



Urban October | New York Liaison Office Report

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Executive Summary:

Throughout the entire month of October, UN-Habitat New York Office celebrated cities and urban areas through a series of events, campaigns, and activities. The month started with **World Habitat Day** on October 5th, with the theme Housing for All: A Better Urban Future. UN-Habitat NYO along with Consortium for Sustainable Urbanization (CSU) in collaboration with the American Institute of Architects, New York Chapter hosted the event “Post Pandemic Cities Planning for the next 2.5 Billion Residents.” Through Urban October, we have been running the Housing for All Campaign (#Housing4All) in partnership with IKEA and The Human Shelter. The Housing for All Campaign raised awareness on the importance of adequate housing, and collected solutions to address housing gaps.

The office also participated in promoting the 40 Days Safer Cities Challenge (#40Days4Innovation4SaferCities) which raised awareness of safety in cities and urban crime prevention and promoted concrete actions by citizens to achieve the safety dimensions of the Sustainable Development Goals.

A series of events were organised keeping this theme in mind with the New York Office partners. NYO participated and promoted events from partners including; Consortium for Sustainable Urbanization (CSU), AIA/Archtober/ Center for Architecture New York City, Mansuetto Institute for Urban Innovation (University of Chicago), Columbia University, Global Housing Foundation, Institute of Global Homelessness, Pritzker Forum on Global Cities, MC-SD (Habitat for Good Unit), among others.

The month concluded with the World Cities Day. In celebration of this, on October 30th, 2020, the New York Liaison Office of UN-Habitat hosted a virtual World Cities Day Celebration. This event was based on the theme of **World Cities Day 2020 “Valuing our communities and cities”**, and featured speakers who gave their reflections on city-level innovations in support of the Sustainable Development Goals. The event was opened by remarks of the Executive Director of UN-Habitat, Ms. Maimunah Mohd Sharif and included a diverse roster of speakers from local government leaders to climate activists.

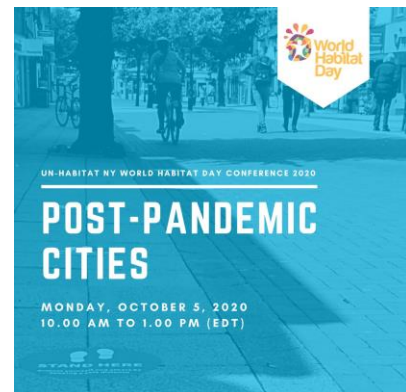
The following report highlights the key takeaways of the events organised and promoted by the New York Office. The appendix provides a summary of the events, for more details please find the link to our comprehensive [matrix](#), that provides detailed event reports and video links.

World Habitat Day | Reflections



The United Nations designated the first Monday of October as the annual World Habitat Day (WHD). This day highlights the state of our towns and cities, as well as the basic right of adequate shelter for all. WHD also reminds us we all have the power and the responsibility to shape the future of our cities, towns, and communities. This year's theme was **Housing For All: A Better Urban Future**. The **global observance was hosted by the city of Surabaya, in Indonesia**. The Executive Director, UN-Habitat Ms. Maimunah Mohd Sharif here underscored the **importance of housing in response to the COVID-19** pandemic and highlighted the need for **innovative solutions** to address issues of housing and work towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The projected increase of 2.5 billion people moving to cities over the next 30 years with the impact of climate change and new threat of pandemics constitutes an unprecedented challenge facing the world today. Recognizing these unique challenges, the UN-Habitat New York Office organised a virtual conference titled **“Post Pandemic Cities: Planning for the next 2.5 Billion Residents.”** The event highlighted that pandemics have historically played a unique role in shaping cities and COVID-19 presents us with a unique opportunity to reimagine the way cities are designed and planned. **Planning and design** have a critical role to play in ensuring that cities not only have the capacity to absorb an influx of people but also the ability to integrate newcomers as productive members of society.



