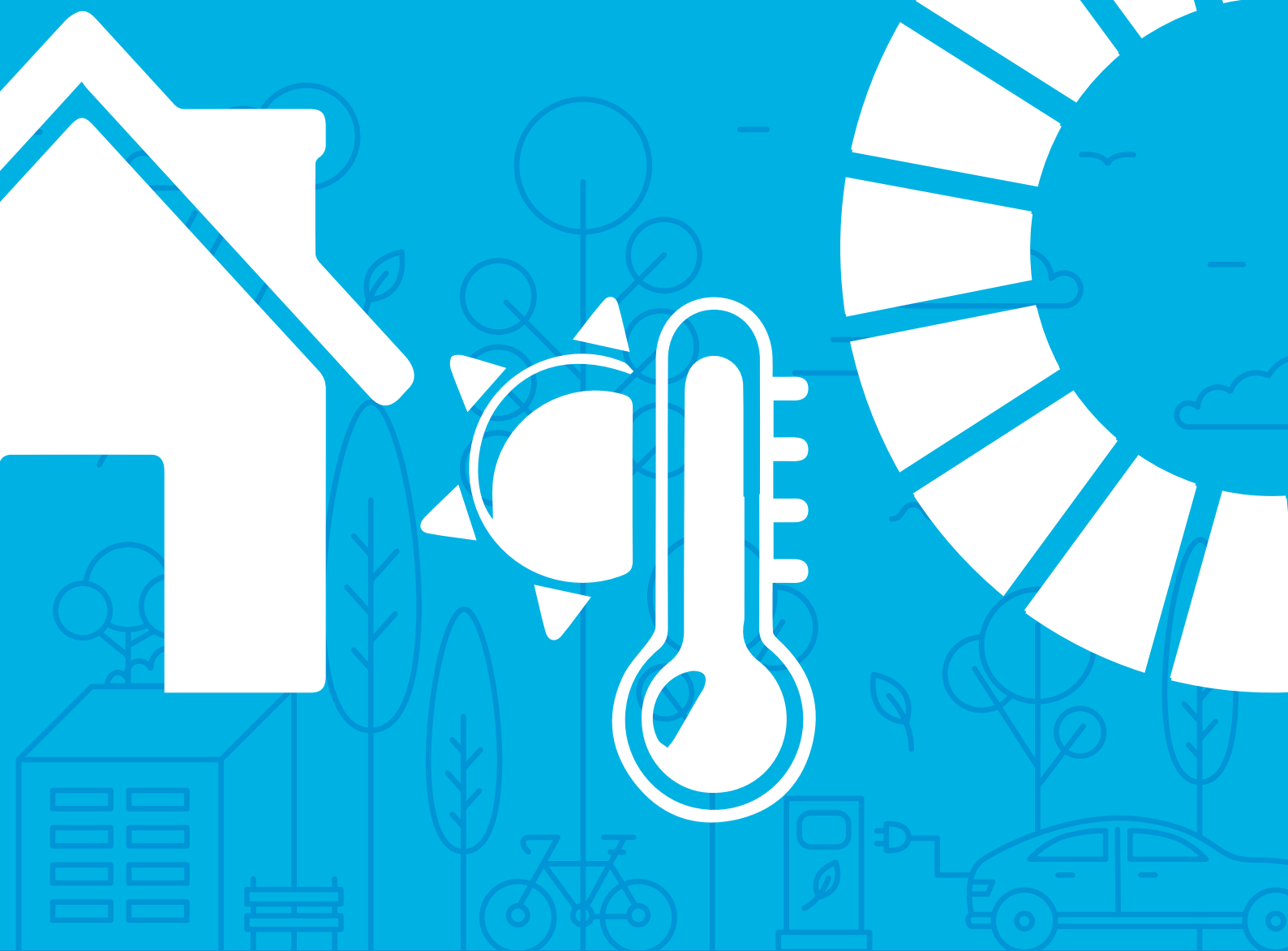


**Priorities 2022–2023:**  
**Adequate Housing, Cities**  
**and Climate Change, and**  
**Localising the Sustainable**  
**Development Goals**





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# Overview

Our world is changing rapidly. Technology and information are moving at breathtaking rates. Populations are expanding, political forces are in flux and the climate crisis threatens the planet's future. A pandemic has swept across the world, claiming millions of lives.

The effects of change are, as ever, felt most strongly in cities and urban areas. This was underlined by COVID-19 which laid bare the economic and social vulnerability of our urban way of life.

Sustainable urban development has therefore never been more difficult and with two thirds of the world's population expected to live in urban areas by 2050, according to the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, that challenge will only grow more formidable.

There is therefore a growing commitment to focus on urban issues across the public sector, private sector, civil society and the United Nations System. In Our Common Agenda, the United Nations Secretary-General urges Member States to take broader and more decisive action to tackle the threats of climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, and escalating inequalities and conflicts. In urban areas, the response

to these threats requires strong leadership and guidance from UN-Habitat, with its knowledge and knowhow drawn from decades of experience of working with local and national governments, communities and all urban stakeholders.

The Secretary-General's Quadrennial Report of March 2022 advises Member States and urban stakeholders on how to accelerate the implementation of UN-Habitat's New Urban Agenda. Building on these recommendations, UN-Habitat has identified three integrated action areas to address major urban challenges and accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement. These priorities correspond directly to recommendations likely to be set at the High-level Meeting on the New Urban Agenda on 28 April and will contribute to implementing the current UN-Habitat Strategic Plan for 2022–23.



