



Chair's summary of the ministerial meeting on the New Urban Agenda held at the thirteenth session of the World Urban Forum

17 May 2026, Baku, Azerbaijan

Opening

Excellencies, distinguished ministers, representatives of Member States, colleagues from the United Nations system, local and regional governments, civil society, academia and other partners,

As Chair, I have the honour of offering this summary of the key issues raised during today's ministerial meeting on the New Urban Agenda.

Let me begin by expressing appreciation to all ministers, heads of delegation, panellists and participants who contributed to today's discussions.

I also thank the delegations expressing appreciation to the Government and people of Azerbaijan for their warm hospitality and for the successful organization of the thirteenth session of the World Urban Forum (WUF13) in Baku, which has brought together more than 58,000 participants from 176 countries, making it the largest session of the World Urban Forum to date.

I take note as well of the ministers' welcoming of the innovative approaches introduced in the preparations for WUF13, including the inaugural leaders' statements segment, which lends greater weight to urban discussions, as well as the intention of Azerbaijan and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) to collaborate in the preparation of operational guidelines for hosting future sessions of the World Urban Forum.

We also recognize the visionary leadership of the President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, as well as the efforts of UN-Habitat and its Executive Director, Anacláudia Roszbach, in providing this important platform for international cooperation on adequate housing and sustainable urbanization.

Key overall message

Today's meeting took place at an important moment. 2026 marks the midpoint of the 20-year implementation horizon of the New Urban Agenda. Ten years after its adoption in Quito, the Agenda remains a vital framework for advancing adequate housing and inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities and human settlements. At the same time, today's discussions made it clear



that the second decade must be defined not by renewed ambition alone but by accelerated implementation, stronger partnerships, and measurable progress in people's lives.

A central message emerged throughout the day: **Housing is far more than shelter. It is a human right, a foundation for dignity and social inclusion, a driver of opportunity, and a practical pathway for climate resilience and sustainable urban development.** As is reflected in the theme of WUF13, "Housing the world: safe and resilient cities and communities", adequate housing is one of the clearest and most urgent entry points for delivering on the commitments made under the New Urban Agenda in people's daily lives.

Highlights from national statements

During the morning session, ministers and heads of delegation shared national experiences from the first decade of implementation.

Many speakers highlighted progress in strengthening national policy, legal and planning frameworks for sustainable urbanization, including national development plans, housing policies, spatial planning laws, land policies, integrated territorial frameworks, strategies aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals, and national reporting processes. Several delegations also reported on large-scale housing programmes, affordable housing finance measures, infrastructure investments, urban regeneration, informal settlement upgrading, land regularization, climate-responsive planning, digital tools and stronger local governance systems.

At the same time, the national statements underlined the scale of the challenges that remained. Speakers referred to rapid urbanization that continued to outpace planning, infrastructure, housing supply and service delivery. Housing affordability and shortages were identified as widespread concerns, affecting low-income households, middle-income groups, young people, first-time home buyers, informal workers, migrants, displaced populations and vulnerable communities. Several statements also highlighted the persistence of slums, insecure tenure, inadequate basic services, climate and disaster risks, financing constraints, data gaps and uneven institutional capacity.

Across the three transformative commitments of the New Urban Agenda, the strongest emphasis was placed on *sustainable urban development for social inclusion and ending poverty*. Speakers repeatedly linked housing with poverty reduction, inclusion, stability, dignity and access to opportunity. Many emphasized that housing policies must reach those most at risk of being left behind, including low-income households, women, young people, older persons, persons with disabilities, migrants, informal workers, displaced populations, slum residents and communities affected by crisis or climate risk. Homelessness was also highlighted as an issue requiring continued attention, with several delegations sharing information on national efforts to expand access to adequate housing.



***Environmentally sustainable and resilient urban development* was also a major theme.** Many delegations stressed the strong interlinkages between housing, urban planning, climate action and sustainable development. That was especially clear in the case of small island developing States, where housing systems were increasingly vulnerable to rising sea levels, extreme weather events and limited access to climate finance. Ministers also underlined that clean air was not only an environmental issue but also a matter of public health, quality of life and sustainable urban planning.

The commitment to *sustainable and inclusive urban prosperity and opportunities for all* was also recognized, though less frequently than the other two commitments. Several speakers noted that housing shaped access to jobs, livelihoods, productivity, mobility and local economic development. However, the economic role of housing received less attention and might need to be more fully addressed in the next phase of New Urban Agenda implementation.

Several housing-related themes stood out across national statements. **Affordability, sustainability, informal settlements and the climate-housing nexus were among the most frequently raised issues**, while speakers also highlighted tenure security, access to basic services, public and social housing, and habitability. Other dimensions of adequate housing, including location, accessibility and cultural adequacy, were mentioned less often, suggesting areas where future discussion and implementation could go deeper.

A recurring message was that housing cannot be addressed in isolation. Speakers called for integrated and place-based approaches that connected housing with land, infrastructure, transport, services, jobs, social protection, public spaces, climate action and local economic development. Several also emphasized secondary cities, smaller towns, urban-rural linkages and balanced territorial development. In that context, speakers also underscored that sustainable and inclusive urban development should consider the protection of the historical and cultural heritage of cities.

National and regional urban forums were recognized as important platforms for exchanging good practices, strengthening partnerships and identifying solutions that could be adapted and scaled across contexts. Speakers also underscored the need to strengthen partnerships across government, academia, civil society, non-governmental organizations, communities and the private sector.

