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It's really important that cities are not synonymous with disconnection with nature, that they're not synonymous with just concrete.



Youth, climate, and urbanization: Key figures

Our world is rapidly changing towards urbanization. While this brings both challenges and opportunities, youth – who are the most adversely impacted by these issues – are at the forefront of a global movement for change:



85%
of the current world's youth population lives in developing countries.

50%+
of the world's population
resides in urban areas today,
and this figure is expected to rise to
70% by 2050

with growth concentrated in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

50%+
of the population in Africa
is under 25 years old.
More than 80 per cent of the
unemployed are youth.

80%+
of global GDP is
generated in cities,
with higher levels of urbanization
generally correlating with
increased GDP per capita.



80%+

of young people (ages 16-25) experience climate anxiety¹,

influencing decisions on career paths and family planning. Furthermore, 1 billion children live in countries at extremely high risk due to climate change².



The Lancet Planetary Health (2021)
UNICEF (2021)



Climate action, powered by youth

Cities are at the forefront of climate change, and the key to addressing this global issue will be found within urban areas and by those who are impacted the most – youth.

With over
42%
of the global
population under
25 years of age,
youth represent a
powerful force for
change

With a focus on urbanization and human settlements, UN-Habitat works to build inclusive, safe, and resilient cities, which includes prioritizing climate action given its tremendous impact on life in urban settings

Central to this is the role of young people, who are at the frontlines of a global movement demanding action. With over

42 per cent of the global population under 25 years of age, youth represent a powerful force for change.

Young activists have made major strides in ensuring climate change is part of the global agenda, by calling on international organizations and governments to rethink and discuss climate-related policies.

A core aspect of youth activism has been mobilizing for change in urban areas and highlighting the links between urbanism and climate change. With over half of the world's population residing in urban areas, cities are major contributors to greenhouse gas emissions due to factors including transportation use and energy demands. At the same time, urban areas are highly vulnerable to climate change impacts such as extreme weather events. As a result, youth – who represent a significant portion of urban populations - are sounding the alarm on how climate change is shaping all aspects of life in urban areas.

Understanding how youth are directly impacted by climate change and sustainability issues is crucial to including this generation in the global agenda. Beyond activism, young people have demonstrated they are capable of taking direct action to create solutions



of the world's population residing in urban areas, cities are major contributors to greenhouse gas emissions due to factors including transportation use and energy demands

and most importantly, are willing to be part of the solution. For instance, youth-led environmental programmes have mobilized close to half a million young people globally³, implementing sustainability projects in schools and communities.

Young people are not just the leaders of tomorrow - they are leading today. Their activism, leadership, and transformative ideas are shaping climate action and helping build a more sustainable future. Youth-led initiatives have inspired young people globally to learn about, and take action on climate change. For example, the organization Fridays for Future was founded by activist Greta Thunberg when she was just 15 years old. Ms. Thunberg sat in front of the Swedish parliament every day for three weeks to protest against the lack of action on climate change. Her bold stance inspired children around the world to do the same starting Fridays for Future protests everywhere from Kampala (Uganda) to Karachi (Pakistan).

The bold actions of youth around the world, whether through climate protests, starting sustainability initiatives at a community level, or participating in local environmental efforts, have shaped global discourse on climate action in recent years. Without youth, there is no climate movement. An inclusive, sustainable world involves youth leadership on climate matters.

With youth at the forefront of climate action, UN-Habitat recognizes that supporting their initiatives, investing in youth-driven climate action, and ensuring their voices are heard on the international agenda are crucial steps towards a more equitable world for future generations.

The Lancet Planetary Health (2021)

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Urban October: An overview



Urban October is an opportunity for everyone to engage in discussions about the challenges and opportunities arising from the rapid transformation of cities and towns. Each October, individuals and organizations committed to sustainable urbanization, including national and local governments, universities, NGOs, and community groups, are encouraged to hold or participate in activities, events, and discussions. The month begins with World Habitat Day on the first Monday of October and concludes with World Cities Day on October 31.

