

SDG Cities Impact

Solutions for Systemic Change towards WUF13

2025 World Cities Day & SDG Cities Global Conference

Date and Time: 13:30-15:00, 26th October 2025

Location: Peony Palace, Broadway Mansions Hotel, Shanghai, China

Online:

<https://un-org.zoom.us/meeting/register/dqJWwymUQ6SLhjjj58qW-A>

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Background and Rationale



The world is facing the convergence of two pressing challenges: a global housing crisis and rapid urban transformation. Nearly 3 billion people live in inadequate housing conditions – over 1 billion in informal settlements and 300 million without any shelter. As urbanization continues to accelerate, cities are struggling to provide affordable, inclusive, and sustainable housing and basic services.

In this context, **sustainable urban development is no longer an option** – it is the cornerstone that will shape humanity's future. Cities are where challenges converge, but also where development efforts can align and multiply for greater impact.

Localization, anchored in multistakeholder and multilevel cooperation and delivered through integrated local development approaches, therefore represents a unique opportunity for all stakeholders to come together – transforming cities into engines of inclusive prosperity and sustainable growth.

For years, the SDG Cities Initiative has worked to **harness the solutions and innovations developed** by cities and provided a dynamic space for exchange, partnerships, and capacity building for local governments worldwide. SDG Cities operates under the umbrella of the **Local2030 Coalition's** effort to strengthen coherence and cooperation across the UN system and its partners to accelerate the localization of the SDGs.

Implemented by UN-Habitat, and embedded within the Local2030 Coalition, SDG Cities offers a **holistic, flexible and modular approach aimed at making things easy for cities** – simplifying complex development processes and their path toward prosperity.

With the ambition of transforming **1,000 cities and improving the lives of 1 billion people**, SDG Cities aims at delivering systemic change at the local level by supporting cities in orienting their planning and investment. It offers a platform for **on-demand support** through which cities can design their own process and access technical assistance tailored to their needs and aspirations.

This event will look towards the **13th World Urban Forum (WUF13)** to be held in **Baku, Azerbaijan, in May 2026**, under the theme "Housing the World: Safe and Resilient Cities and Communities". It will focus on **cities' solutions and innovations, sharing light on their role in promoting systemic change** – moving beyond sectorial, ad hoc and project approaches toward whole-of-society and government efforts. It will directly contribute to the local and regional governments' engagement during the Forum.

The debate will flow across the SDG Cities process, touching upon data, strategic planning and investments. In addition, panelists will reflect on how we can collectively contribute to addressing the global housing crisis and supporting the implementation of UN-Habitat Strategic Plan 2026-2029.

The outcome of the session will be a **renewed partnership and commitment toward systemic change and sustainable urban development through SDG Cities**, paving the way for tailoring global support to cities and **contributing to the global mobilization toward World Urban Forum 13**.

Objectives

01

Discuss cities' solutions for systemic change anchored on multistakeholder and multilevel cooperation.

02

Facilitate peer exchange among cities on innovations and practices that strengthen data, planning, and orient catalytic investments.

03

Highlight the nexus of housing and cities, showcase best practices that demonstrate how adequate housing supports both adaptation and mitigation, and how these lessons will be central to **WUF13** deliberations.

04

Highlight linkages and delivery of the UN-Habitat's 2026–2029 Strategic Plan and the Local2030 Coalition's process and tools through the SDG Cities process.

05

Promote collaboration through the SDG Cities Global Community as a platform for learning, advocacy, and partnerships.

06

Position WUF13 as the next global milestone after SDG Cities Global Conference, encouraging stakeholders to register, contribute solutions to the Practices Hub, and commit to active participation.

Expected Outcomes

01

Increased awareness on the need and potential of systemic approaches to sustainable development – including on the role of cities and the solutions that they are already applying.

02

Shared understanding of the SDG Cities approach as an integrated urban development process that creates long-lasting transformative change for cities and communities.

03

Strengthened capacities of cities and partners to create enabling and inclusive local environments connecting on data, planning and impact investments.

04

Stronger commitments and insights, gather recommendations and ideas during the session will feed into WUF13's dialogues and agenda-setting.

05

Increased mobilization toward the WUF13 and the SDG Cities Global Community as platforms for connecting cities and partners.