

# Cairo Call to Action

Twelfth session of the World Urban Forum (WUF12)

*It All Starts at Home: Local Actions for Sustainable Cities and Communities*

## Preamble

We, the participants of the twelfth session of the World Urban Forum in Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt:

**Recognize** that urbanization is an irreversible megatrend and a transformative force that, if harnessed effectively, can drive social equity, economic growth, environmental protection, and well-being. How we plan, govern, and manage territories and urban spaces shapes our progress toward achieving inclusive, resilient and sustainable societies and communities.

**Reaffirm** our commitment to promote sustainable urbanization through the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the 2030 Agenda thereby accelerating progress with other global development goals.

**Recall** that the Pact for the Future, adopted at the Summit of the Future in September 2024, includes commitments to ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing; support plan and implement just, safe, healthy, accessible, resilient and sustainable cities; pursue the localization of sustainable development while considering future generations as well as the role of digital technologies in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals.

**Acknowledge** that it all starts locally as local action is essential to achieve sustainable development; it all starts together as accelerating progress towards sustainable cities and communities requires all actors to join hands across sectors, levels and locations; and it all starts now as it is urgent to tackle unprecedented and interlinked global crises.

**Recognize** that the effective participation and collaboration of all relevant stakeholders, in line with the New Urban Agenda, including local governments, the private sector and civil society, women, organizations representing youth, as well as those representing persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, professionals, academia, trade unions, employers' organizations, migrant associations and cultural associations.

**Recall** that access to adequate housing is a human right, but that the scale of the global housing crisis is unprecedented, with almost 3 billion people facing some form of housing inadequacy worldwide, with 1.1 billion living in slums and informal settlements. Addressing this global crisis requires collective commitment to policies and investments that prioritize housing as a foundation to realize the sustainable development goals.

**Conscious** that cities are at the forefront of climate action and the achievement of global targets for both mitigation and adaptation. Urban climate action is critical to manage greenhouse gas emissions whilst also minimizing the disproportionate effects of climate impacts which threaten lives, livelihoods, and infrastructure.

**Mindful** that conflict and humanitarian crisis continue to destroy lives and homes. Cities have become both sanctuaries and strained hosts for displaced populations. The humanitarian challenges posed by these crises underscore the need for resilient urban systems that can adapt and respond to the needs of all residents, fostering social cohesion and the reconstruction of homes. Local governments play a key role in driving solutions and integrating the forcibly displaced into urban development strategies

**Call** to undertake and promote the following actions within the broader context of sustainable urbanization:

## Cairo Call to Action

### 1. We call for urgent action to address the global housing crisis

It all starts at home. Tackling the global housing crisis is a pre-requisite to accelerate the 2030 Agenda and achieve poverty eradication, climate action and crises response and recovery. The vulnerability of informal settlements and slums calls for their urgent transformation, including through local action. Responding to the housing affordability crisis remains critical in the context of the homelessness challenge. Urban recovery and reconstruction are urgent given the loss of home and neighborhoods in crisis. Access to urban basic services is at the heart of adequate housing, and leveraging digital technologies can enhance their delivery. We thus call for the prioritization of the right to adequate housing in local, national and global frameworks to ensure dignity and empowerment for all and as a pillar of social protection.

### 2. We call for achieving global goals through local action

Transforming global goals into a reality at the local level requires effective localization in line with national frameworks and communities' priorities. It is anchored in multilevel governance through meaningful collaboration among all stakeholders, coordination across sectors for alignment of policies and implementation. Given the specificities of each place and community, we call for translating global goals into local action by empowering local actors with the necessary institutional and financial capacities and resources, also through support from national governments.

### 3. We call for sustaining a systemic representation of local actors at all levels

Localization can only happen when all relevant stakeholders, cities and communities have decision-making power including through meaningful dialogue. The role of youth, women and persons with disabilities is also key for local action, among other stakeholders. We call for sustained and systematic representation of communities as political actors in local and national decision-making processes and for the

representation of local and regional governments and other stakeholders in multilateral systems.

#### **4. We call for sharing urban spaces and opportunities inclusively**

Localization means reaching every community at all levels and leaving no one behind. Access to public spaces, infrastructure and services, and economic opportunities for all is essential for inclusive cities. The sense of belonging shapes the sustainability of our cities and neighborhoods within the broader meaning of home beyond physical structures, including through a quality of life lens. We call for caring cities where women, children and youth, persons with disabilities, elderly, indigenous groups, low-income households, migrants, refugees, and all stakeholders, feel safe and included.

#### **5. We call for urban planning to deliver better local outcomes**

Participatory urban planning is instrumental to addressing the challenges and unlocking the benefits of urbanization. Effective urban planning is the backbone of delivering inclusion, resilience, accessibility and sustainability in cities and communities. A holistic approach to the social, ecological and economic functions of land and the continuum of land rights are key. Placing proximity and circularity at the center of urban development is necessary to ensure efficient resource consumption, environmental sustainability, economic prosperity and social equity. The promotion of people-centered smart cities principles is key in that endeavor. We call for all actors to apply urban planning and land use articulated around the principles of equity, shared prosperity, and resource efficiency.

#### **6. We call for unlocking finance for cities and communities**

Addressing the financing gap to meet urban development needs is urgent. This requires increased flows of financing to local and regional governments and to communities. Better urban planning and regulations are required to leverage untapped sources of revenue and to increase preparedness to access financial markets. Priority setting and sequencing of investments is key to realize local development plans. We call for innovation and cooperation to increase financing for communities and local and regional governments across public, private, domestic and international spheres.

#### **7. We call for ensuring equity and justice for sustainable cities**

Prioritizing the needs of marginalized and underserved communities in urban planning and resource allocation is essential. This includes promoting equal access to housing, services, and economic opportunities, and actively addressing systemic inequalities that hinder full participation in city life. We call for equity and justice, including for climate action, such that all residents have a fair chance to thrive.

#### **8. We call for leveraging local and grassroots data for decision-making**

Localized data is a pathway to empower communities. Bottom-up data should be recognized and integrated in urban planning, also leveraging technology, to enhance the people's voices. Collaborative efforts for co-production of data and research

across relevant stakeholders need to be promoted. We call for greater recognition and use of local, grassroots and disaggregated data as a means to generate greater social inclusion and more localized approaches to urban development, also leveraging voluntary local reviews of the sustainable development goals.

**9. We call for harnessing culture and heritage as an asset for sustainability**

Cultural diversity is essential for sustainable cities and communities. We need to integrate local traditions and indigenous knowledge into urban development. By valuing and preserving these assets, cities can reduce their ecological footprint and promote sustainable practices. We call for leveraging cultural heritage to drive social inclusion, foster resilience, and offer sustainable economic opportunities.

**10. We call for building coalitions and alliances to scale local impact**

The magnitude and interconnected nature of urban development challenges and opportunities requires stronger collaboration for progress. Local action is more impactful when driven by coalitions that bring together communities, local and national governments, the private sector and civil society. Empowering local actors through these partnerships and coalitions is a powerful tool for addressing community-specific challenges while aligning with broader national and global goals. We call participants and stakeholders to unite in building action-oriented coalitions that accelerate progress toward sustainable urbanisation and a better quality of life for all. It all starts with us!