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FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

PRESS RELEASE

World Habitat Day 2026 in Muscat calls for urgent action on adequate housing

Muscat, 5 October 2026 – Marking World Habitat Day in Oman this year, representatives from governments, civil society and academia called for urgent action to address a global housing crisis affecting nearly 3.4 billion people.

“Adequate housing is not a luxury. It is a foundation for a dignified life and for sustainable cities. Housing needs to be treated as a public priority alongside land and basic services, with greater investment in communities and cooperation across levels of government, the private sector and civil society,” said the Executive Director of UN-Habitat, Anacláudia Rossbach.

“Today’s observance,” she continued, “underscores the breadth and depth of global commitment to ensuring that adequate housing is seen for what it is: not a luxury. Rather, a foundation for a dignified life and for sustainable cities.”

The top United Nations official was addressing a gathering in the Omani capital for the global observance of World Habitat Day 2026, held under the theme ‘Adequate Housing for All,’ and hosted by Oman.

The event brought together more than 500 government officials, city leaders, urban experts, civil society and private sector representatives to discuss how to make housing more accessible and affordable, while strengthening cities and communities.

Adequate housing is central to people’s dignity, security and opportunity, but remains out of reach for too many people around the world, especially for more than 1.1 billion people who live in informal settlements and slums. The situation is getting worse as conflicts, disasters and economic hardships displace millions of people every year.

"Foundation of dignity"

In his message for World Habitat Day, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres described adequate housing as “the foundation of dignity, security and opportunity.”

He called for coordinated action by national and local governments, stronger partnerships and better use of data, as well as financing that enables developing

countries to invest in housing at scale. He also highlighted the wider benefits of investing in adequate housing and transforming informal settlements to reduce poverty and inequality, strengthen climate resilience and support peaceful and inclusive societies.

The President of the United Nations Habitat Assembly, Malaysia's Minister of Housing and Local Government, Nga Kor Ming, sent his video message highlighting the longer-term responsibility of urban development.

"True urban stewardship means building a foundation where future generations can thrive," Mr. Ming said, while also calling for a shift in how housing challenges are addressed, from quick fixes to systemic transformation.

"Scaling adequate housing is the most effective catalyst to deliver SDG 11 and unlock the New Urban Agenda," he added.

Highlights from the global observance

At today's observance, a ministerial segment brought together ten ministers and deputy ministers from Bahrain, Egypt, Libya, Kuwait, Pakistan, Oman, Qatar, Somalia, Türkiye, and the United Arab Emirates. Their exchanges added national perspectives to the discussion, highlighting approaches and priorities for addressing housing challenges in different contexts.

A subsequent dialogue with panellists from national and city-level governments, international organizations and academia examined practical ways to advance adequate housing for all.

At the opening press conference of the global observance, H.E. Khalfan bin Said bin Mubarak Al Shuaili, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning of Oman, said that Oman was proud to host this year's global observance of World Habitat Day, and supported calls to prioritize housing and sustainable urban development.

The global observance also highlighted cooperation between partners through the signing of development agreements, including international agreements.

Today's event further included the presentation of the UN-Habitat Scroll of Honour Awards, which recognize entities and individuals for their contributions to better housing and human settlements. This year's five awardees hailed from Brazil, Myanmar, Pakistan, Tunisia and the United Kingdom.

Away from the global observance in Oman, World Habitat Day 2026 was observed in more than 10 countries, including Cameroon, Cabo Verde, Mozambique, India, Pakistan, Thailand, Sri Lanka among others. To date, more than 99 global events are registered to be held during Urban October.

World Habitat Day marks the start of UN-Habitat's Urban October, a month-long campaign that brings together events and activities around the world to advance dialogue and action on adequate housing and sustainable urban development. The programme will end with World Cities Day on 31 October 2026.

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About World Habitat Day

World Habitat Day was established by the UN General Assembly in 1985 and first celebrated in Nairobi in 1986. It is observed annually on the first Monday of October to reflect on the state of human settlements and the right to adequate shelter.

About UN-Habitat

UN-Habitat is the United Nations entity working for sustainable urbanization. With programmes in over 90 countries, it supports policymakers and communities to create socially and environmentally sustainable cities and towns. UN-Habitat promotes transformative change in urban areas through knowledge, policy advice, technical assistance, and collaborative action. To know more, visit unhabitat.org or follow us on X @UNHABITAT.

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