



2026 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF)

SDG 11 Side Event

Title:

Accelerating SDG 11: Building Sustainable, Inclusive and Resilient Cities through Integrated Urban Systems and Human Rights: Sustainable Housing, Mobility and Circular Solutions

Date: 10 July 2026

Time: 13:15-14:30

Venue: Conference Room 11, UN Headquarters, New York

Partners: UN-Habitat, UNDRR, OHCHR and UNCRD/UN DESA, Custodian Agencies for SDG 11

Contributing Member States: Spain, Japan, Malawi, Azerbaijan, China, the Philippines, Bangladesh, Nepal

Background

The world is undergoing one of the most significant urban transitions in human history. According to the United Nations World Urbanization Prospects 2025, cities are now home to approximately 45 per cent of the global population, more than double the 20 per cent recorded in 1950, while a further 36 per cent live in towns and semi-dense areas. By mid-century, nearly 70 per cent of humanity is expected to reside in urban areas. Cities already account for approximately 70-75 per cent of global energy consumption, generate most of the global economic output, and concentrate critical infrastructure, services, assets and innovation. As urban populations continue to grow, demand for housing, transport, energy, water, land and waste management systems is expected to increase significantly, placing unprecedented pressure on urban ecosystems, public resources, governance systems as well as on efforts to fulfil human rights and leave no one behind in achieving sustainable development.

At the centre of this urban transition lies a growing housing crisis and a widening challenge to the realization of the human right to adequate housing. Nearly 3 billion people worldwide lack access to adequate housing, while more than 1.1 billion people live in slums and informal settlements characterized by overcrowding, insecure tenure, inadequate services, poor living conditions and heightened exposure to environmental and health risks. Recognized under international human rights law as part of the right to an adequate standard of living, adequate housing extends beyond shelter to encompass security of tenure, affordability, habitability, accessibility, availability of services, cultural adequacy and access to opportunities. Yet for millions of people, particularly women, children, persons with disabilities, migrants and other groups in vulnerable situations, these rights remain out of reach. Housing challenges are increasingly interconnected with broader urban issues, including poverty, inequality, climate vulnerability, infrastructure deficits, limited fiscal space, environmental degradation and limited access to economic opportunities. Housing has therefore emerged not only as a social and development imperative but also as a cornerstone of human dignity, social justice, urban resilience and sustainable development.

At the same time, cities are increasingly on the front line of climate change and disaster risk. The concentration of people, infrastructure and economic activity in urban areas has amplified exposure to floods, heatwaves, storms, droughts and other hazards. The impacts of disasters often cascade across



interconnected urban systems including housing, transport, water, energy, health, education and livelihoods resulting in prolonged social and economic disruption. These impacts disproportionately affect low-income communities and residents of informal settlements, where vulnerability is frequently concentrated. Strengthening urban resilience is therefore essential not only for safeguarding development gains but also for protecting human rights and ensuring that no one is left behind.

As the international community approaches the final years of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, progress towards SDG 11 remains uneven and insufficient. Evidence from Voluntary National Reviews, New Urban Agenda reporting processes, and global assessments consistently point to fragmented and sector-specific approaches as a major constraint to implementation. Housing, mobility, resilience, resource efficiency, ecosystem protection and service delivery are often planned and managed independently despite their strong interdependencies. At the same time, growing inequalities and persistent gaps in access to adequate housing highlight the need for development pathways that place human rights, equity, participation and accountability at the centre of policymaking. Accelerating progress towards inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities therefore require integrated urban systems that align policy, planning, financing, governance and implementation across sectors while advancing the realization of human rights.

Global frameworks provide a strong mandate for such action. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the New Urban Agenda, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and international human rights instruments collectively call for cities that are inclusive, resilient, environmentally sustainable and responsive to the needs and rights of all residents. Complementary initiatives, including the Aichi 2030 Declaration on Environmentally Sustainable Transport (2021-2030), the Jaipur Declaration on 3R and Circular Economy (2025-2035), the UN Decade of Sustainable Transport (2026-2035), and emerging sustainable city standards and guidelines, further emphasize the need for systemic transformation in how cities are planned, financed, managed and monitored.

Against this backdrop, this side event will examine how integrated urban approaches grounded in human rights can accelerate implementation of SDG 11 by placing people, adequate housing and dignity at the centre of urban transformation. It will showcase practical experiences from cities and countries that are advancing sustainable transport, circular economy practices, nature-based solutions, resilient infrastructure and risk-informed urban planning while addressing housing and informal settlement challenges. The session will also highlight the importance of robust urban data systems, strengthened monitoring of SDG 11 and enhanced partnerships to support evidence-based policymaking and accountability. By bringing together Member States, local governments, UN entities, development partners, civil society and other stakeholders, the event will identify practical pathways for advancing coherent, inclusive, resilient and rights-based urban development that simultaneously delivers benefits for poverty reduction, social inclusion, climate action, economic opportunity and the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing, alongside other human rights.

Objective of the session

This high-level side event will present key findings from the 2026 SDG 11 Synthesis Report and examine how housing and informal settlements can serve as entry points for advancing inclusive, resilient and sustainable urban development. The session will explore how integrated urban systems, risk-informed planning, human rights-based approaches and strengthened resilience and urban data ecosystems can accelerate implementation of SDGs, the New Urban Agenda and the Sendai Framework. Drawing on experiences from Member States, cities, UN entities and development partners, the event will identify practical pathways for scaling housing solutions and human rights-based approaches that simultaneously address poverty, inequality, infrastructure, climate resilience and urban sustainability.

Programme details

Time	Segment
13:15	<p>Opening</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anacláudia Rossbach, Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN-Habitat • Shigeo Murata, Head of United Nations Centre for Regional Development (UNCRD), under DSDG/UN DESA • Claudia Fuentes Julio, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) • Kamal Kishore, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction, and Head of United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR)
13:30	<p>Presentations and interventions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Highlights of the 2026 SDG 11 Synthesis Report 2. Localizing SDG 11: The Experience of Okinawa Prefecture, Japan <i>Denny Tamaki, Governor of Okinawa Prefecture, Japan</i> 3. <i>Representative of Malawi/Nepal</i> 4. <i>Representative of Spain</i> 5. <i>Mayor (UNDRR proposal)</i> 6. UN Decade of Sustainable Transport (2026-2035) <i>Astra Bonini, Chief, Integrated Policy Analysis Branch, DSDG/UN DESA</i>
14:10	Discussion
14:25	Closing and way forward

Questions for panel discussion

- The 2026 SDG 11 Synthesis Report highlights that progress remains uneven across many SDG 11 targets, with housing emerging as a central enabler of sustainable urban development. Based on the report's findings, what do you see as the most critical barriers to accelerating implementation, and what immediate actions should governments and partners prioritize between now and 2030 to get SDG 11 back on track?
- If you could prioritize one transformative action over the next four years to accelerate SDG 11 implementation globally, what would it be, and how would success be measured by 2030?
- What new and innovative financing mechanisms and policy reforms are most effective in scaling integrated urban solutions that simultaneously deliver affordable housing, sustainable mobility, climate resilience and social inclusion?
- How can cities operationalize a human rights-based approach to advancing SDG 11 to ensure that no one is left behind, particularly low-income communities, migrants, persons with disabilities, women, youth and older persons?
- How can circular economy approaches help cities accelerate SDG 11 while advancing climate goals, resource efficiency and economic opportunities?