Through Urban October, the New York Office ran the Housing for All Campaign (#Housing4All). World Habitat Day marked the launch of this Campaign, with the release of the documentary *The Human Shelter* by Boris Bertram. Access to the documentary was made available for free to a public audience on the UNH YouTube Channel, in partnership with IKEA and *The Human Shelter*. The Housing for All Campaign raised awareness on the importance of adequate housing, and collected solutions to address housing gaps. The campaign also marked the start of a successful partnership with important private sector partners such as IKEA for future collaborations.

Urban Innovation | Event Reflections

Innovation is critical in working towards readapting our cities post the pandemic. “Welcome to Honolulu I & II” looked at Honolulu’s innovative approach and success in ‘Urban Regeneration’ practices to further inclusion and the SDGs and promote housing for all. Honolulu showed pathways to successfully integrate the construction market, financial market and banks to manage **high housing costs** and **quality affordable housing** and the need to emphasize on **Public- Private Partnerships**. Any effort towards Affordable housing must further be complemented with **sustainable transit-oriented development** as seen by the success of Honolulu’s rail project.

Further recognizing the importance of urban innovation, **Mobilizing Urban Stakeholders to accelerate progress towards the SDGs by 2030** event used the showcase of award winning documentaries as a unique medium to inspire individuals to take action in their neighbourhoods in megacities worldwide and contribute towards achieving the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda. This panel discussion marked the first collaboration project between the **MegaCities-ShortDoc festival** and UN-Habitat New York. The event fostered a partnership for future events with UN-Habitat and opportunities to showcase short documentaries on the UN-Habitat YouTube Channel throughout the duration of Urban October.



Urban Planning and Design | Event Reflections

The ongoing coronavirus pandemic is hitting large cities around the world hard, like no other event in living memory. Its deadly spread exposes the assumptions upon which urban environments are based: density, interdependence, personal interchange, and collective action. The cracks and flaws in the urban fabrics of even the most successful cities—inequality, precariousness, high cost of living—have also been exposed and found wanting. Fundamentally better urban planning and design is needed that works with cities and not against them. “Design and the Post-Pandemic City”, an Urban October event from the **Mansueto Institute for Urban Innovation, University of Chicago**, with world-renowned designer and urbanist **Bruce Mau** blended design thinking with emerging insights from urban science to demonstrate systemic approaches for imagining the future of cities in a post-pandemic world. The event highlighted the importance of **urban design can be seen as a crucial mediator between knowledge and problem solving**.



In a world of social distancing where we are forced to shift to a digital platform, planning must be readapted to meet the new demands. The **Consortium for Sustainable Urbanization (CSU)**’s **H.E. Talal Abu Ghazaleh (TAG) Lecture** was a memorial lecture delivered by **Claire Weisz (UAIA)**. The lecture

introduced to practitioners a new concept of “**Millennial Thinking**” in planning. It focused on what the present generation is asking for and what it has to do with what we are thinking about urbanisation today.

To work towards a better urban future, the SDGs must be implemented into professional practice especially urban planning. Recognizing this, the **International Union of Architects (UIA)** introduced a guide with case studies of how urban planning can be approached to meet multiple SDGs. Examples included projects carried out in partnership with UN-Habitat that ranged from architectural design to micro-finance, micro gardening, urban planning and even examples of how to legitimize informal settlements. The **Consortium of Sustainable Urbanisation (CSU) Gala Awards 2020** was another platform to provide recognition and encourage practitioners to contribute to the future of sustainable urbanization.

Housing for All | Event Reflections

The “**Housing and Social Protection to End Homelessness**” event featured a collaboration by UN DESA, IGH, and UN-Habitat. It was the first celebration of World Homeless Day since its establishment in 2010. The event clearly emphasized that the solution to end homelessness isn’t just housing alone, but requires many pieces, depending on the national context. However, some overarching critical elements include; political will, better financing, and a changed mindset that there isn't a quick and easy solution. It is essential to prevent homelessness and have a working global definition in order to measure it and get people into the system of helping them with long-term measures out of this temporary condition.

Housing for all includes addressing issues of gender and age in increasing evictions and homelessness. The **Symposium on Women and Children Experiencing Homelessness/Displacement** hosted by **UNANIMA International**, explored the various issues faced by women and children experiencing homelessness. The causes of homelessness that were discussed included domestic violence, human trafficking, income and market access inequality, mental health stigma, and natural disasters. Potential solutions outlined included affordable housing infrastructure, improved education and access to income opportunities, increased shelters and services for homeless people, and universal social protections.



