



79th meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Programmatic, Budgetary and Administrative Matters of the Executive Board of UN-Habitat

Background document

Update on the outcomes of the High-Level meeting of the General Assembly on the midterm review of the New Urban Agenda

I. Introduction

1. The present report updates the Executive Board on developments since its first session of 2026, when the Board considered preparations for the High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly on the midterm review of the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and of the 2026 quadrennial report of the Secretary-General. The High-Level Meeting was convened by the President of the eightieth session of the General Assembly on 16 and 17 July 2026, with a resumed plenary on 28 July 2026, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 79/214.
2. The review marked the midpoint of the 20-year implementation period of the New Urban Agenda and fulfilled the mandate to assess progress, identify best practices, gaps and challenges, and accelerate implementation towards 2036. Its principal intergovernmental outcome was the adoption of the Political Declaration to Renew Commitment and Accelerate the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda, contained in General Assembly resolution 80/291.

II. Quadrennial report of the Secretary-General and evidence base for the midterm review

3. The third quadrennial report of the Secretary-General on progress in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, entitled ***"Progress in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda"*** (A/80/696–E/2026/53), was issued on 19 March 2026 and circulated as an official document of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. In accordance with paragraph 175 of the New Urban Agenda, the report served as the official midterm assessment of progress and challenges since 2016 and identified priority actions for the decade leading to 2036.
4. The report highlighted that implementation had lagged behind the growing scale and complexity of housing and urban challenges. While more countries had adopted national urban and housing policies and mainstreamed New Urban Agenda principles, implementation remained uneven. The global housing crisis had deepened; infrastructure and basic-service gains remained unequally distributed, particularly in informal settlements and slums; and local and regional authorities, while increasingly at the forefront of solutions, continued to face financing and capacity constraints. The report identified housing-centred approaches, strengthened multilevel and metropolitan governance, integrated land-use, mobility and service planning, diversified urban finance, capacity development and stronger urban data systems as important accelerators.
5. The evidence base for the review was substantially strengthened compared with earlier reporting cycles. It drew on 69 national progress reports, inputs from 22 United Nations entities, stakeholder surveys, consultations and expert processes, as well as complementary evidence from voluntary national and local reviews and related global frameworks. Additional evidence on global and regional urban trends was drawn from the 2026 SDG 11 Synthesis Report and the 2026 World Cities Report, providing up-to-date analysis of progress, persistent gaps and emerging challenges across key dimensions of sustainable urban development. Together, these diverse sources provided a robust and substantive basis for the intergovernmental process and for the deliberations of the High-Level Meeting.

III. Intergovernmental and consultative process

6. The intergovernmental process was led by the Permanent Representatives of Malawi and Poland, appointed by the President of the General Assembly as co-facilitators. Building on initial consultations

with Member States in March 2026, the co-facilitators prepared a Food-for-Thought Paper and subsequently an Elements Paper to guide the development of the Political Declaration. The Elements Paper was made available ahead of the first session of the Executive Board in Nairobi in April 2026, providing delegations with an opportunity to provide feedback on the emerging priorities for the outcome.

7. The process was complemented by consultations with Member States and stakeholders, including Member State consultations in New York and global stakeholder consultations on the Food-for-Thought Paper on 27 March and the Elements Paper on 7 May. Stakeholder perspectives from local and regional authorities, civil society, academia, youth, the private sector and other constituencies were incorporated during the process, reinforcing the inclusive and participatory character of the review.
8. Throughout the process, UN-Habitat provided substantive, facilitative and secretariat support, under the guidance of the President of the General Assembly and the co-facilitators. Building on the role outlined to the Executive Board, UN-Habitat supported coherence across substantive inputs and the use of agreed language; alignment with relevant intergovernmental processes; and the inclusive engagement of Member States, the United Nations system and stakeholders. UN-Habitat also provided secretariat support to the intergovernmental process and supported the organizational and substantive preparations for the High-Level Meeting, including stakeholder engagement and coordination across its formal and complementary elements.
9. The zero draft of the Political Declaration was circulated by the co-facilitators on 15 May 2026, ahead of the thirteenth session of the World Urban Forum (WUF13) in Baku. WUF13 provided a bridge between stakeholder engagement and intergovernmental negotiations. A dedicated Ministerial Meeting on the New Urban Agenda was convened on 17 May to take stock of ten years of implementation, with particular attention to housing and the three transformative commitments of the New Urban Agenda. Its Chair's Summary, together with the Baku Call to Action, contributed substantive perspectives to the midterm review. The Baku Call to Action emphasized rights-based, inclusive and climate-resilient housing systems and called for the second decade of the New Urban Agenda to be one of accelerated implementation and measurable progress.
10. Following WUF13, delegations submitted proposals on the zero draft by 29 May. Line-by-line consultations were held from 2 to 5 June and on 10 and 11 June. The co-facilitators circulated the first revised draft on 12 June. Further consultations were held on 17, 22 and 25 June, and continued into early July. A first silence procedure was broken. Following additional consultations and revisions, including a third revised text, a second silence procedure was concluded. The final text was transmitted by the co-facilitators to the President of the General Assembly on 9 July 2026, completing the mandated process to prepare the Political Declaration agreed in advance by consensus of the High-Level Meeting.