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. However, the

UN-Habitat, as the UN agency responsible for sustainable urbanization, is at the forefront of helping cities achieve the vision of sustainable and equitable urban futures for all by exploring innovative financing solutions, tackling climate action through waste management, and "building back better" through urban planning in post-crisis urban recovery. This holistic framework that encourages the integration of all facets of sustainable development to promote equality, welfare, and shared prosperity is paved in the New Urban Agenda, which was adopted by the United Nations in 2016.

In 2024, Urban October events, including World Habitat Day and World Cities Day, embraced themes relating to youth engagement and participation in climate action and creating a better future. Inspired by youth around the world who changes, but who are also boldly leading the charge on sustainability efforts, Urban October 2024 was marked by youth



participation across a range of activities and events and discussions centred around recommendations by youth.

On 7 October 2024, the global observance of World Habitat Day was held under the theme "Engaging youth to create a better urban future". As the world rapidly urbanizes, a significant portion of urban residents today are young people, particularly in some countries in Africa and Asia. The observance focused on

The global observance of World Habitat Day 2024 was broadcasted live on UN Web TV and Zoom: Opening Ceremony - World Habitat Day 2024 (Querétaro, Mexico) | UN Web TV

The global observance of World Cities Day 2024 was streamed live on UN Web TV: Opening Ceremony - World Cities Day 2024 (Alexandria, Egypt) | UN Web TV

ways to involve the new generation in shaping their urban present and future through participatory processes and local leadership opportunities. A key highlight of the World Habitat Day global observance is the UN-Habitat Scroll of Honour Award, which recognizes outstanding contributions to sustainable urban development.

In 2024, World Cities Day was observed in Alexandria, Egypt, under the theme "Youth leading climate and local action for cities". The event highlighted the role of youth in leading climate action within cities, showcasing innovative youth-led initiatives that promote urban sustainability and practical solutions for building climate-resilient cities. The discussions emphasized the importance of integrating youth perspectives into urban policies and strategies to advance meaningful local climate action.

Global reach and accessibility



Worldwide, 130 cities in 71 countries hosted

Urban October events in 2024. including World **Habitat Day and World Cities** Day.



The hashtag #DíaMundialdelHabitat (Spanish for "World Habitat Day") reached

million people.



Content from this year's global observances was viewed over

times across various platforms within 24 hours, including YouTube, X, and UN Web TV.

Since 2020, global observance events have been held in a hybrid format (virtual and in-person), significantly expanding their reach and impact. These events were inclusive and accessible as the UN Web TV broadcasts featured International Sign Language interpretation and Zoom events included real-time captioning and translations into multiple languages. The World Habitat Day 2024 events were held in English, with simultaneous translation into Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian, and Spanish. The World Cities Day 2024 events were held in Arabic, Chinese, English, and French.



World Habitat Day



2,500+
participants from 88 countries, 288

Designated by the United Nations, World Habitat Day is observed annually to reflect on the state of cities and human settlements, and to promote the right to adequate shelter. The programme included a high-level ceremony followed by two roundtables addressing youthled initiatives in climate action and sustainable urban mobility.

In recognition of the youth at the helm of climate action, the 2024 World Habitat Day theme was "Engaging youth to create a better urban future".

Date: 7 October 2024 **Global observance of World Habitat** Day 2024: Querétaro, Mexico Total participants: 2,500+ from 88 countries, 288 cities

Co-organized by the State of Querétaro, the Municipality of Querétaro, and the Government of Mexico, the event took place in the Educational Cultural Center of the State of Querétaro.





By 2030, an estimated 60 per cent of

60%

of people will live

in urban areas

by 2030, with up

to 60% of urban

years of age

dwellers under 18

people will live in urban areas, with up to 60 per cent of urban dwellers under 18 years of age, exposing these populations to unprecedented challenges in the context of climate change. Despite progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, cities – particularly in the Global South – continue to grapple with poverty, inequality, and

urgent action.

environmental degradation, necessitating

World Cities Day brings Urban October to an end on 31 October each year. As with

Day October 31, 2024 BETTER CITY, BETTER LIFE

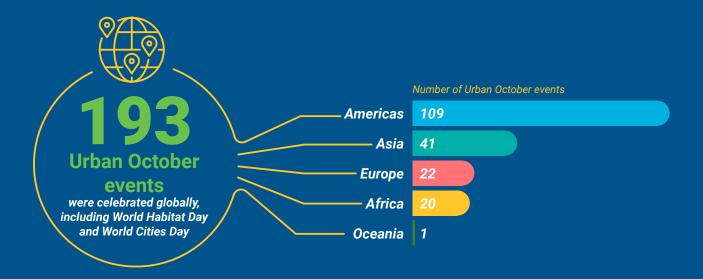
Youth leading climate and local action for cities

The global observance of World Cities Day 2024 was held under the theme "Youth climate changemakers: Catalyzing local action for urban sustainability". The event highlighted the key role of local governments and young people in addressing the climate crisis in cities.