One of the critical issues highlighted during Urban October was the importance of multilateralism. The event “**Leave No One Behind: Ending Youth Global Homelessness in the Decade of Action**” on October 21st made a very strong case for that by using the example of homelessness. The only way to make sustainable progress is by having a whole-of-the-system approach. In this particular case, the speakers highlighted that making policies without including lived experiences is totally unethical and would oppose any human rights approach as well as the SDGs.

Furthermore, the necessity of relevant data is probably bigger than ever before as highlighted in the event “**Global Strategies for Sustainable Workforce Housing: Innovative Solutions to**

Win the War Against Poverty, Healthcare & Crisis” on October 24th. Housing is the foundation for access to work, education, sanitation, healthcare, water, and food and therefore, requires a lot of data in order to address all related issues. Also, many affordable housing solutions were presented during the event,

including expanded subsidies for public land and new affordable housing units, financial incentives for lower rents through tax policy and government-backed finance, expanded social safety nets for renters during times of crisis and the protection of tenants' rights, mandating a minimum percentage of affordable housing, and collaboration between stakeholders.

The dots need to be connected between policies and partnerships to advocate for a stronger support system, especially for vulnerable people groups which was emphasized in another event **“Urban Agenda to Urgent Action: Preventing Evictions and Homelessness”** on October 27th. The role of UN Habitat as amplifier and facilitator for sustainable change was repeatedly discussed during several events. Particularly this event used the COVID-19 example to show that a recovery from this pandemic can't be addressed independently but requires an organization like UN Habitat to lead the way in connecting the dots on a global level. This is even more urgent when we look at the current rate of urbanization.

World Cities Day | Reflections



The month concluded with the **World Cities Day**. This year the theme was **“Valuing our communities and cities.”** In celebration of this, on October 30th, 2020, the New York Liaison Office of UN-Habitat hosted a virtual World Cities Day Celebration. **“Local Innovations, SDGs & COVID-19”**, highlighted the interactions between local innovations and the Sustainable Development Goals, and how COVID-19 has changed the sustainable development strategies of communities and organizations. The event featured welcoming remarks from UN SG Antonio Guterres and UN-Habitat ED Maimunah Mohd Sharif. NYO Director Chris Williams opened the session and guided the discussion, emphasizing the importance of global community networks, and place-based and people-centered urban resilience.

Same day the Permanent Mission of Slovakia and the Permanent Mission of Germany to the UN, NGO Committee on Sustainable Development-NY and UN-Habitat collaborated on an event, **“Better City, Better Life: Valuing our Communities & Cities”** to highlight UN75 and World Cities Day. It addressed the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on our communities and cities while strengthening our resilience to build back better. It emphasised that while many are utilizing innovative communication platforms that allow for better engagement to strengthen the resilience of their communities and cities, through the pandemic others without access are falling further behind. It was recognised that it is vitally important that we continue our focus on the SDGs and 2030 SDG agenda to build partnerships with Member States, UN-Habitat, national and local authorities as well as stakeholders from civil society and the private sector in order to be better prepared to achieve the inclusive, safe, resilient and healthier future we want with the UN we need – to “Leave No One Behind.”

Cities are growing and local/national authorities are very limited in their response without the discourse with the communities, whether it be vulnerable people groups or any other stakeholder, as mentioned during the **“Global Observance of World Cities Day” on October 31st**. This event marked the official end of Urban October and was hosted by the city of Nakuru, Kenya. It featured an opening session where both the World Cities Report 2020 and the Shanghai Manual 2020 were officially launched - two documents that are of both local



Valuing our communities and cities

and global importance as they provide guidance for communities concerning a sustainable path in the urbanization process. Furthermore, this event concluded Urban October 2020 with four roundtable sessions with highly reputable and knowledgeable speakers from different sectors and levels of governance, including the Executive Director of UN Habitat, Ms. Maimunah Mohd Sharif.

