Statement by the
Executive Director of UN-Habitat

Regenerating the City: Adequate Housing for All

World Cities Day

31 October 2026

BETTER CITY, BETTER LIFE

Fuzhou, China

A city is never finished. Buildings age. People move through them. Neighbourhoods live their own lives. Some places prosper, others are left behind. Regeneration has always been part of how a city stays alive.

But regeneration isn't about replacing the old with the new. It's about whether people's lives get better.

Most of humanity – almost seven in ten people by 2050 – will live in cities. Yet more than a billion of us still call informal settlements and slums home, while many more strain under the cost of housing, weak services, and the mounting force of a changing climate.

These struggles are connected. Where people live decides whether they can reach a job, a school, a hospital, or simply a public space that is theirs.

So regeneration and adequate housing must move as one – reaching the people who need them most.

Cities around the world are already proving it can be done. Our task is not to reinvent. It is to listen, learn, invest in the work that works – and put the people who live in these places at the heart of the decisions.

A city regenerated is not a blank slate. It is a place renewed, without losing the people who make it home.

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