



UN-HABITAT

Executive Board of the United Nations
Human Settlements Programme
Second session of 2026
Nairobi, 24 and 25 November 2026
Item 8 of the provisional agenda*

Outcomes of the thirteenth session of the World Urban
Forum

Outcomes of the thirteenth session of the World Urban Forum

Report by the Executive Director

I. Introduction

1. In resolution 56/206, the General Assembly affirmed that the World Urban Forum (WUF) would be a non-legislative technical forum and, in resolution 72/226, reaffirmed the role of WUF as an advocacy platform for stakeholders in the fields of human settlements and sustainable urbanization. WUF contributes to follow-up to the New Urban Agenda¹ by bringing Member States and stakeholders together to exchange knowledge, identify priorities and build partnerships for implementation.
2. The thirteenth session of WUF (WUF13), co-organized by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and the Government of Azerbaijan, was held in Baku, from 17 to 22 May 2026, under the theme “Housing the world: Safe and resilient cities and communities”. Taking place 10 years after the adoption of the New Urban Agenda, WUF13 responded to a global housing crisis affecting 3.4 billion people and framed adequate housing as a human right and a foundation for inclusion, prosperity, climate resilience and sustainable development.
3. At the midpoint of the Agenda’s implementation, WUF13 elevated adequate housing as a global development priority and strengthened the focus on implementation. The session’s principal outcomes included the stakeholder-led Baku Call to Action² and the Chair’s summary of the first dedicated ministerial meeting on the New Urban Agenda.³ WUF13 also expanded global stakeholder mobilization, introduced platforms connecting knowledge and practice with delivery, and reinforced partnerships across levels of government, the United Nations system, financial institutions, civil society, academia and the private sector. Its outcomes provide a foundation for implementing the UN-Habitat strategic plan for the period 2026–2029 and sustaining action towards the fourteenth session (WUF14).

* HSP/EB.2026/17.

¹ A/RES/71/256.

² See https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2026/05/wuf13_baku_call_to_action.pdf.

³ See https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2026/05/final_chair_summary_nua_ministerial_meeting_wuf_13.pdf.

II. Elevating scale, reach and inclusivity

4. WUF13 was the largest session to date, bringing together more than 58,000 participants from 176 countries, of whom 57 per cent were women and 43 per cent were men. High-level representation included 27 heads of State, Government and international organizations, 88 ministers, 76 deputy ministers and 130 mayors. The 577 activities included high-level segments, main sessions, partner-led events and three new flagship platforms, reflecting both the political reach of the Forum and the breadth of stakeholder-led content.

5. The WUF13 “Urban Expo” was the largest yet held at a session of the Forum, covering 34,200 square metres and receiving more than 100,000 visits. It brought together 260 exhibitors from 92 countries. A total of 136 civil society organizations participated in the Expo, compared with 15 at the twelfth session, supported by a dedicated civil society cluster and other spaces for presenting community-led initiatives. The Expo thus functioned not only as an exhibition space, but also as a matchmaker enabling governments, communities, practitioners and businesses to compare approaches and explore the transfer of practical solutions.

6. WUF13 featured 459 speakers from all regions, of whom 52.3 per cent were women and 47.7 per cent men, thereby achieving near gender parity. The programme’s composition also reflected the Forum’s role as an open platform: dedicated assemblies, round-table discussions and other formats enabled local and regional governments, women, children and young people, persons with disabilities, Indigenous Peoples, older persons, grassroots organizations, academia, professionals and the private sector to contribute distinct perspectives. In the post-session survey, 84 per cent of respondents rated inclusivity at 8 or above out of 10.

7. Operational arrangements sought to give practical effect to the sustainability principles discussed at WUF13. Electricity used during the session was generated entirely from green sources; 154 electric buses were in operation at peak times; 200 water refill stations were installed; and an electronic meal-entitlement system avoided approximately 336,000 paper vouchers. All catering-related waste was diverted from landfill. In the post-session survey, 76 per cent of respondents rated sustainability at 8 or above out of 10.

8. Accessibility was integrated into venue design, programme delivery and participant support. Measures included 220 ramps, 3,000 metres of tactile paving, 50 induction-loop systems and 40 reserve wheelchairs. Captioning was available for approximately 80 per cent of the programme, while sign language interpretation, two accessibility service points and 32 trained volunteers supported participation across the session.

9. The communications campaign extended the reach of WUF13 beyond participants in Baku. A total of 1,267 media representatives registered, of whom 865 attended in person. Earned media coverage was estimated to have generated between 200 million and 500 million impressions. From September 2025 to May 2026, World Urban Forum social media channels reached more than 991,000 people, generated more than 557,000 video views and nearly 200,000 engagements, and gained more than 9,600 followers. United Nations Web TV recorded more than 60,000 live and on-demand views. Those channels enabled discussions and outcomes from Baku to reach audiences that could not participate directly.