IV. Adoption and principal elements of the Political Declaration

11. On 16 July 2026, the General Assembly adopted resolution 80/291: ***“Political Declaration to Renew Commitment and Accelerate the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda”*** by 148 votes in favour, 2 against and no abstentions. The Declaration reaffirms the New Urban Agenda as the global framework for sustainable urbanization and human settlements and provides renewed political direction for its second decade of implementation through 2036.
12. The Declaration recognizes sustainable urban development as a driver of poverty and hunger eradication, economic growth, social inclusion, resilience and environmental sustainability, and reaffirms the right to an adequate standard of living, including adequate housing. It emphasises addressing the global housing crisis, informal settlements and homelessness; improving access to land, basic services and infrastructure; promoting integrated territorial and urban planning; strengthening climate and disaster resilience; and ensuring that data, technology and innovation serve inclusive and people-centred urban development.
13. A central feature is its stronger focus on accelerating implementation. The Declaration calls for adequate, sustainable, predictable and accessible means of implementation, including finance, capacity development, technical assistance, technology cooperation and strengthened international cooperation. It recognizes the need for resources to reach the local level and calls for inclusive multilevel governance, appropriate legal, institutional and fiscal frameworks, and meaningful participation of local and regional authorities, communities and stakeholders in decision-making, implementation and reporting. Importantly, the Declaration provides a framework for strengthening the integration of sustainable urbanization across the wider United Nations system. It calls upon relevant United Nations entities to enhance coordination and support for implementation and for sustainable urbanization to be integrated,

in consultation with host Governments and in accordance with national priorities, into common country analyses and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks. This provides an important basis for connecting implementation of the New Urban Agenda more systematically with delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and other relevant global commitments at the country level. For UN-Habitat, the Declaration establishes an authoritative political framework for aligning the Strategic Plan 2026–2029 with accelerated implementation of the New Urban Agenda. It also provides a basis for leveraging UN-Habitat’s role as the United Nations focal point for sustainable urbanization and human settlements to promote greater system-wide coherence and coordination, strengthen reporting, and enhance support to Member States through 2036.

V. High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly

14. The High-Level Meeting ***“Delivering Sustainable Urbanization for All: Accelerating and Scaling Implementation of the New Urban Agenda to 2036 Together”*** comprised an opening segment and plenary debate on 16 July; four interactive multi-stakeholder panels and a closing segment on 17 July; and a resumed plenary on 28 July to accommodate remaining statements. The meeting brought together Member States, intergovernmental organizations, the United Nations system, parliamentarians, local and regional authorities, international finance institutions, civil society, academia, youth, the private sector and other stakeholders.
15. Opening statements were delivered by the President of the General Assembly; the Deputy Secretary-General, on behalf of the Secretary-General; the President of the UN-Habitat Assembly; representatives of Malawi and Poland as co-facilitators; Azerbaijan as host of WUF13; and the Executive Director of UN-Habitat. The opening established a consistent call to move from commitment to implementation, with emphasis on adequate housing, financing, strengthened local capacity, integrated planning, resilience, multilevel governance and partnerships.
16. The plenary featured 110 statements, including 60 ministers, vice-ministers and other high-level officials. Member States broadly recognized that progress since 2016 had lagged behind the scale and speed of urban challenges. Adequate and affordable housing emerged as the most prominent concern, alongside insecure tenure, homelessness, informal settlements and gaps in basic services. Financing was repeatedly identified as a structural constraint, with calls for stronger municipal finance, domestic resource mobilization, affordable credit, international cooperation, project preparation and institutional capacity. Delegations also emphasized climate and disaster resilience, integrated territorial development, localization of the SDGs, stronger multilevel governance, improved urban data and responsible digital transformation.
17. The four multi-stakeholder panels broadened the review beyond intergovernmental perspectives and engaged approximately 300 stakeholders:
 - a. Panel 1, on delivering for people, emphasized housing-centred, rights-based approaches linking affordability, tenure security, basic services, informal-settlement upgrading and community participation;
 - b. Panel 2, on financing, called for stronger local fiscal systems, improved access to finance, investment-ready project pipelines and innovative and blended finance supported by increased institutional capacity;
 - c. Panel 3, on urban resilience, called for climate and disaster risk to be systematically integrated into planning, housing and infrastructure, including through resilient construction and retrofitting, nature-based solutions, hazard mapping, early warning and stronger local resilience financing;
 - d. Panel 4, on future-ready cities, emphasized governance, capacity, data, innovation and digital transformation as an integrated implementation system, with technology and artificial intelligence serving locally defined public objectives and accompanied by responsible data governance;

Member States and stakeholders called for stronger recognition of local knowledge, meaningful participation in decision-making, more accessible financing, disaggregated and community-generated data, and partnerships capable of translating global commitments into community-owned implementation.