The first of our three priorities is to **provide adequate housing** for all. Investing in adequate and affordable housing for all and including housing into national planning and land-use strategies will tackle several issues central to people's well-being. Adequate housing advances economic and social inclusion, digital access, personal safety and security, and healthy environments. It is central to UN-Habitat's mandate and is contained in the Leave No-one Behind commitment in the Secretary-General's Our Common Agenda report.



The second priority **addresses the key role of cities as contributors to climate solutions**. With increased local climate finance, cities could make significant progress towards implementing adaptation priorities set in Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). Local governments could embark on resilience-building with communities in informal settlements, align essential urban services with national climate plans and adopt innovations for maximum environmental, social, health and economic improvement. Beyond direct climate actions, local governments would benefit from a stronger emphasis on sustainable urban development NDCs.



UN-Habitat's third priority for 2022–2023 is **localizing the Sustainable Development Goals**. Local leadership and local action plans on the SDGs have been identified as central to realizing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This priority supports the New Urban Agenda's call for a multi-level governance system which was further supported by the Secretary-General in Our Common Agenda's proposal for inclusive multilateralism and in the Quadrennial Report's request to Member States to foster collaboration between local and regional governments.

UN-Habitat has a critical role to play in advocating and coordinating the work of the United Nations on SDG localization. It can build the capacity of local, evidence-based action plans and schemes for data and monitoring that are in line with the newly endorsed Global Urban Monitoring Framework.

UN-Habitat believes that immediate investment in these three strategic areas would create tangible

impacts within the global community's limited time span. They could transform the world's currently unsustainable development path to one that delivers a much greater measure of lasting prosperity and peace. To this end, this document presents 15 proposals for tangible, evidence-based investments and initiatives across UN-Habitat's 3 priorities, with indicative costs of delivery included for each proposal.





# Adequate housing

## The challenge to provide adequate housing for all

Housing is recognized by Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as an essential right.

It makes up nearly 60 per cent of the built environment and is arguably the single biggest influence on the daily quality of life of people in cities. Yet an estimated 1.6 billion people live in inadequate housing conditions, without access to basic services or sanitation, and struggling to afford housing costs. About 70 per cent of the world's households live with precarious tenure and some 15 million are forcibly and illegally evicted every year. It is estimated that an additional three billion people will require adequate and affordable housing by 2030 and that 50 per cent of the building stock required in developing countries by 2050 is yet to be built. The decisions on how these housing gaps will be filled have significant implications for climate, society and the economy.

Member States have said that policy advice and technical assistance to increase the quantity and quality of housing should be a central feature of UN-Habitat's mandate. This mandate is based on meeting the seven elements described in the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights' General Comment No. 4 on the Right to Adequate Housing, namely: **legal security of tenure; availability of services, materials, facilities and infrastructure; affordability; habitability; accessibility; location; and cultural adequacy.**

The Secretary-General's *Our Common Agenda* report also calls for better governance to deliver adequate housing, while his *Quadrennial Report* on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda recommends that housing and associated basic services should be integrated with health, income, education and access to basic services as five elements of a new social contract to address multiple forms of inequality and reduce poverty.

In December 2021, the United Nations General Assembly approved resolution A/RES/76/133 that sets out actions to end homelessness, mitigate evictions and promote affordable housing. The resolution recalls that the New Urban Agenda, *inter alia*, promotes cities and human settlements that should progressively achieve the full realization of the right to adequate housing for all. The resolution also encourages Member States to increase the pool of affordable housing, upgrade slums and to take steps to end arbitrary evictions.

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## UN-Habitat's proposed response on adequate housing

Recognizing the centrality of housing to sustainable urban development, and in response to the calls for action from Member States and the Secretary-General, UN-Habitat proposes the following five priority areas for action:

**1. Housing demand** is a demographic, economic and social dynamic that can be predicted and needs to be monitored. It operates as an ecosystem, with each part of the housing system affecting others. For example, access to adequate low-income housing has a positive impact on slums and the homeless. In the absence of significant public intervention, housing systems risk creating segregation and marginalization, whether at national regional, local or neighbourhood level.

### UN-Habitat proposes:

- The development of locally – and regionally – focused housing and housing demand profiles, clearly linked to income quintiles and levels of vulnerability, to identify and monitor the housing challenge and guide policy.
- The development of environmental risk and connectivity profiles for



**Output:** Localized housing profiles linked to national frameworks that directly contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and national commitments in international law.



**Indicative budget (biennium):** USD 4 million (up to five pilot projects depending upon local costs).

**2. Land** is a fundamental constraint on housing supply and quality and a major determinant of housing costs. This is despite the fact that many cities, particularly in developing countries, still have low average residential densities of 5 to 10,000 per sq km and major under-development of up to 40 per cent or more in their urban cores. These low densities are frequently characterised by laissez-faire strategies such as minimal public intervention, artificial scarcity and commercial speculation. Active land management strategies, where the public sector uses planning, regulatory and financial tools, and land acquisition strategies to meet development needs in a socially inclusive manner are needed. These should be explicitly linked to environmental and public health objectives at city and regional levels.



**Output:** Municipal and regional land strategies and action plans with clear

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