

CONCEPT NOTE

June 2022

31 days to promote better urban future

Urbanization presents some of the most significant opportunities and challenges in the world today. Cities are centres for economic growth and development but also face demographic, environmental, economic and social challenges.

The United Nation's Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11 – **“to make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable”** – identifies sustainable urbanization as one of the key priorities for global development. The adoption of the new Urban Agenda by the United Nations in 2016 has seen national and local governments around the world embark on a transformative path towards making SDG11 a reality.

By engaging all stakeholders, cities have the ability to harness transformational change and improve the life of their inhabitants. However, in many contexts, cities lack the capacity to enact this change. Ensuring cities have the capacity, capability and tools to address the challenges posed by urbanization has become a pressing global issue.

More than half of the world's population live in cities and towns and the number is growing every day

Urban October



Urban October was developed to raise awareness, promote participation, generate knowledge and engage the international community in creating a better urban future.

Every October UN-Habitat and partners organize a month of activities, events and discussions on urban sustainability. Urban October is an opportunity for people around the world to join the conversation around the challenges and opportunities created by the fast pace of change in our cities and towns. National and local governments, universities, non-governmental organizations, communities and other stakeholders in sustainable urbanization are encouraged to hold or participate in activities, events, and discussions.

Urban October begins with World Habitat Day at the start of the month and ends with World Cities Day on 31 October. Activities to mark Urban October take place around the world on these specific days and throughout the month. Different cities around the world host the global observances of World Habitat Day and World Cities Day each year.

By engaging all stakeholders, cities can harness transformational change and ensure a better life for all in an urbanizing world

World Habitat Day



World Habitat Day is held on the first Monday of October and launches Urban October. The day centres around the global observance, which is held in a different country each year with keynote speakers and roundtable discussions focused on a specific theme. World Habitat Day was first celebrated in 1986 in Nairobi, Kenya, with the theme 'Shelter is my right'.

In 2022, the World Habitat Day, under the theme **Mind the Gap. Leave No One and No Place Behind**, will look at the problem of growing inequality and challenges in cities and human settlements.

We want to draw attention to growing inequalities and vulnerabilities that have been exacerbated by the triple 'C' crises – COVID-19, climate and conflict.

The pandemic and recent conflicts have reversed years of progress made in the fight against poverty,

resulting in the emergence of newly poor people—those who would have exited poverty in the absence of the pandemic but remain poor, and those who have fallen into poverty on account of the pandemic. According to the UN-Habitat's World Cities Report, the number of people affected was between 119 and 124 million in 2020 and between 143 and 163 million in 2021. Tackling urban poverty and inequality have become an urgent global priority.

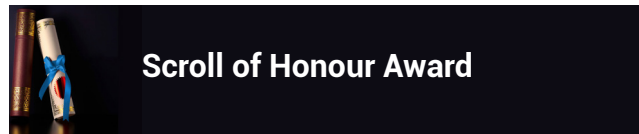
Cities and local governments play a front-line role in responding to crises and emergencies as well as in planning for an inclusive, resilient, and green future. To prepare urban areas for future catastrophes, we need to start with cities. Thus, local action and local implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals is more important than ever.

Objectives:

Our aim is to bring representatives of local governments, from mega cities to middle-size and small cities, to discuss their current challenges and ways to address growing inequalities. How to narrow the gap between the urban poor, between the rural and urban areas or different neighbourhoods within cities.

Expected outcomes:

- Bring the topic of inequalities to discussion, hearing the silenced experiences of the marginalized, understanding the transversal benefits that inclusion has for the whole society, and its outcomes.
- Encouraging governments at all levels to institutionalize channels of dialogue with the ones that tend to have lagged behind.
- Encourage multilevel governance on the horizontal level between governments, civil society and communities.



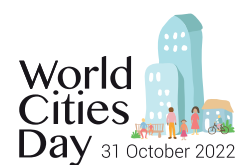
Scroll of Honour Award

As part of the World Habitat Day celebrations, UN-Habitat present its Scroll of Honour award.

The UN-Habitat Scroll of Honour award was launched in 1989 and is one of the most prestigious sustainable urbanization awards in the world. It aims to acknowledge initiatives that have made outstanding contributions in the field of human settlements, the provision of housing, highlighting the plight of people living in poverty or who have been displaced, and developing and improving human settlements and the quality of urban life.

The Scroll of Honour award is handed out at the World Habitat Day celebrations. Winners in each of the five categories travel to the host city to take part in the global observation. They receive plaques engraved with the name of the winning individual, city or institution.

World Cities Day



World Cities Day brings Urban October to an end on 31 October each year and was first celebrated in 2014. As with World Habitat Day, a global observance is held in a different city each year and the day focuses on a specific theme.

This year's global observance is planned in Shanghai, China under the theme **Act Local to Go Global**. We want to bring different partners and diverse stakeholders together to share their experiences and approaches to local action, what local action worked and what is needed to empower local and regional governments to create greener, more equitable and sustainable cities.

Local action is critical to achieve the sustainable development goals by 2030. UN-Habitat has been at the forefront of SDG localization since the very endorsement of the Agenda 2030. Since then, UN-Habitat has been working to advance SDG localization by providing technical expertise to partners across the globe, by leading the development of cutting-edge research, by capacitating local and regional governments on SDG localization, and by strengthening the voice of local governments and local actors within the main international and UN-led fora on SDGs.

Objectives:

Our aim is to advance the technical and political debate on the localization of the SDGs as a comprehensive roadmap to enhance inclusive human settlements and organize political inputs to implement global recommendations in local contexts.

To share and hear from best examples of participatory processes and inclusion related to SDG localization that can be extrapolated and tailored to different contexts. To define concrete hands-on learnings and recommendations on how to effectively implement the SDGs to reduce inequalities within cities and across territories.

To strengthen the connection between the findings of the discussion and the theme of World Habitat Day **Mind the Gap. Leave No One and No Place Behind** and local action that can help narrow the inequality gap.

Expected outcomes:

- Promoting the acceleration of SDG implementation in cities and territories among stakeholders and constituencies.
- Implement recommendations to foster inclusive policies and to raise the voices of the most left behind.