World Cities Day

World Habitat Day, a global observance is held in a different city each year and the day focuses on a specific theme.

Urban October 2024 in numbers





130
cities
hosted events



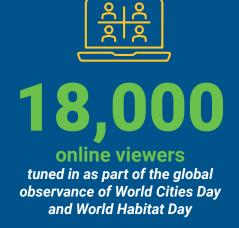


26
events hosted
at World Habitat Day



2,500+
participants from 88 countries joined World Habitat Day 2024 celebrations







nominations received for the UN-Habitat Scroll of Honour Award 2024



winners selected for the UN-Habitat Scroll of Honour Award 2024



worldwide initiatives
recognized
in the UN-Habitat Scroll of
Honour Award award over a 30+
year period



Urban October 2024 recommendations

Cities are shaping our present and future, but as they grow, they are confronted with challenges of providing basic services for urban populations. By 2050, one in three young people worldwide will be African, with a significant and growing percentage living in cities. Below are some of the main challenges and recommendations discussed during Urban October 2024.

The challenges:

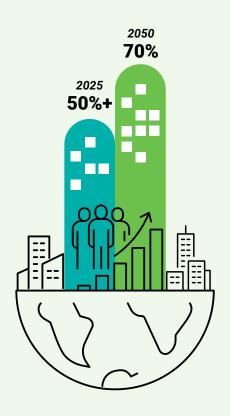
- As cities expand, they face increasing challenges in providing infrastructure and essential services such as adequate housing, water, sanitation, education, security, and jobs.
- Climate change impacts cities and vulnerable youth through:
- More frequent extreme weather events
- Food and water insecurity
- Escalation of climate-related health issues
- Displacement due to extreme weather events
- Psychological impacts and climate anxiety

The recommendations:

- 1. Localize the SDGs. The path to accelerating the achievement of the SDGs is through localization. This enables local governments, in partnership with youth and communities, to be catalysts for change.
- 2. Invest in urban youth. With many young people living in informal settlements and slums, cities should train youth and support youth-led enterprises through targeted programmes to enhance their skills. Strengthening these youth-led enterprises can create livelihoods and boost local economies, helping young people lift their communities out of poverty.
- 3. **Engage youth in urban governance.** Youth are increasingly recognized as key evidence-builders, contributing valuable data and solutions that drive innovative urban development. Involving youth in local governance through initiatives such as Youth 2030 Cities and the Young Gamechangers Initiative is essential for advancing the localization of the SDGs by empowering them to participate in urban planning and decision-making.
- 4. **Prioritize affordable housing development.** National and local governments must prioritize the development of affordable housing, ensuring that all urban residents, particularly youth and marginalized communities, have access to safe, adequate, and affordable living conditions.
- 5. **Increase digital access.** Investment in digital infrastructure is crucial to bridging the digital divide in urban areas. Policies should focus on improving access to ICT for all to ensure equal opportunities for education and employment.
- 6. Adapt essential services for vulnerable youth. With 2.6 million people in Africa affected by climate disasters, especially in informal settlements and slums, governments must prioritize adapting essential services like water, sanitation, and health systems to protect their well-being.

World Habitat Day 2024

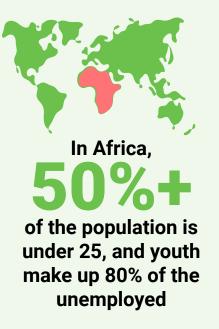
Important information



50%+
of the world lives in cities today. This figure is expected to rise to 70% by 2050



Developing countries are home to 85% of the world's youth



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Global observance 2024

On 7 October 2024, UN-Habitat invited everyone interested in sustainable urban development to join the global observance of World Habitat Day, under the theme "Engaging youth to create a better urban future". The event, held in Querétaro, Mexico, focused on empowering youth to take the lead in shaping their urban present and future through participatory processes and local leadership.



