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**United Nations Habitat Assembly of the  
United Nations Human Settlements Programme  
Second session**

Nairobi, 5–9 June 2023

Item 9 of the provisional agenda\*

**Report on the World Urban Forum**

## **Report of the eleventh session of the World Urban Forum: executive summary**

### **Note by the secretariat**

1. The World Urban Forum was established by the United Nations in 2001 to examine one of the most pressing issues facing the world today: rapid urbanization and its impact on communities, cities, economies and climate change. Over the past two decades, the Forum has evolved into the premier global conference on sustainable urbanization. Convened by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the forum is a unique non-legislative platform and one of the most inclusive international gatherings on urban issues.
2. The eleventh session of the World Urban Forum, held at the International Congress Centre in Katowice, Poland, from 26 to 30 June 2022, was co-organized by UN-Habitat, the Polish Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy and the Municipal Office of Katowice and convened by UN-Habitat.
3. With more than 2 million inhabitants, the city of Katowice is one of the biggest business centres in Poland and the largest city in the Upper Silesia and Zagłębie Metropolis. Katowice was the first city in Central and Eastern Europe to host the Forum. The city constitutes a global example of how integrated planning and the establishment of a new economy based on culture, services and creativity can continue to attract financing to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.
4. The eleventh session of the World Urban Forum exceeded expectations, with more than 17,000 participants from 158 countries. Over the five days of the Forum, more than 450 high-quality knowledge exchanges took place in the form of assemblies, dialogues, round-table discussions and special sessions. In addition, unique stakeholder-led events were held at the Urban Expo, UN-Habitat priority programmes were showcased at the UN-Habitat Arena, and 11 urban zones were organized throughout the city. Forum legacy initiatives were presented in various spaces, highlighting the transformative impact of the Forum on previous host cities and the link between the Forum legacy and UN-Habitat initiatives.
5. With strong participation from stakeholders, the Forum continues to mobilize a wide range of participants representing local, national and regional governments, parliamentarians, civil society, women, older persons, children and youth, people with disabilities, grassroots groups, Indigenous Peoples, local communities, the private sector, foundations and philanthropic organizations, academia, professionals and other stakeholders of the New Urban Agenda.<sup>1</sup>

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\* HSP/HA.2/1.

<sup>1</sup> General Assembly resolution 71/256, annex.

6. The theme of the eleventh session of the Forum, “Transforming our cities for better urban future”, sought to strengthen relationships and develop action and policies to improve urban environments, in the context of achieving Sustainable Development Goal 11 – making cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. Since the establishment of the New Urban Agenda in 2016, the World Urban Forum has provided an opportunity to advocate for and track the progress of local action towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

7. Over the past decade, natural hazards and human-made disasters have become increasingly urban. Combined with recent shocks, including the massive disruption of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, issues such as rising inequality, environmental degradation and the breakdown of the social contract are increasing. The devastating impact of these issues on cities is disproportionately felt by the most vulnerable and is leaving some people and places behind.

8. Now more than ever, we need to build capacity for more effective urban crisis prevention, response and recovery and empower mayors to be in the driver’s seat both as first responders and as visionaries who can accelerate not just recovery but also transformation towards a better urban future. For the first time, at its eleventh session the World Urban Forum introduced an Urban Crises Track, curating more than 40 events that enabled broad sharing of relevant knowledge and best practices.

9. Moreover, at its eleventh session the Forum established a new benchmark for inclusivity and accessibility. Hybrid (in-person and online) participation in most sessions and discussion events, including the opening and closing sessions, was offered. Interpretation was provided in all six official languages of the United Nations, as well as in Polish and Ukrainian (for six events). Information was also provided in both international and Polish sign language. Communication access real-time translation speech transcription and numerous other mechanisms provided improved access for people with disabilities. These options demonstrated that transformative action to ensure accessibility for all through universal design is possible in the built environment.

10. Overall gender parity was achieved in terms of participation, with women comprising 47 per cent of participants and men 53 per cent. The Executive Director of UN-Habitat and the Government of Poland also ensured gender parity on panels, with women making up 52 per cent of the more than 600 speakers at the main sessions. In terms of regions, in-person representation was led by Europe with 68 per cent of participants, followed by Asia at 12.3 per cent and Africa at 10.8 per cent. Participants representing local and regional governments were the most common, making up 20.3 per cent of participants, with national government representatives making up 12.5 per cent of participants, and individual attendees 15.1 per cent.

11. The World Urban Forum will continue to call for action and mobilization and track progress on the Katowice Declared Actions.<sup>2</sup> The Declared Actions consist of voluntary actions and commitments made by participants to support the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. The goal will be to ensure that the actions which participants in the eleventh session committed to undertaking are achieved, and that the most positive results possible are delivered to the communities that need them most in the run-up to the twelfth session of the Forum, to be held in Cairo in 2024.

12. The draft report of the eleventh session of the World Urban Forum is being made available at <https://unhabitat.org/governance/un-habitat-assembly/second-session-2023>.

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<sup>2</sup> Available at [https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2022/07/katowice\\_declared\\_actions.pdf](https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2022/07/katowice_declared_actions.pdf).