Several speakers highlighted the impact of wars, conflicts and disasters on cities, housing, infrastructure and basic services, as well as the displacement and humanitarian challenges that followed. Delegations also referred to the importance of post-conflict reconstruction and recovery. In that context, they welcomed the experience that Azerbaijan had gained in



post-conflict reconstruction, including as a source of lessons that might be relevant in similar contexts, and they expressed solidarity with Azerbaijan in that regard.

Ministers also welcomed the planned launch at WUF13 of the Smart, Sustainable Settlements for Safe Return Package (4SRP) initiative, developed by Azerbaijan in collaboration with UN-Habitat, the International Organization for Migration and the Baku Climate and Peace Action Hub, as a vital step towards integrated solutions for climate-resilient, environmentally sustainable, peace-positive and people-centred urban recovery, particularly in fragile and post-conflict settings. Support was expressed for the planned establishment of a dedicated working group at WUF13 tasked with developing 4SRP guidelines and criteria with a view to setting internationally recognized standards for sustainable recovery and facilitating greater access to international development and climate finance for vulnerable countries.

The most frequently mentioned drivers of effective implementation were governance, planning and financing. Delegations called for better multilevel coordination, empowered local governments, stronger planning systems and more predictable financing. Capacity-building was also repeatedly emphasized, including support for project preparation, implementation and urban monitoring. Digital technologies were mentioned less frequently than other implementation drivers, suggesting an area in which further exchange, practical guidance and capacity development may be useful.

In their national statements, speakers stressed that efforts in this area must shift from commitments to delivery at scale in the coming decade. That would require stronger finance, stronger institutions and stronger partnerships, as well as practical tools, local capacity, data systems and accountability mechanisms that helped to turn national commitments into visible improvements in people's lives.

Highlights from the three panel discussions

The afternoon panel discussions deepened the discussions through the lens of the three transformative commitments of the New Urban Agenda.

In the first panel discussion, on **housing for social inclusion and ending poverty**, panellists emphasized that land and housing should be recognized as human rights and as pillars of social and urban justice. Speakers stressed that the discussion must go beyond the number of housing units delivered to address the quality of housing, the strength of communities, and the social infrastructure connecting people to jobs, education, services and opportunity.

Panellists highlighted the need to upgrade informal settlements through integrated approaches that combined housing, infrastructure, poverty reduction and resilience. Speakers also stressed



that private investment had an important role to play but must be aligned with the public interest and must not lead to gentrification or displacement.

In the second panel discussion, on **housing for urban prosperity and opportunities for all**, participants highlighted housing as foundational economic and social infrastructure. Speakers emphasized that housing policy should be people-centred and demand-driven and connected to jobs, education, health, transport, safety, services and local livelihoods. The panellists stressed that housing delivery must move from isolated projects to scaled, coordinated citywide and nationwide systems.

Participants also highlighted the need to unlock well-located land, strengthen inclusive and flexible financing systems, recognize the economic role of informal settlements and ensure that housing interventions reached those who were most excluded from formal markets. A recurring message was that a city that works for its poorest residents works better for everyone.

In the third panel discussion, on **housing for environmentally sustainable and resilient urban development**, participants underscored that the climate crisis was also a housing crisis. Speakers noted that more than 1 billion people living in informal settlements were highly exposed to extreme weather events and often lacked access to basic services. The panellists emphasized that decisions on how homes and infrastructure were planned, built, upgraded and retrofitted could simultaneously reduce emissions, strengthen resilience and improve quality of life.

Participants called for stronger alignment between housing policies and climate policies, including national climate strategies, nationally determined contributions, national adaptation plans and long-term strategies. They also stressed the need for more climate finance, stronger local capacity, better project preparation, multilevel governance and partnerships with communities, local governments, development banks, housing associations and the private sector.

Priorities for the next decade

Across the full day of discussions, several priorities emerged for the remaining decade of New Urban Agenda implementation.

First, adequate, affordable, safe and climate-resilient housing must be placed at the centre of national and local development strategies, including through social housing, rental housing, public housing, community-led approaches and support for low- and middle-income households.

Second, commitments must be matched by delivery systems. This requires clearer accountability, technical support, project preparation, data systems and measurable follow-up.



Third, urban finance must be strengthened, including affordable housing finance, municipal finance, climate and development finance, concessional finance, blended finance, private sector partnerships and predictable support for vulnerable countries and regions.

Fourth, housing must be integrated with broader urban and territorial planning, linking it with land, infrastructure, services, mobility, jobs, public spaces, social policy, climate resilience and local economic development.

Fifth, cities and communities need greater investment in resilient, green and low-carbon infrastructure, including energy-efficient buildings, water and sanitation, sustainable mobility, clean energy, flood management, coastal resilience, disaster risk reduction and risk-informed relocation.

Sixth, local governments must be empowered through stronger multilevel governance, municipal capacity, fiscal decentralization, participatory planning, and clearer roles for cities and regions in decision-making.

Finally, implementation must remain people-centred and inclusive, with particular attention to women, young people, older persons, persons with disabilities, migrants, displaced populations, informal workers, low-income households, slum residents, landless communities, and communities affected by crisis or climate risk.

Closing

Excellencies, colleagues,

Today's discussions reaffirmed that the New Urban Agenda remains not only relevant but indispensable. The first decade of implementation has generated important experiences, lessons and partnerships. The second decade must now be defined by delivery at scale.

The messages emerging from the ministerial meeting will inform the wider deliberations of WUF13, the Baku Call to Action and the preparations for the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the midterm review of the New Urban Agenda, to be held in New York on 16 and 17 July 2026.

As Chair, I hear a clear call from today's meeting to use this midterm moment not only to take stock but to renew political commitment, strengthen implementation and place adequate housing at the centre of sustainable urban development.

Let us carry this momentum forward from Baku to New York, and from commitment to action, as we work together to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable by 2036.