"This World Habitat Day, we celebrate you – the young, the brave, and the changemakers of today and tomorrow. You are the heartbeat of our cities, the force driving us toward a better future."

Ms. Anacláudia Rossbach, UN-Habitat Executive Director



"As we celebrate World Habitat Day, let us support youth everywhere, include young people in decision-making, and build cities where people of all ages can thrive."

António Guterres, United Nations Secretary-General



World Habitat Day roundtables

World Habitat Day 2024 included two roundtable discussions that brought together key stakeholders to emphasize the pivotal role of youth tackling climate change challenges in urban environments and promoting sustainable practices.

Roundtable 1

Youth power: Leading the charge against climate change

During this roundtable, speakers discussed the essential elements needed to empower youth leadership in climate advocacy and decision-making, including education and leveraging technology. Youth activism in marginalized communities was highlighted as a crucial factor in enabling young people to become agents of change. Speakers also reflected on strategies to prioritize achieving the SDGs within the six years remaining until 2030. These strategies included the need for data-driven decision-making and economic action plans that prioritize both people and the environment.



Recommendations that emerged from the discussion:

- 1. Commit to green infrastructure. By integrating nature-based solutions and sustainable transportation into urban planning, cities can demonstrate their commitment to green infrastructure in urban development, which enhances climate resilience, supports long-term environmental sustainability, and enhances overall quality of life for residents.
- 2. Engage stakeholders. By increasing collaboration among diverse stakeholders, cities can ensure effective urban planning and development that is inclusive and responds to the diverse needs of various populations living and working in urban settings.
- 3. Empower communities and engage youth. Sustainable, long-term change can be achieved through community-led and youth-led initiatives. All stakeholders working towards achieving sustainable, climate-adaptive cities should work closely with youth and communities to understand their needs and equip them as they implement local solutions.



"When you teach a child, a girl, a boy or adolescent, about climate change and sustainability, there is a very interesting phenomenon, because those children, these adolescents, they teach their parents, they teach their uncles or grandparents or siblings."

Mr. Luis Antonio Ramírez García, Coordinator for the Latin America and the Caribbean Agenda, UN-Habitat, Mexico

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Roundtable 2

Moving forward: Youth-driven solutions for sustainable urban mobility

The primary objective was to highlight the essential role of young people in promoting innovative solutions to enhance urban mobility, reduce private car dependency, and lower CO2 emissions, ultimately creating more sustainable and accessible urban environments.



TEJIENDO SOLUCIONES INSTRUCCIONES

> WEAVING SOLUTIONS

"We need to start designing the cities we want to live in."

Mr. Pablo Marín Escobar, Founder and CEO, Pluralio, Mexico Recommendations that emerged from the discussion:

1. Engage youth in urban planning. Governments, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders should focus on the role of youth shaping urban policies and planning, recognizing their ability to contribute innovative ideas and fresh perspectives

to improve urban living conditions.

2. Collaborate through public-private partnerships. Promoting partnerships between the public and private sectors can facilitate urban expansion and address housing shortages, while ensuring the effective integration of transportation systems into urban planning.

3. Embrace technology for urban development. Technology can be used to enhance the quality of life in urban settings, including enhancing communication between governments and the public, streamlining urban planning processes, delivering remote education and telemedicine, and improving transportation efficiency. Governments should consider how to maximize existing technology so it can advance urban development goals.

Youth dialogue session

Creating a better urban future

The objective of the **Youth dialogue: Creating a better urban future** was to explore various approaches, practices, and impactful stories that highlight the effective participation of young people in local-level decision-making. The session emphasized that providing young people with access to such opportunities is crucial for shaping both the present and future of our cities. It ensures that urban life remains sustainable, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of children, youth and young adults.

"International cooperation needs spaces for young persons not as observers but as actors... Youth voices must be tangible in public policy."

