

Provisional Overview of Key Facts and Outcomes of the Innovate 4 Cities 2026 Conference

Background on Innovate4Cities (I4C)

- Innovate4Cities took place on the UN compound from 21-24 June 2026, for the first time on the African continent
- Co-hosted by the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy (GCoM) and UN-Habitat, I4C26 was the fourth global convening at the crossroads of city climate science, policy and practice.
- This Conference brought together a diverse group of participants, who generate evidence, make decisions, shape policy and implement urban climate action across local, regional, and national government, alongside academia, civil society and industry.

Participation and programme

- Around **1200 participants** joined Innovate4Cities in person – and many more online! Of these,
 - o 52% were women
 - o 10% were youth
 - o three-quarters from this continent
 - o one-quarter are from academia
 - o 36% from NGOs
 - o 12% from the private sectors
 - o 10% from local and national governments
- **The I4C programme featured**
 - o A field trip was jointly organized by UN-Habitat and GCOM to Korogocho and Go Down Arts Centre on Sunday 21 June
 - o Opening session featuring ED UN-Habitat, ED UNEP, Co-Managing Director GCOM, Representative of Nairobi City County
 - o Multiple plenary sessions on multilevel governance, housing, science to action, finance and data
 - o Member States briefing on the IPCC Special Report and COP31, chaired by the PR of Türkiye
 - o Local leaders roundtable bringing together 50+ local leaders
 - o Youth roundtable, bringing together 100+ youth
 - o Largest in-person organized review of the IPCC Special Review on Climate Change and Cities, with 100+ members
 - o Over 130 partner-led events, AI hackathon, business-city roundtable, workshops and closed-door sessions

High-level takeaways:

1. **The development and climate agenda need to go together.** And cities are the place where this can turn into a reality.
2. **The strong presence of local leaders showed the diversity of solutions that are out there,** not as ideas, but being delivered on the ground, to the people.
3. **Youth presence was overwhelming in all the sessions, in all the rooms.** Youth voices were heard loud and clear: young people are not passively watching, but important actors and decision-makers
4. **Data and technology alone will not save us.** By combining AI and behavioral science with the power of localized storytelling, we can shift mindsets.
5. **Urban sustainability cannot be designed in isolation from the people it serves.** African solutions hold many of the solutions we need, and it is the most fitting place to shape global urban climate solutions.
6. **Housing and climate change are not disconnected crises.** Housing is at the centre of the climate discussion. People-centered climate approach needs to start at home.
7. **Bridge the gap between climate finance and urban realities.** We must structurally realign NDCs 3.0 and global finance flows to ensure capital lands directly in the cities and communities that need it the most.
8. **IPCC Special Report is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.** We will have the knowledge. Then it will be on all of us to turn this into a reality on the ground.
9. **We need real case studies.** And Innovate4Cities showed the practicality of solutions - to learn and replicate.
10. **No single actor can solve urban challenges alone. We need radical collaboration and coalitions.** Government, businesses, researchers, civil society and communities must work together to develop and scale solutions.

Next steps:

- Develop a strategy for disseminating the IPCC Special Report on Climate Change and Cities (March 2027)
- Planning for the next Innovate4Cities to be held in 2028