

UNITED NATIONS



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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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MESSAGE ON WORLD CITIES DAY 2021

31 October 2021

Cities are hubs of innovation and human ingenuity — and potential centres for transformative action to implement the Sustainable Development Goals and build a zero-carbon, climate-resilient and socially just world.

The theme of this year's World Cities Day, 'Adapting Cities for Climate Resilience', comes at a time when cities must be more resilient than ever before. They have been epicentres of the COVID-19 pandemic and are on the frontlines of the climate crisis.

Globally, over 1 billion people live in informal settlements, with 70 per cent highly vulnerable to climate change. Sea level rise could put more than 800 million people in coastal cities at direct risk by 2050. Yet just 9% of climate finance to cities goes to adaptation and resilience, and cities in developing countries receive far less than those in developed countries. This must change — half of all climate finance should be dedicated to adaptation.

We need a people-centred and inclusive approach to planning, building and managing cities. Resilient infrastructure, early warning systems and financial instruments to mitigate risks are crucial tools as cities seek to adapt and protect the lives and livelihoods of their residents.

Cities can lead the way in recovering better from the pandemic, reducing emissions at the scale and speed the world needs, and securing a resilient future for billions.

On World Cities Day, let us renew our resolve to confront urban challenges, mitigate risks, and forge lasting solutions. Together, we can transform our cities, and thereby transform our world.