Mr. César Enrique Calvo Aspiros, Youth Ambassador, Querétaro, Mexico





the quality of urban life. The Award aligns

with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly emphasizing Goal 11:

The Award is presented during the Global

Sustainable Cities and Communities.

observance of World Habitat Day, a

day designated by the United Nations

to remind the global community of our collective responsibility to reflect on

the state of our cities and towns and to

In 2024, UN-Habitat received 127

nominations from across Africa, Asia, Europe, the Americas, and Oceania. Five

contributing to sustainable cities and

winners were recognized for embodying

best practices and innovative approaches

shape their future.

communities.

Winners of the 2024 UN-Habitat Scroll of Honour Award:

- Ville de Rabat from the Kingdom of Morocco, for its pioneering approach to integrated and sustainable urban development, exemplified by its "Rabat a Sustainable and Inclusive City" vision.
- Alcaldía de Santiago de Cali, from Cali, Colombia, for addressing urban and housing challenges by transforming public spaces, legalizing informal settlements, and promoting sustainable development.
- Majlis Bandaraya Ipoh from Ipoh Perak, Malaysia, for its efforts to transition the city from a resource-intensive economy to a regenerative model focused on health, waste management, and ecotourism, while aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Allen Kong from Ocean Grove, Australia, for his pioneering work in socially and environmentally sustainable architecture, mentorship, and leadership in inclusive design through global programmes and indigenous advocacy.
- David Satterthwaite from London, United Kingdom, for revolutionizing urban development by advocating for improved housing and living conditions for marginalized urban residents.

Case study

Advancing urban development and social housing initiatives in Colombia

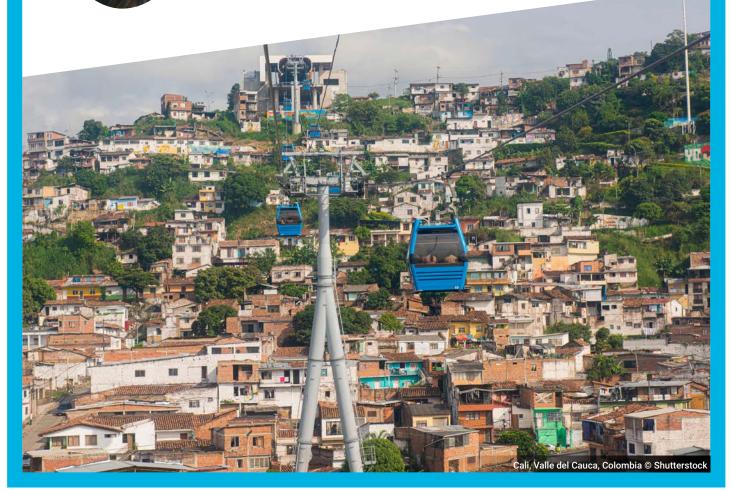
The Municipality of Santiago de Cali, through its Secretariat of Social Housing and Habitat, leads efforts in urban development and social housing, guided by the MIHabitat policy. The programme focuses on legalizing informal settlements, urban renewal, and enhancing public spaces. Projects such as the "Bulevar de Oriente" have improved the quality of life for over 300,000 residents by transforming underdeveloped areas into more functional and accessible urban spaces.

With over 40 per cent of Cali's population living in precarious conditions, the MIHabitat programme addresses the challenges of informal settlements and relocates families from high-risk areas. Initiatives around the Pondaje and Charco Azul lagoons combine housing reforms with public space improvements, fostering social cohesion and promoting environmental sustainability.



"Receiving this award reflects the joint effort of the Cali Mayor's Office and the communities to make our city a more inclusive and sustainable place."

Ms. Maria Del Mar Mozo Muriel. Secretary of Social Housing and Habitat, Cali, Colombia



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World Cities Day 2024

World Cities Day 2024 served as a call to action for youth and local governments to collaborate in addressing the climate crisis. As climate change challenges increase, especially in rapidly growing cities, the event emphasized the critical role of youth in driving urban adaptation and building climate resilience.

Important information



Cities produce over

80%
of the global GDP,
with urbanization linked to

higher GDP per capita



With

million people
in Africa impacted by climate
disasters, governments must
adapt essential services to

safeguard those in informal

settlements

"By empowering young people, we can accelerate climate action and drive global progress for the Sustainable Development Goals."

