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Outcomes of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the midterm review of the implementation of the New Urban Agenda

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Report of the Executive Director

I. Introduction

1. The present report provides an update for the Executive Board of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) on developments since its first session of 2026, when the Board considered the report of the Executive Director on preparations for the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the midterm review of the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the preparation of the 2026 quadrennial report of the Secretary-General (HSP/EB.2026/10). The high-level meeting was convened by the President of the General Assembly at its eightieth session on 16 and 17 July 2026, with a resumed plenary session on 28 July 2026, in accordance with 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. The principal intergovernmental outcome of the review was the adoption of the Political Declaration to Renew Commitment and Accelerate the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda, set out 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 (A/80/696-E/2026/53) was issued on 19 March 2026 and circulated as an official document of the General Assembly and of 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 made and challenges faced since 2016 and identified priority actions for the decade leading up to 2036.

* HSP/EB.2026/17.

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; gains in infrastructure and basic services 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 also 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 strengthened substantially compared with earlier reporting cycles. The review drew on 69 national progress reports, input from 22 United Nations entities, as well as stakeholder surveys, consultations, expert processes and 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 global synthesis report on Sustainable Development Goal 11[1] and the *World Cities Report 2026*,[2] providing an up-to-date analysis of progress, persistent gaps and emerging challenges across key dimensions of sustainable urban development. Together, those diverse sources provided a robust substantive basis for the intergovernmental process and for the deliberations of the high-level meeting.

III. Intergovernmental and consultative process

6. The intergovernmental process for the preparation of the political declaration was led by the Permanent Representatives of Malawi and Poland to the United Nations in New York, who had been appointed as co-facilitators by the President of the General Assembly. 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 2026 of the Executive Board, held in Nairobi in April 2026, and afforded delegations an opportunity to provide feedback on emerging priorities for the outcome document.

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 taken into account 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. In its facilitative and substantive role, 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, held in Baku. The Forum provided a bridge between stakeholder engagement and intergovernmental negotiations. A dedicated ministerial meeting on the New Urban Agenda was convened on 17 May 2026 to take stock of 10 years of implementation, with particular attention to housing and the three transformative commitments of the New Urban Agenda. Together with the Baku Call to Action, the Chair's summary of the ministerial meeting 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 the thirteenth session of the World Urban Forum, delegations were requested to submit proposals regarding the zero draft of the political declaration by 29 May 2026. Line-by-line consultations were held from 2 to 5 June and on 10 and 11 June 2026. The co-facilitators circulated the first revised draft on 12 June. Further consultations were held on 17, 22 and 25 June and continued

[1] UN-Habitat, SDG 11 Global Report 2026: Housing at the Centre of Sustainable Cities and Communities (Nairobi, 2026).

[2] UN-Habitat, World Cities Report 2026: The Global Housing Crisis – Pathways to Action (Nairobi, 2026).

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 successfully. The co-facilitators transmitted the final text to the President of the General Assembly on 9 July 2026, completing the mandated process of preparing a political declaration agreed by consensus in advance 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, entitled "Political Declaration to Renew Commitment and Accelerate the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda", by 148 votes in favour, 2 against and no abstentions. In the Declaration, Heads of State and Government, Ministers and High Representatives reaffirm their commitment to the implementation of the New Urban Agenda as the global framework for sustainable urbanization and human settlements and provide renewed political direction for its second decade of implementation, through 2036.

12. In the Political Declaration, sustainable urban development is recognized as a driver of poverty and hunger eradication, economic growth, social inclusion, resilience and environmental sustainability, and the right to an adequate standard of living, including adequate housing, is reaffirmed. The Declaration emphasizes 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. One central feature of the Political Declaration 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. The need for resources to reach the local level is recognized, together with the need 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 into common country analyses and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks, in consultation with host Governments and in accordance with national policies, priorities and needs. This provides an important basis for connecting the implementation of the New Urban Agenda more systematically with the delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals and other relevant global commitments at the country level. For UN-Habitat, the Declaration establishes an authoritative political framework for aligning its strategic plan for the period 2026–2029 with accelerated implementation of the New Urban Agenda. It also provides a basis for leveraging the role of UN-Habitat 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 for Member States through 2036.

V. High-level meeting of the General Assembly

14. The high-level meeting of the General Assembly, held on the theme "Delivering sustainable urbanization for all: accelerating and scaling implementation of the New Urban Agenda to 2036 together", comprised an opening segment and a plenary debate on 16 July, four interactive multi-stakeholder panel discussions 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, United Nations system entities, 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 of the United Nations, on behalf of the Secretary-General; the President of the UN-Habitat Assembly; representatives of Malawi and Poland as co-facilitators of the intergovernmental process; a representative of Azerbaijan as host of the thirteenth session of the World Urban Forum; and the Executive Director of UN-Habitat. The opening segment 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 by 60 ministers, deputy ministers and other high-level officials. Member States broadly recognized that progress since 2016 had lagged behind the scale and pace of development of urban challenges. Adequate and affordable housing emerged as the most prominent concern, alongside tenure insecurity, 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 greater institutional capacity. Delegations also emphasized the importance of climate and disaster resilience, integrated territorial development, localization of the Sustainable Development Goals, 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 that link 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.

18. During the multi-stakeholder panel discussions, 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.

19. Together, the breadth of participation, the adoption of the Political Declaration, the convening of the plenary and the substantive multi-stakeholder engagement fulfilled the mandate established by the General Assembly in resolution 79/214.

VI. Events convened on the margins of the high-level meeting

20. On 16 July 2026, the Permanent Representatives of Poland and Zimbabwe to the United Nations, as co-chairs of the Group of Friends of UN-Habitat, Sustainable Urbanization and the New Urban Agenda, together with the Government of 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 were 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.

21. On 17 July 2026, the Wagner Graduate School of Public Service at New York University, in partnership with UN-Habitat, convened the Academic Dialogue on the Future of Cities, on the theme “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 World Urban Forum Academy and the lead-up to the fourteenth session of the World Urban Forum.

VII. Next steps

22. Building on the outcomes of the midterm review and the high-level meeting, UN-Habitat will play a central role in supporting the implementation of the Political Declaration and the accelerated delivery of the New Urban Agenda through 2036. In alignment with its strategic plan for the period

2026–2029, UN-Habitat 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 the national and local levels.

23. 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 for the period 2026–2029 provides the principal institutional vehicle for the 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, which are closely aligned with the priorities identified through the review.

24. 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 Sustainable Development Goal localization, financing for development, climate action, disaster risk reduction and other relevant global processes, and to strengthening the role and capacities of local and regional authorities as implementation partners, as reflected in the Pact for the Future.

25. The outcomes of the midterm review, coupled with the findings of the review of Sustainable Development Goal 11, also provide a strengthened political and substantive narrative for the 2027 Sustainable Development Goals Summit. Sustainable urbanization and adequate housing should be positioned as accelerators across the Goals 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.

26. 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 the fiftieth anniversary of UN-Habitat, the 2027 Sustainable Development Goals Summit and the fourteenth session of the World Urban Forum, in 2028, to demonstrate progress. This will ensure that the second decade of implementation of the New Urban Agenda delivers at scale, with tangible improvements in the lives of people and communities.