III. Global stakeholder mobilization

10. In the build-up to WUF13, a transformative approach to stakeholder engagement enabled meaningful involvement that was inclusive, strategic and action-oriented. Between October 2025 and May 2026, more than 3,500 stakeholders from more than 160 countries participated in more than 50 consultations and advisory engagements linked to assemblies, round-table discussions, 11 stakeholder groups and the Baku Call to Action. For the first time in the history of the Forum, stakeholders directly shaped the outcome document of a session through dedicated consultations, which resulted in a zero draft being published prior to WUF13. As part of the development of the final Baku Call to Action, a multi-stakeholder advisory group deliberated on comments received, WUF13 session outcomes and other relevant interactions. That approach multiplied stakeholder engagement and participation beyond individual sessions, giving constituencies a more direct role in shaping the shared WUF13 vision, priorities and outcomes. The approach further strengthened stakeholder ownership of the World Urban Forum and served to reiterate a strong commitment to the implementation of the UN-Habitat strategic plan, the New Urban Agenda and Sustainable Development Goal 11.

11. A dedicated global advocacy road map complemented those efforts, transforming the road to WUF13 into a year-long campaign across all six UN-Habitat regional offices. More than 135 advocacy

and mobilization activities reached and engaged more than 55,000 stakeholders in more than 40 countries through in-person, hybrid and virtual formats. They included 23 multilingual information sessions, delivered in the six official languages of the United Nations and Azerbaijani; the promotion of WUF13 at 76 international and regional conferences, forums and high-level meetings; and 36 regional and country-led initiatives, which reached more than 6,300 people. The campaign was reinforced by seven dedicated media engagements, specialized media training at ADA University in Baku and four diplomatic briefings, in Baku, Geneva, Nairobi and New York. Through coordinated action by UN-Habitat headquarters and regional and country offices, the host country and strategic partners, the road map maintained the Forum's global visibility, strengthened political ownership and established networks to advance the Baku Call to Action and build momentum towards WUF14 in Mexico.

12. Regional, national and global-level mobilization towards WUF13 was enabled through a series of strategic platforms and engagements across all regions. In Africa, the Kenya Urban Forum 2025 and the Second Africa Urban Forum in Nairobi provided major platforms for aligning WUF13 with regional priorities. In Asia and the Pacific, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Future Cities and Regions Forum 2025, Asia-Pacific Climate Week 2025 and the Urban20 Mayors Summit strengthened engagement with national and local governments, city networks and development partners on sustainable urbanization, climate action and innovation. In Latin America and the Caribbean, Habitat LATAM 2025 and the Forum of Ministers and High-level Authorities of Housing and Urban Development of Latin America and the Caribbean Housing and Urban Development Ministerial Meeting advanced regional dialogue on housing, complemented by outreach through World Cities Day in Colombia and at the thirtieth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Belém, Brazil. In Europe and Central Asia, the Ukrainian Urban Forum 2025, the Third National Urban Forum of Azerbaijan, the 12th Global Baku Forum, the Tashkent Urban Forum and engagements across the Danube region and Serbia reinforced policy exchange and partnerships, while outreach across the Arab States, including the Cairo Urban Run, Egypt Urban Week and Baku Urban Week, broadened public engagement, reinforcing continuity between sessions of the World Urban Forum.

IV. Strategic outcomes and achievements

13. WUF13 played a critical role in positioning adequate housing as a cross-cutting development priority rather than a stand-alone sector. Across the session, adequate housing was linked with poverty reduction, health, livelihoods, social protection, land and tenure security, infrastructure, climate action and crisis recovery. Discussions called for integrated housing systems supported by public investment, predictable finance, implementation capacity and accountability. The participation of national, local and regional governments and diverse stakeholder constituencies also underscored that implementation requires coordinated action across levels and sectors.

14. The Baku Call to Action is the principal stakeholder-led outcome of WUF13. It states that the global housing crisis has reached a critical juncture and recognizes that the crisis results from structural, systemic and governance failures rather than from a shortage of housing units alone. It accordingly presents adequate housing as more than shelter and as a key factor shaping dignity, inclusion, resilience, stability and opportunity within a wider system of land, infrastructure, services, finance and governance. Together, these drivers shape where and how people live.

15. Organized around three thematic pillars, the Call to Action examines the underlying rights and structural drivers of the housing crisis, the levers required to address its immediate manifestations, and the pathways for transforming housing systems. It calls for renewed political commitment and accelerated action through integrated housing policies, organized multi-stakeholder action, long-term predictable financing, stronger implementation capacity, multilevel governance, sustained public investment and measurable accountability. Taken together, these priorities frame housing as a shared public responsibility requiring coordinated action across institutions and levels of government.

16. The ministerial meeting on the New Urban Agenda provided a dedicated platform for Member States to assess progress and identify priorities for the Agenda's second decade of implementation. The Chair's summary, the principal outcome of the meeting, identifies adequate housing as a central entry point for the New Urban Agenda, linking it to social inclusion, economic opportunity, climate resilience and sustainable urban development. That framing places housing within the wider development agenda and highlights its relevance to national policy priorities beyond the housing sector alone.