Mr. Antonio Guterres, United Nations Secretary-General



Roundtable 1

Public-Private sector panel dialogue

This discussion emphasized the importance of centralized decision-making frameworks that involve civil society, youth, and the private sector. It also advocated for decentralized governance to encourage local solutions for climate adaptation. Participants called for increased funding and multisectoral partnerships to support climate initiatives at the local level.



"We need strategies that not only adapt to climatic changes but also bring every sector — civil society, youth, and the private sector — on board for sustainable impact."

Mr. Hesham El-Helbawy, Assistant Minister of Local Development in Upper Egypt

Roundtable 2

Youth panel dialogue discussion on climate and cities

This discussion highlighted the crucial role of youth in driving climate action within urban settings. It provided a platform to share best practices and advocate for next steps to transform ideas into tangible outcomes. The roundtable inspired collaborative, youth-centred approaches across multiple sectors.



"Empowered youth are the architects of solutions and the heart of resilient urban societies."

Ms. Sarah Syed, UN-Habitat Youth Advisor, Canada



Championing climate action in Africa

UN-Habitat, together with Cities Alliance and UNOPS, organized a campaign on African youth championing climate action for World Cities Day. It included a series of videos, online articles, and social media posts featuring youth activists, and an op-ed written by the regional directors from the three organizations which highlighted solutions-oriented action taken by young climate activists.

