



Urban October Background

Objectives of Urban October

Urban October is an opportunity for everyone to be part of the conversation about the challenges and opportunities created by the fast rate of change in our cities and towns. Each October, everyone interested in sustainable urbanization from national and local governments to universities, NGOs and communities is encouraged to hold or participate in virtual or physical activities, events, and discussions.

The overall objective of the WHD and WCD initiative is to raise awareness globally of the importance of sustainable urbanization – the way cities and human settlements are planned, designed, governed, and managed, in improving the quality of life of every man, woman and child.

Urban October further builds on a brand on several platform to attract higher levels of engagement by global, regional, national, and local institutions and partners with a view to influencing policies, investment priorities and practices at all levels.

World Habitat Day is marked on the first Monday of October each year and is recognized by the United Nations to reflect on the state of towns and cities, and on the basic right of all to adequate shelter. The day is also intended to remind the world that everyone has the power and the responsibility to shape the future of towns and cities. World Habitat Day was first celebrated in 1986 in Nairobi, Kenya, and the theme chosen for that year was *"Shelter is My Right"*.

The United Nations General Assembly decided that this should be an annual event and the first Monday of October was chosen. The day is celebrated in many countries around the world and various activities are organized to examine the problems of rapid urbanization and its impact on the environment and human poverty.

Annual themes for World Habitat Day have been diverse and have included *"Shelter for the Homeless"*, *"Our Neighbourhood"*, *"Safer Cities"*, *"Women in Urban Government"*, *"Cities without Slums"* and *"Water and Sanitation for Cities."*

UN Habitat makes plain the need to plan cities in order to avoid the chaotic development of urban sprawl and all the associated problems that are created as a result.

Cities are engines of growth. Many people from rural areas globally long to move to cities to realize their dreams of a better life. Often this dream is not realized, but people continue to flock to cities for no other reason than a vague promise of a better future and prosperity. In the early twentieth century, only 20 per cent of the global population lived in cities. Today, this figure has exceeded 55 per cent and predictions for the next 30 years suggest that it will rise to 70 per cent.

Most of the rapid urbanization is taking place in developing nations.

World Habitat Day amplifies the **Race to Zero** and UN-Habitat's **ClimateAction4Cities** and encourages local governments to develop zero-carbon plans in the run up to COP26 in November.

Cities worldwide are experiencing climate-related disasters, such as floods, droughts, sea level rise, heatwaves, landslides and storms.

Sustainable, climate-resilient societies address poverty reduction, basic services livelihoods, accessible, affordable, and adequate housing, infrastructure, informal settlements and ecosystems.

World Cities Day is an annual United Nations observance day held on 31 October. The global observance, first held in 2014, is organized by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) in coordination with each year's selected host city.

The General Assembly in its resolution A/RES/68/239 of 27 December 2013 decided "to designate 31 October, beginning in 2014, as World Cities Day", and invited "the United Nations system, in particular UN-Habitat, relevant international organizations, civil society and all relevant stakeholders to observe and raise awareness of the Day" and stressed "that the costs of all activities that may arise from observing the Day should be met from voluntary contributions".

Since then, the World Cities Day has been held as the pinnacle of the Urban October campaign, which begins with World Habitat Day on the first Monday of October, advocacy activities throughout the month of October and the World Cities Day every 31st October.

This initiative has been championed by the People's Republic of China, through the Shanghai Municipality and the Ministry of Human Settlements and Urban Development.

Global hosting of World Habitat Day has been as follows:

- 2014: With the theme: "Voices from Slums"
- 2015: With the theme: "Public Spaces for All"
- 2016: With the theme: "Housing at the Centre"
- 2017: With the theme: "Housing Policies: Affordable Housing"
- 2018: Nairobi, Kenya with the theme: "Municipal Solid Waste Management"
- 2019: Mexico City, Mexico with the theme: "Frontier Technologies as an Innovative Tool to Transform Waste to Wealth"
- 2020: Surabaya, Indonesia with the theme: "Housing For All: A Better Urban Future"
- 2021: TBA, with the theme: "Accelerating urban action for a carbon-free world"

Global hosting of the World Cities Day has been as follows:

- 2014: Shanghai, China with the theme: "Leading Urban Transformations"
- 2015: Milan, Italy with the theme: "Designed to live together"
- 2016: Quito, Ecuador with the theme: "Inclusive Cities, Shared Development"

- 2017: Guangzhou, China with the theme: "Innovative Governance, Open Cities"
- 2018: Liverpool, United Kingdom with the theme: "Building Sustainable and Resilient Cities"
- 2019: Yekaterinburg, Russia with the theme: "Changing the world: innovations and better life for future generations"
- 2020: Nakuru, Kenya with the theme: "Valuing our communities and cities"
- 2021: TBA, with the theme: "Adapting Cities for Climate Resilience"

Implementation of the Urban October Campaign has included two important initiatives:

- The "Scroll of Honour" award, a UN-Habitat award that recognizes cities that demonstrate good practice within the annual theme of World Habitat Day
- Launch of the "Shanghai Manual" - A Guide for Sustainable Urban Development in the 21st Century published in 2011, 2016, 2017 and 2018. The manual is a collection of case studies, experiences and expertise drawn from around the world on how to create sustainable urban development. It is developed by experts in Shanghai Municipality experts, UN agencies (UN-Habitat, UNDESA); academic institutions and other key partners.