finance value chain to prioritize inclusion and scale by strengthening municipal finance with a focus on fiscal autonomy and revenue generation strategies. We call on development banks and the private sector to prioritize access to credit and establish predictable, long-term financing frameworks that are territorially grounded and accessible to those most in need. We encourage the private sector to partner with national and local governments, central banks, financial institutions and organized community savings to pioneer new ways to calculate and manage risk, target subsidies, expand access to credit and blend finance. We encourage Parliamentarians and national treasury to diversify government subsidies to cater to diversity of housing approaches, drawing in private and community-led savings.

#### **12. Encourage a multi-sector and multi-actor approach!**

Fragmented planning systems continue to reinforce exclusion, spatial inequality and inefficient urban growth by disconnecting housing from land, infrastructure, transport, livelihoods and essential services. We call for integrated and systems-based planning approaches that embed housing within broader territorial and urban frameworks while advancing equity, inclusion and spatial justice and the right to the city. We urge that this process is driven through empowering local governments, civil society organizations, grassroots movements and private sector actors to co-produce outcomes.

#### **13. Strengthen multilevel and participatory governance!**

Effective housing systems require strong cooperation, partnerships and coordination across all levels of government and grassroots, civil society, professionals and development actors. Local and regional governments, from intermediary to mega-cities, are often tasked with implementation without the mandates,



financing or institutional support required to deliver effectively. We call upon Member States to drive structural reforms that clarify responsibilities, improve coordination across institutions, sectors and stakeholders, and empower local and regional governments through decentralized financing, participatory planning tools and strengthened institutional and implementation capacity. National, regional and local governments, communities, professionals, development partners and civil society must strengthen multilevel and multi-stakeholder governance mechanisms at metropolitan and regional levels that support inclusive housing delivery, city-wide informal settlement upgrading and locally grounded urban transformation.

**14. Commit to implementation, accountability and delivery!**

Commitments to housing are not lacking, yet delivery continues to fall short due to weak coordination, limited capacity, and ineffective systems. We call for implementation of national housing strategies, with clear pathways, measurable targets and strong monitoring and reporting mechanisms, alongside sustained investment in education, training and professional development systems that strengthen implementation capacity. We encourage civil society, local, regional and national governments to establish partnerships, strong National Habitat Forums and joint committees to build capacity, strengthen coordination, document successful practices and monitor progress. At a global level, we encourage UN-Habitat to use the World Urban Forum as a key convenor to monitor progress in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and scale up successful housing practices.

**15. Use knowledge and data for public interest!**

Housing systems often operate with poor, disaggregated and outdated information related to land records, housing and market studies, census and demographic information and economic evidence. This hinders the ability to respond to rapidly changing needs, natural disasters or to long-term planning. We call for a strong commitment to an evidence-based approach that combines local and community-led data with scientific and academic knowledge. We call for academic institutions, research partners and practitioners to bridge knowledge and capacity gaps, integrating the possibilities of artificial intelligence, towards a stronger analytical and empirical frameworks. We encourage international organizations, governments and the academic community to advocate for more resources to accelerate research, particularly in the global south. This includes developing targeted programmes for capacity development of professionals, public sector officials, civil society & grassroots movements towards participatory planning processes.

**In conclusion**, we thank the Government of Azerbaijan and its people for their warm hospitality. The Baku Call for Action is an ambitious call to confront the housing crisis at its roots. Together, we must organize and confront these challenges, leaving no one behind.

**Disclaimer** The Baku Call to Action is a stakeholder-driven outcome document from WUF13 based on consultations and deliberations among stakeholders and partners. The document does not constitute a negotiated intergovernmental outcome and does not necessarily reflect the views or official positions of Member States or the Secretariat of the United Nations.