17. The Chair's summary notes that social inclusion and ending poverty received the strongest emphasis in national statements at the session, followed by environmentally sustainable and resilient

urban development; while the economic role of housing received comparatively less attention. Affordability, sustainability, informal settlements and the climate-housing nexus were the most prominent housing themes; location, accessibility and cultural adequacy were raised less frequently. The summary therefore records areas of convergence while also identifying dimensions of adequate housing that may require greater attention in future policy dialogue.

18. The Chair's summary further identifies the principal implementation challenge as moving from commitments to delivery at scale. It calls for stronger financing, multilevel governance, local capacity, integrated planning, data systems and accountability. WUF13 contributed to and built momentum towards the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the midterm review of the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. On 16 July 2026, the General Assembly adopted the Political Declaration to Renew Commitment and Accelerate the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda.⁴ The Declaration reinforced several priorities highlighted in Baku, including adequate housing, investment, empowered local governments, climate resilience, data, partnerships and locally led implementation.

19. Three new platforms strengthened the implementation focus of the Forum. The WUF Academy delivered nearly 100 masterclasses, lectures and innovation-led workshops, as well as a dedicated interactive space featuring a "digital learning wall" where the "Housing Primer" mobile-based microlearning course was launched. The Practices Hub showcased 171 housing practices from 84 countries through 11 interactive sessions and a digital display, providing examples of real-world housing solutions in action. The Business and Innovation Hub, the session's dedicated platform for private sector engagement, held 15 sessions co-curated with partner organizations under the theme "Urban Value Chain in Action", while the Startup Pavilion featured 14 innovative start-ups from 10 countries. Together, the platforms created complementary routes for learning, comparing tested approaches and connecting public priorities with technical expertise, innovation and potential delivery partners.

20. WUF13 also strengthened United Nations system-wide engagement. More than 1,000 United Nations participants registered, including 11 resident coordinators and 14 senior United Nations representatives, and more than 30 "One UN" events were held. The "One UN Roundtable" considered the integration of housing and sustainable urbanization into Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks. Building on the international financial institutions working group on sustainable urbanization launched at the twelfth session, a round-table discussion co-convened with the World Bank Group mobilized international financial institutions around an operational agenda for collaboration with UN-Habitat across the project cycle, with a focus on integrated housing investment, subnational finance, municipal readiness, bankable project pipelines and improved city access to development finance. The discussions linked the global policy agenda with the country-level coordination, institutional capacity and financing needed for implementation.

21. Participant assessments indicated that 91 per cent of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with WUF13; 92 per cent considered the content relevant to their work; 93 per cent reported improved knowledge of housing; 93 per cent were satisfied with the networking opportunities; and 92 per cent considered WUF important for sharing solutions. Respondents also reported intended follow-up through community engagement, partnerships, policy advocacy and the application of practical tools. While these findings reflect immediate participant-level results rather than longer-term policy impact, they indicate that WUF13 strengthened knowledge, networks and readiness for follow-up.

V. Legacy and follow-up

22. The Baku Call to Action will be disseminated and contextualized through engagement of Member States, regional and country offices of UN-Habitat, stakeholder networks and relevant global, regional and national forums. The aim will be to keep Call to Action priorities active in policy dialogue and to encourage governments and partners to consider how they can be applied within different mandates and contexts. The report of the thirteenth session and the WUF13 edition of *Perspectives* will complement this work by synthesizing the in-depth substantive messages, trends and recommendations.

23. UN-Habitat will build on the stakeholder networks, focal points and engagement mechanisms established for WUF13 to support implementation of the Baku Call to Action and preparations for WUF14. Stakeholder dialogues, Urban Thinkers Campuses and engagement through relevant multilevel platforms will sustain exchanges beyond the six-day event and help connect stakeholder

⁴ A/RES/80/291.

recommendations and partnerships with opportunities for action throughout the World Urban Forum cycle.

24. The implementation-oriented elements introduced at WUF13 will provide further pathways for follow-up. The WUF Academy will support continuing capacity development; the Practices Hub will facilitate access to tested approaches and peer learning; and the Business and Innovation Hub will maintain engagement with innovation, finance and private-sector partners.

25. The substantive priorities emerging from WUF13 may serve as reference points for UN-Habitat programmatic work and implementation of its strategic plan for the period 2026–2029. They provide a stakeholder-informed basis for linking global advocacy and normative work with capacity development and country-level support. Practices and learning resources from WUF13 will also be connected with the housing knowledge platform to support continued access, learning and potential replication.

VI. Lessons and strategic directions for the fourteenth session

26. In their feedback, participants called for more action-oriented formats, practical tools, case studies and clearer follow-up mechanisms. They further recommended that future sessions continue improving grassroots participation, multilingual engagement, accessibility support, sustainability and digital engagement. These findings will inform institutional learning and preparations for WUF14.

27. The transition to WUF14 in Mexico City will be treated as a continuing implementation cycle. Preparations will build on WUF13 outcomes, partnerships and platforms and strengthen the World Urban Forum as a mechanism for knowledge, partnerships and action in support of the New Urban Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.