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Urban October Speakers

Global Observance of World Cities Day 2024

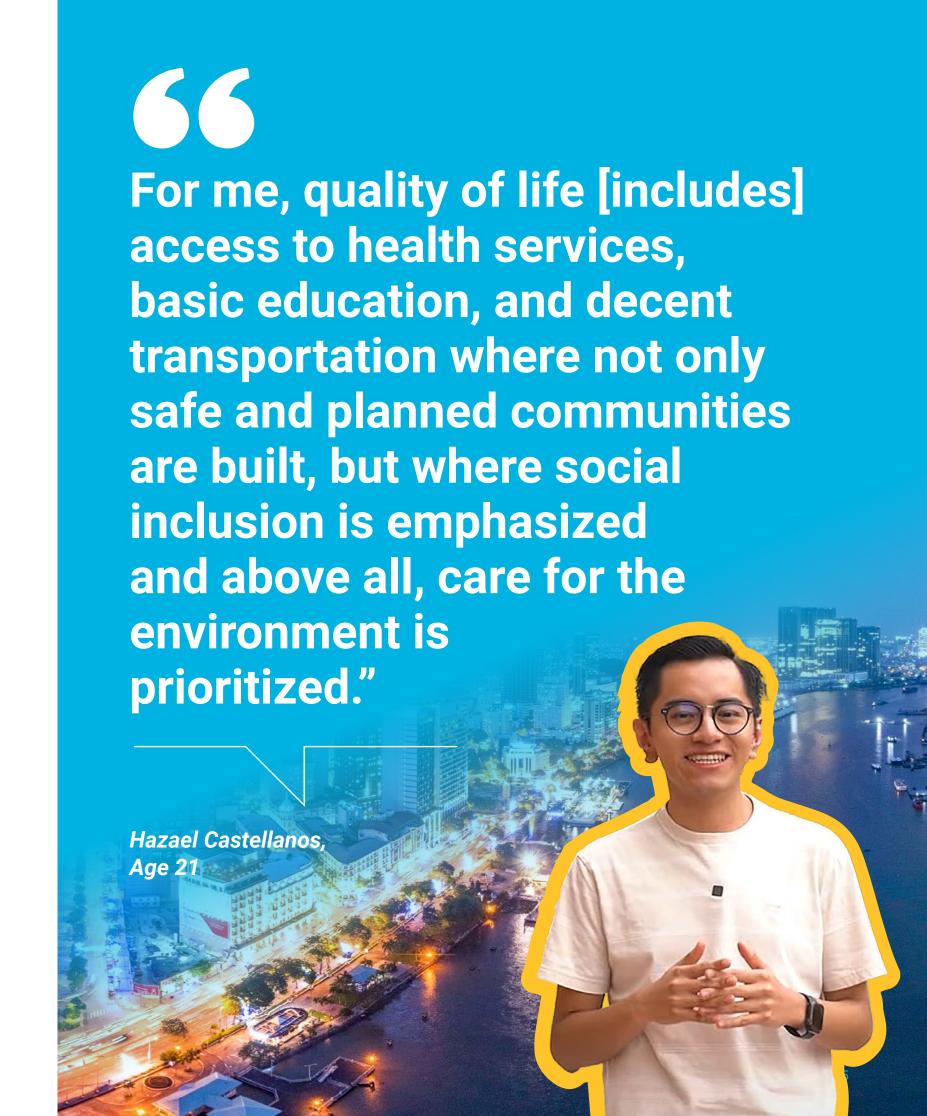
Alexandria, Egypt

- Manal Awad, Minister of Local Development of Egypt
- Hesham El-Helbawy, Assistant Minister of Local Development, Egypt
- Ni Hong, Minister of Housing and Urban-Rural Development of China
- Ahmed Khaled, Governor of Alexandria
- Mostafa Madbouly, Prime Minister of Egypt
- Elena Panova, United Nations Resident Coordinator in Egypt
- Felipe Paullier, United Nations
 Assistant Secretary-General for Youth
 Affairs
- Anacláudia Rossbach, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN-Habitat
- Ahmed Zayed, Director, Bibliotheca Alexandrina

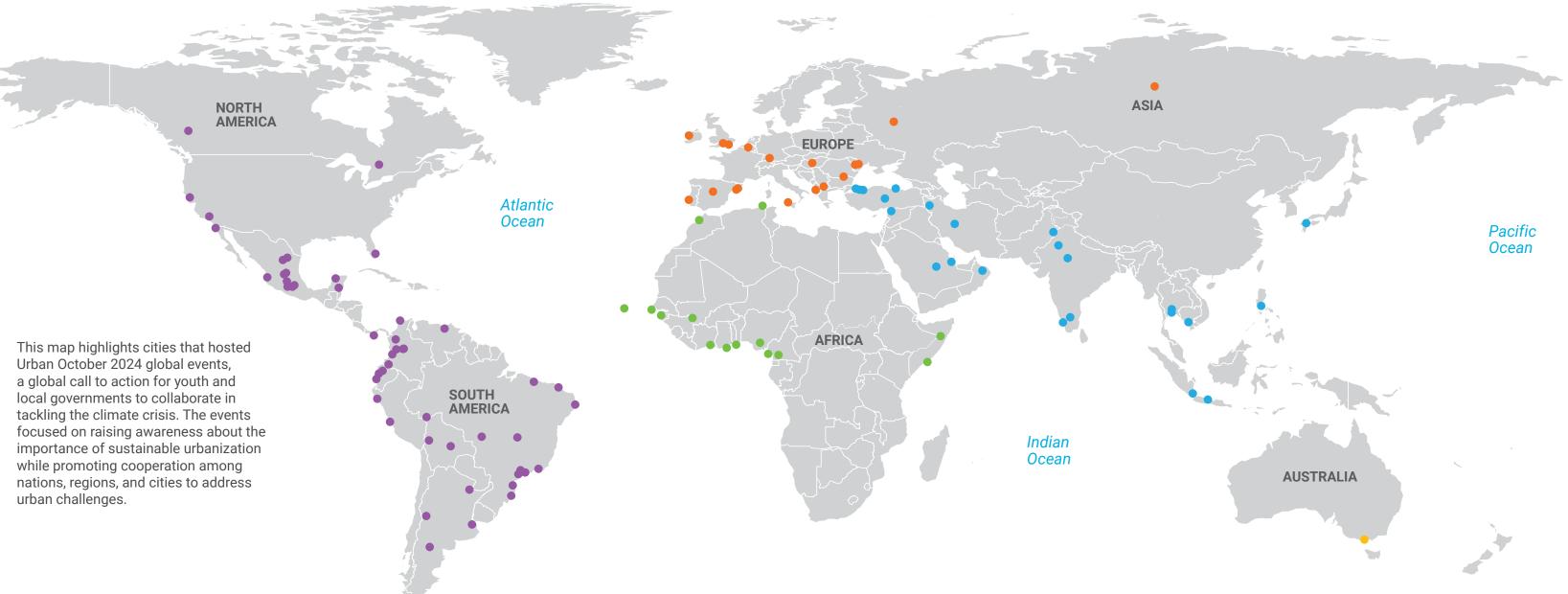
Global Observanceof World Habitat Day 2024