It was emphasized by the speakers that a top-down approach must be accompanied by a bottom-up approach as it has proven to be the most successful best practice in the past decades to achieve lasting change. Particularly “**Roundtable 2: Working together to build sustainable cities and communities**” emphasized the successful results of providing infrastructure from the public and private sector which will enable local communities even better to drive sustainable solutions and innovation in their specific environment. The health of cities depends on the health of our communities and long-term planning is critical on top of a complementary governance system. “**Roundtable 3: Building Back Better Communities through Public Space**” served as a valuable addition to this previous. The role of public spaces in this approach is critical to create an accessible and inclusive environment for everyone in the community. It is important that particularly local communities must not only be valued, but included in decision making processes, integrated, and supported wherever needed. Sustainable urbanization succeeds and falls with urban dwellers’ engagement.

On the other hand, “**Roundtable 1 - Towards Africities: Achieving the SDGs through Resilient Intermediate Cities in Africa co-organized with UCLG-A and Council of Governors of Kenya**” took a geographical approach in focusing on the continent of Africa. While the Executive Director of UN Habitat, Ms. Maimunah Mohd Sharif reaffirmed UN Habitat’s commitment to the ongoing collaborations and partnership with the government of Kenya, the speakers highlighted the necessity of inclusion for an effective response to COVID-19 and the rapid progress of urbanization. All cities must be embedded in a bigger approach in order to become self-reliant and practice solidarity to all African people, not only in terms of COVID-19 recovery but also concerning the new African model of development. As emphasized by “**Roundtable 4: The World Cities Report 2020: The Value of Sustainable Urbanization**”, the future of Africa will be determined by its sustainability of urbanization. There is no other continent with such a growing population in cities like Africa which must be used as an advantage to drive sustainability in all sectors across the continent. As stated by the speakers, if all stakeholders come together, we will achieve sustainable development in Africa for the benefit of all humanity.

Lastly, the Global Observance of World Cities day also revealed the immense potential that UN Habitat has in terms of becoming a stronger/better global facilitator and amplifier of local and multi-sectoral solutions/approaches to achieve the SDGs. Local communities are the key drivers which UN Habitat can support by helping them to be involved in the global decision-making processes and to build meaningful partnerships that foster the value of sustainable urbanization.

Appendix 1: Events Overview

World Habitat Day	Format	UNH Participation	Collaboration Partner
Post Pandemic Cities	Virtual Conference, Webex	NYO ED Christopher Williams	CSU, AIA
Housing for All Campaign	Campaign launch, release of campaign website, campaign trailer	Promotion on UNH WHD Global Observance Day in Surabaya, Indonesia	The Human Shelter, Good Company Pictures
The Human Shelter	Release of the documentary The Human Shelter on UNH YouTube Channel	n/a	The Human Shelter, Good Company Pictures
Welcome to Honolulu I	Virtual Panel Discussion	UNH ED Video Message	FIABCI-USA, Hawaii Council
UIA World Architecture Day	Webinar	UNH DED Vistor Kisob	UAI Union of Architects

Urban October | Week 1

UO Week 1	Format	UNH Participation	Collaboration Partner
Welcome to Honolulu II	Virtual event, including screening of Push The Movie	n/a	FIABCI-USA, Hawaii Council
CSU 2020 Annual Gala	Virtual Gala	n/a - promoted event	CSU
Megacities SortDocs Film Festival	Virtual Panel Discussion	UNH Housing expert Jesús Salcedo (as Moderator)	Megacities Short Docs Film Festival, Mission 2030
2020 TAG Lecture by Claire Weisz	Virtual Event	NYO ED Christopher Williams	CSU
Symposium on Women and Children/Girls Experiencing Homelessness/Displacement	Webinar	NYO ED Christopher Williams	UNANIMA International
The Human Shelter Housing amid the COVID-19 pandemic	Launch of new material	n/a	The Human Shelter / Good Company Pictures
IKEA Promotion Housing4All	Launch of Housing4All Campaign Trailer on Instagram and YouTube, YouTube Ads	n/a	IKEA
The Human Shelter Screening and Q/A with Makoko Community in Lagos, Nigeria	In person event in Lagos cinema	n/a	The Human Shelter / Good Company Pictures