18. The breadth of participation, adoption of the Political Declaration, completion of the plenary and substantive multi-stakeholder engagement collectively fulfilled the mandate established by General Assembly resolution 79/214.

VI. Events convened on the margins of the High-Level Meeting

19. On 16 July, the Co-Chairs of the Group of Friends of UN-Habitat, Sustainable Urbanization and the New Urban Agenda, Poland and Zimbabwe, together with Kenya and UN-Habitat, jointly hosted a Ministerial/High-Level Luncheon entitled ***“Charting the Way Forward: Delivering on the Promise of the New Urban Agenda from the Midterm Review”***. Approximately 200 participants including ministers, other senior representatives, mayors and local government leaders, United Nations entities, and stakeholders participated. The Deputy Secretary-General delivered the keynote address. Discussions focused on moving from commitments to implementation at scale through integrated housing approaches, locally accessible finance, multilevel governance and delivery systems, resilience, upgrading and retrofitting, and better urban data.
20. On 17 July, the NYU Wagner Graduate School of Public Service, in partnership with UN-Habitat, convened the Academic Dialogue on the Future of Cities, ***“Advancing Knowledge, Policy, and Practice for the New Urban Agenda”***, with approximately 160 participants from academia, government and urban practice. The Dialogue highlighted the role of universities and research institutions in bridging evidence, policy and implementation through policy-relevant research, disaggregated data, innovation, capacity development and research-to-practice partnerships. It also identified opportunities to deepen collaboration through the WUF Academy and the lead-up to WUF14.

VII. Next steps

21. Building on the outcomes of the Midterm Review and the High-Level Meeting, UN-Habitat will play a central role in supporting implementation of the Political Declaration and the accelerated delivery of the New Urban Agenda through 2036. In alignment with the UN-Habitat Strategic Plan 2026–2029, the Programme will support Member States and local and regional authorities in translating the renewed commitments into action, including by advancing adequate housing, land and basic services; strengthening integrated urban and territorial planning and multilevel governance; mobilizing financing and investment; enhancing climate resilience; and strengthening data, capacity development and monitoring. Through its normative, operational and convening functions, UN-Habitat will also strengthen partnerships across the United Nations system and with relevant stakeholders to support coordinated implementation and measurable progress towards the objectives of the New Urban Agenda. Particular attention will be given to strengthening urban data and monitoring systems through the Global Urban Data Coalition, including disaggregated and geospatial information, to identify inequalities, guide investment and track implementation at national and local levels.
22. The immediate priority is to translate the Political Declaration and the findings of the midterm review into accelerated implementation of the New Urban Agenda through 2036. The UN-Habitat Strategic Plan 2026–2029 provides the principal institutional vehicle for this next phase, with its focus on adequate housing, land and basic services, integrated urban planning, transformation of informal settlements, climate resilience, financing, data, capacity development and partnerships closely aligned with the priorities identified through the review.
23. UN-Habitat will support Member States and partners in integrating sustainable urbanization and adequate housing across relevant General Assembly, Economic and Social Council and United Nations system processes, while strengthening national and local implementation, monitoring and reporting. Particular attention will be given to connecting the New Urban Agenda with SDG localization, financing for development, climate action, disaster risk reduction and other relevant global frameworks, and to strengthening the role and capacities of local and regional authorities as implementation partners, as reflected in the Pact for the Future.
24. The outcomes of the midterm review coupled with the findings of the review of SDG11 also provide a strengthened political and substantive narrative for the 2027 SDG Summit. Sustainable urbanization and adequate housing should be positioned as accelerators across the SDGs during the final implementation period of the 2030 Agenda. In parallel, the New Urban Agenda, the Political Declaration and evidence from implementation can inform consideration of the post-2030 sustainable development framework, ensuring that cities, housing, human settlements, territorial development, urban data and multilevel governance are appropriately reflected in the architecture that follows 2030.

25. The period ahead should therefore focus on implementation and measurable results: translating political commitments into national and local action; mobilizing partnerships and finance; strengthening evidence and accountability; and using milestones including the commemoration of Habitat at 50, the 2027 SDG Summit and WUF14 in 2028 to demonstrate progress. This will ensure the second decade of the New Urban Agenda delivers at scale, with tangible improvements in the lives of people and communities.