Oueretaro, Mexico

- Fernando Carrera Castro, Representative of the United Nations Children's Fund in Mexico
- Fernando González Salinas, Secretary of Urban Development and Public Works, Government of the State of Oueretaro
- Mauricio Kuri González, Governor of the State of Queretaro
- Peter Grohmann, Resident Coordinator of the UN System in Mexico
- Virginia Hernández Vázquez, Youth Secretary, Government of the State of Queretaro
- Felipe Fernando Macías Olvera, President of the Municipality of Queretaro
- Anacláudia Rossbach, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN-Habitat
- Enrique Javier Ochoa Martínez, Undersecretary of Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mexico
- Edna Elena Vega Ragel, Minister of Agrarian, Territorial and Urban Development



Urban October 2024 global events



AfricaAmericasAsiaEuropeOceania

Africa

Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire Accra. Ghana Annaba, Algeria Bamako, Mali Bargny, Senegal Buea, Cameroon Comé, Benin Dakar, Senegal Garowe, Somalia Mogadishu, Somalia Nsukka, Nigeria Praia, Cape Verde Rabat, Morocco Sao Domingos/Mansoa, Guinea-Bissau Yaoundé, Cameroon

Americas

Arcadia, United States Armenia, Colombia Barranquilla, Colombia Bogotá, Colombia Brasília, Brazil Buenos Aires, Argentina Burnaby, Canada Cali. Colombia Chía, Colombia Ciudad de México, México Cobija, Bolivia Cuenca, Ecuador Criciúma, Brazil Cuiabá, Brazil Ecatepec de Morelos, Mexico Ensenada, Mexico Estado de Mexico, Mexico Formosa, Argentina

Fortaleza, Brazil Guayaquil, Ecuador Honolulu, United States Jaraguá do Sul. Brazil Lake Worth, United States La Paz, Bolivia Lambayeque, Peru Lima, Peru Mendoza, Argentina Mérida, Mexico Mexico City, Mexico Monterrey, Mexico Neuquén, Argentina Panamá, Panama Pasto, Colombia Puerto La Cruz, Venezuela Querétaro, Mexico

Quintana Roo, Mexico
Quito, Ecuador
Recife, Brazil
Resistencia, Argentina
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
Saltillo, Mexico
San Francisco, United States
San Luis Potosí, Mexico
Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia
Sabanalarga, Colombia
São Paulo, Brazil
São Caetano do Sul, Brazil
Tapiraí, Brazil
Tepic, Mexico
Toronto, Canada

Δeia

Avcılar, Türkiye Bangkok, Thailand Bengaluru, India Budaiya, Bahrain Calicut, India Delhi, India Fukuoka, Japan Istanbul, Türkive Jakarta, Indonesia Kayseri, Türkiye Lahore, Pakistan Manama, Bahrain Muscat, Oman New Delhi, India Ordu, Türkiye Pathum Thani, Thailand Phnom Penh, Cambodia Quezon City, Philippines Riyadh, Saudi Arabia Sakarya, Türkiye Tehran, Iran

Europe

Barcelona, Spain Bucharest, Romania Budapest, Hungary Brussels, Belgium Chişinău, Moldova Criuleni, Moldova Galway, Ireland Lisbon, Portugal London, United Kingdom Madrid, Spain Moscow, Russia Oxford, United Kingdom Palermo, Italy Reutlingen, Germany Skopje, North Macedonia Tirana, Albania Vilafranca del Penedès, Spain

Oceania

Melbourne, Australia



For a full list of all the events that took place during Urban October 2024, use the QR code.

*Any reference to Kosovo in United Nations documents and United Nations websites, whether to the territory, institutions or population, is to be understood in full compliance with Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo. Kosovo is therefore not listed as a country.

**The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Final boundary between the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan has not yet been determined. Final status of the Abyei area is not yet determined.

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A better quality of life for all in an urbanizing world



UNITED NATIONS HUMAN SETTLEMENTS PROGRAMME P.O. Box 30030, Nairobi 00100, Kenya unhabitat-info@un.org www.unhabitat.org

