

WUF11 SESSION CONCEPT NOTE

DIALOGUE ON URBAN CRISIS RESPONSE AND RECOVERY

The future of Urban Crises

1. Key Words:

Urban resilience, climate emergency, COVID-19, post-conflict, sustaining peace, urban crises

2. Objectives of the Session:

- To reflect on what the nature and scale of urban crises will be in the future and how they will change our cities
- To reflect on the increasing scale of displacement of people and communities and how that will transform our urban landscape
- To explore how recovery from crises is an opportunity to accelerate the needed transformation towards a more resilient, green, healthy, and just urban future, leaving no one and no place behind
- To advocate for a tailored response to urban crises and discuss the role of mayors as both first responders and visionaries who can mobilize a whole-of-society response, empowered by national governments and the international community

3. Summary:

The dialogue will reflect on a future with raising urban crises and the role of mayors as both first responders and visionaries who can accelerate the recovery and transformation towards a better urban future.

The climate emergency, the massive disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic in cities and communities, the global housing crisis, growing inequalities; the breakdown of the social contract and the increasing urban nature of conflict and warfare, are having devastating impacts leaving people and places behind.

Crises are affecting the physical fabric of our cities but more importantly are displacing people at an increasing scale. The war in Ukraine alone has forced over 11 million people from their homes in the span of a couple of months. By May 2022, Poland was hosting 3.3 million Ukrainian refugees. This requires new thinking on how this will transform the urban landscape, what it takes for host communities and the displaced to sustain their lives, and ultimately for people to return home or build new lives elsewhere.

Moreover, urban crises are disrupting productive sectors in cities who are key contributors to national GDP, with ripple effect across territories. The impact of the 4 August 2020 blast in Beirut is a testimony to this, showing the critical need to address urban crises at multiple scales in parallel.

Response to crises often fails to underscore the importance of ensuring a tailored approach to urban recovery in complement to nationally led efforts. At the heart are neighbourhoods and communities either directly affected or hosting the displaced. Mayors and local

governments can drive bottom-up recovery, mobilizing communities, civil society and businesses.

As the COVID-19 response has demonstrated, crises are opportunities to fundamentally rethink our cities, shift policies and leapfrog forward towards more green, healthy, and just cities. As such, the dialogue cuts across the other thematic dialogues and will zoom in on the essential elements of a holistic response to urban crises, including the role innovation can play.

4. Guiding Questions for Discussions:

This Dialogue will address the following questions:

- What is the future of urban crises and what are the root causes and drivers?
- How do the multiple crises affecting cities and communities intersect (climate, pandemic, natural/man-made disasters) and what does that mean for the response?
- How do we manage the massive displacement associated with it?
- What are the crises opportunities to radically shift policies and practices ?
- How do we use the crisis response to accelerate towards climate outcomes, more equitable cities that leave no one and no place behind, more healthy cities and more resilient urban environments?
- What is the role of Mayors and local governments and what can national governments and the international community do to empower bottom-up recovery that is tailored to each context?
- How can innovation help accelerate recovery?

5. Expected Outcomes and Impact:

The dialogue will shape a better understanding of the future of urban crises. It will identify how urban crisis recovery can accelerate transformation towards more green, healthier, just and resilient cities and how mayors and local governments can be empowered by national governments and the international community to drive this.

6. Session Format:

The Executive Director of UN-Habitat will set the scene on why it is important to focus on urban crises and the role of Mayors and local governments.

Through short, pre-recorded messages, global experts will share their views on the future of urban crises touching on the climate emergency, growing inequalities and the housing crisis and the increasing urban nature of conflict and war to provoke further discussion.

A global thought leader will reflect on the messages shared and facilitate several rounds of conversation with a live panel, composed of mayors, national government representatives and experts. The first conversation will start with the mayors and then expand to the other panel members.

Testimonies of young people are considered for intermezzos.