



— Bogotá, Colombia —

CONCEPT NOTE

Roundtable 02:

Digital Innovation to Enhance Urban Infrastructure, Land Use and Basic Service Provision

Date: 31 October 2025

Time: 14:45-15:45 (UTC -05:00)

Overview

With urban populations projected to exceed 6.7 billion by 2050, cities are under growing pressure to expand and modernize infrastructure, optimize land use, and ensure equitable access to basic services. These challenges are particularly acute in the Global South, where rapid urbanization outpaces the capacity of local governments to plan and manage urban growth in a sustainable, inclusive, and resilient manner.

Digital innovation offers transformative potential to address these challenges, enhancing how infrastructure is planned, monitored, and maintained; enabling real-time tracking of service needs and delivery; improving land management and mobility systems; and strengthening participatory planning and data-driven decision-making. However, many cities still face structural barriers such as limited institutional capacity, insufficient financing, digital illiteracy, and infrastructural deficits that constrain the effective use of technology.

UN-Habitat has been at the forefront of advancing people-centred digital solutions that address these urban challenges while promoting equity, accessibility, and sustainability. Key initiatives include the Global Land Tool Network (GLTN) which has been providing pro-poor and gender-responsive tools for land reform, inclusive land administration, and sustainable land governance globally. Moreover, through UNITAC, UN-Habitat has deployed tailored technologies to improve service delivery. Some examples are: the Digital Job Card – a mobile and web-based application deployed in Namibia to digitize and track public service tasks like water meter readings, electricity maintenance, and building inspections in real time; the Water Access App – a cloud-based platform implemented in Hargeisa, Somalia, which connects residents in underserved areas to certified water vendors through mobile ordering, ensuring transparency, quality control, and affordability by eliminating intermediaries. UN-Habitat is also advancing sustainable and intelligent mobility systems across cities in Africa and the Middle East supporting in the design and implementing pedestrian and cyclist-friendly streets leveraging on data platforms, AI and Augmented Reality.

This work has been at our core over the past years and has found Member States recognition through the upcoming UN-Habitat's Strategic Plan 2026–2029, which prioritizes housing, land, and basic services as levers to combat poverty, inequality, climate change, and humanitarian crises.

This roundtable will convene leading voices from governments, cooperation agencies, the private sector, and development partners to share experiences, tools, and strategies for harnessing digital innovation to improve urban governance and enhance service delivery for all.

Roundtable Objectives

This roundtable aims to:

- Explore how digital tools and technologies are transforming urban infrastructure management, land use, and service delivery.
- Showcase concrete innovations and use cases from around the world that illustrate the application of people-centred smart city approaches to core urban systems.
- Discuss the enabling conditions and institutional frameworks needed for scaling digital innovation in support of better infrastructures, service delivery and land use.
- Identify opportunities for international collaboration, public-private partnerships, and investment to expand digital solutions that serve marginalized communities and improve urban governance.

Proposed Programme: Roundtable 02

Structure:

1. Opening by Moderator (5 mins)
2. Setting the Scene (5 mins)
Transforming Urban Governance through Digital Innovation
3. Keynote address (5 mins)
4. Panel Discussion (30 mins)
(Topic TBC)
5. Open Q&A / Interactive Dialogue (10 mins)
6. Closing Reflections by Moderator (5 mins)