Newsletter Week 1: https://mailchi.mp/b1bdfdc34bd/un-habitat-ny-newsletter_sep2020

Urban October | Week 2

UO Week 2	Format	UNH Participation	Collaboration Partner
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Proceedings of the Expert Group Meeting on Affordable Housing and Social Protection Systems for All to Address Homelessness	Webex Panel Discussion	NYO ED Christopher Williams, Robert Lews-Lettington (Chief of Section Land, Housing, and Shelter)	UN-Habitat, UNDESA
Do we need to rethink affordable housing post-COVID-19? (Columbia University)	Webinar	Giulia Lavagna (UN Habitat Housing Unit)	Columbia University
Urban October at The University of Chicago: Design and the Post-Pandemic City- A conversation with Bruce Mau	Virtual Panel Discussion	Promoted Event	University of Chicago
Changing Cities, New Realities I: "Adapting Governance"	Virtual Discussion	Promoted Event	Pritzker Forum on Global Cities
Leadership Breakfast with Kim Yao	Discussion	Promoted Event	Archtober
Community Friday Paddles	In person event	Promoted Event	Archtober
Design Tour: Architecture	Tour	Promoted Event	Archtober
Inside Schermerhorn Row: A Virtual Tour of the Seaport Museum's Landmark Buildings	Virtual Tour	Promoted Event	Archtober
Open House New York Weekend	Tour	Promoted Event	Archtober
Community Friday Paddles	In person event	Promoted Event	Archtober
Eileen Gray: Architectural Drawing as Spatial Praxis	Discussion	Promoted Event	Archtober
Fall 2020 Sciame Series: Alexia León	Virtual Discussion	Promoted Event	Archtober

Newsletter Week 2: https://mailchi.mp/2cdcb75d12b5/un-habitat-ny_urban-october-week2

Urban October | Week 3

UO Week 3	Format	UNH Participation	Collaboration Partner
Smart Cities in the Post-COVID-19 Era: Creating People-Centered and	Webinar	n/a- promoted event	IHC and Red Dot Foundation

Gender-Responsive Cities to Advance the New Urban Agenda.” (Urban Thinkers Campus- Day 1)			
Leave No One Behind: Ending Youth Global Homelessness in the Decade of Action	Webex Panel Discussion	Chris Williams, Executive Director, UN-Habitat New York	Institute of Global Homelessness (IGH)
The Impact and Promise of Smart Cities for post-COVID 19 era: Inclusive technology and creative partnerships for The City We Need (Urban Thinkers Campus- Day 2)	Virtual Panel Discussion	n/a- promoted event	IHC and Red Dot Foundation
Lecture: J. Phillip Thompson	Lecture	Promoted Event	Archtober
Changing Signs, Changing Times: A History of Wayfinding in Transit with the New York Transit Museum	Virtual Discussion	Promoted Event	Archtober
How to Launch Your Project: Join Cooper Hewitt to Learn How to Launch a Project!	Virtual Workshop	Promoted Event	Archtober
Steven Holl Architects’ Ex of In House, Virtual Tour	Virtual Tour	Promoted Event	Archtober
Architecture Graduate Programs Info Session	Info Session	Promoted Event	Archtober
Bricks & Brownstone: The New York Row House	Virtual Tour	Promoted Event	Archtober
92Y Master Class: Stanford White in Detail	Master Class	Promoted Event	Archtober
History Happy Hour: Decoding the Past–Cemetery Symbols, Part 2	Discussion	Promoted Event	Archtober
AIANY Boat Tour: Architecture and the Lights of Gotham	Boat Tour	Promoted Event	Archtober
NYC Architecture Biennial	Exhibition	Promoted Event	Archtober
AIANY Boat Tour: Architecture and the Lights of Gotham	Boat Tour	Promoted Event	Archtober

Newsletter Week 3: https://mailchi.mp/648f1272793d/un-habitat-ny_urban-october-week3

Urban October | Week 4

UO Week 4	Format	UNH Participation	Collaboration Partner
FIABCI-USA Hawaii Council - World Cities Day Event	Virtual Panel Discussion	n/a- promoted event	FIABCI-USA Hawaii Council

Working Group to End Homelessness, Vincentian Family Evictions Event	Webex Panel Discussion	Chris Williams, Executive Director, UN-Habitat New York	Working Group to End Homelessness, Vincentian Family
Inclusive Cities for All: COVID-19 Urban Response	Virtual Panel Discussion	Chris Williams, Executive Director, UN-Habitat New York	IFFD (International Federation for Family Development)
Habitat Norway Panel Discussion: The Human Shelter and Housing For All Campaign	Screening of the Human Shelter in Oslo cinema, followed by virtual panel and interactive audience discussion	Director Boris Bertram and UN-Habitat, represented by Christophe Lalande	Habitat Norway, The Human Shelter (Boris Bertram)
UN-Habitat NY World Cities Day 2020: Local Innovations, SDGs & COVID-19	Webex Panel Discussion	Chris Williams, Executive Director, UN-Habitat New York	
Better City, Better Life: Valuing our Communities & Cities	Webex Panel Discussion	Chris Williams, Executive Director, UN-Habitat New York	

Please find here link to our complete matrix with Event Reports & Recordings:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1HwMAq_lukS8VKdIDVb5dje588EPPFsJU/view?usp=sharing

Appendix 2: Youtube Campaigns

1. Housing for All Campaign | The Human Shelter

October 5 | Launch of the Housing for All Campaign, website and release of campaign trailer. Access to documentary The Human Shelter by Boris Bertram to a public audience on the UNH YouTube Channel.

UN-Habitat **Web Stories**:

<https://unhabitat.org/launch-of-the-“housing-for-all”-campaign>

<https://unhabitat.org/the-human-shelter-an-explorative-documentary-to-illustrate-un-habitat-housing-for-all-campaign>

IKEA press release on official website „Newsroom“ <https://www.ikea.com/gb/en/this-is-ikea/newsroom/#/>

YouTube Performance:

Housing for All Campaign Trailer: <https://youtu.be/ovDfNF9mI9Y>, number of views **1.536**

The Human Shelter: https://youtu.be/B_xJC3xloCQ, number of views **4.432**

Promotion on UN-Habitat NY **Social Media Channels**:

Number of total posts: 4

Interactions:

Total likes: 13

Total impressions: 337

2. MegaCities Short Docs Film Festival

Panel Discussion with participation of UN-Habitat, MC_SD Film Festival, OECD, Mission 2030.

Listed videos on UN-Habitat YouTube channel:

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLTQZbEc6Bv5_psApX5a0HgCK6CJuxKCq-&jct=LfmmRZN2dgpOdiUQofEZGhoec_whFA (44 views)

UN-Habitat Social Media Promotion:

Number of total posts: 4

Interactions:

Total likes: 4

Total impressions: 217

Link to posts:

https://twitter.com/UNHABITAT_NY/status/1312505955528081409?s=20

3. The Human Shelter | Housing amid the COVID-19 pandemic:

UN-Habitat Web Stories: <https://unhabitat.org/director-of-'the-human-shelter'-film-explores-perceptions-of-homes-during-covid-19-pandemic>

Launch of new material on UNH Youtube Channel:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B_xJC3xloCQ&list=PLTQZbEc6Bv5-alziSWj49231xZ2gCZI5I

Updates on Housing for All Website: unhabitat.org/housing4all

UN-Habitat Social Media Promotion:

Number of total posts: 4

Interactions:

Total likes: 71

Total impressions: **337**

Link to posts:

<https://twitter.com/UNHABITAT/status/1316304460537384962?s=20>

4. Housing 4 All | IKEA Promotion

Two posts on Instagram IKEA today with around **10.000 views**: <https://www.instagram.com/ikeatoday/>
<https://linktr.ee/IKEAtoday>

1 minute campaign trailer on IKEA YouTube Channel: 78.000 views in four days

YouTube Ads report: So far the trailer has been viewed **116K times**. The documentary seems to have been viewed around 2275 times, out of which 1400 have been directed there by the Youtube-ad.