

Outcome Report of the 2025 Regional Partners Forum on Sustainable Urban Development



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Executive Summary

The [5th International Forum on Low Carbon Cities and the 2025 Regional Partners Forum](#) on Sustainable Urban Development were held from 25 to 27 August 2025 in Bangkok. The events were convened by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in collaboration with the North-East Asian Subregional Programme for Environmental Cooperation (NEASPEC), Incheon Metropolitan City, the Asia-Pacific Localization Partnership for Sustainable Development (APLP-CITIES), and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat).

The Forum brought together national and local governments, city leaders, civil society, academia, and development partners to advance dialogue on resilient, inclusive, and low-carbon urban development in Asia and the Pacific. It served as a platform to assess regional progress on Sustainable Development Goal 11 (SDG 11) and the New Urban Agenda (NUA), to identify emerging urban trends, and to chart strategic directions for the next phase of sustainable urban development in the region.



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The outcomes of the Forum will inform key intergovernmental processes, including the regional review of SDG 11 at the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) in 2026, the global synthesis for the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), and the United Nations Secretary-General's third Quadrennial Report on the New Urban Agenda. They will also contribute to shaping the thematic discussions at the Ninth Asia-Pacific Urban Forum (APUF-9) in Yokohama, Japan, in 2027, which is expected to serve as a milestone platform to accelerate action on the urban dimensions of the 2030 Agenda.

The Forum noted that the Asia and the Pacific region remains significantly off-track in achieving SDG 11. Cities across the region continue to face rising pressures from rapid urbanization, climate change, growing inequalities, and resource scarcity. Smaller and intermediary cities face the most acute

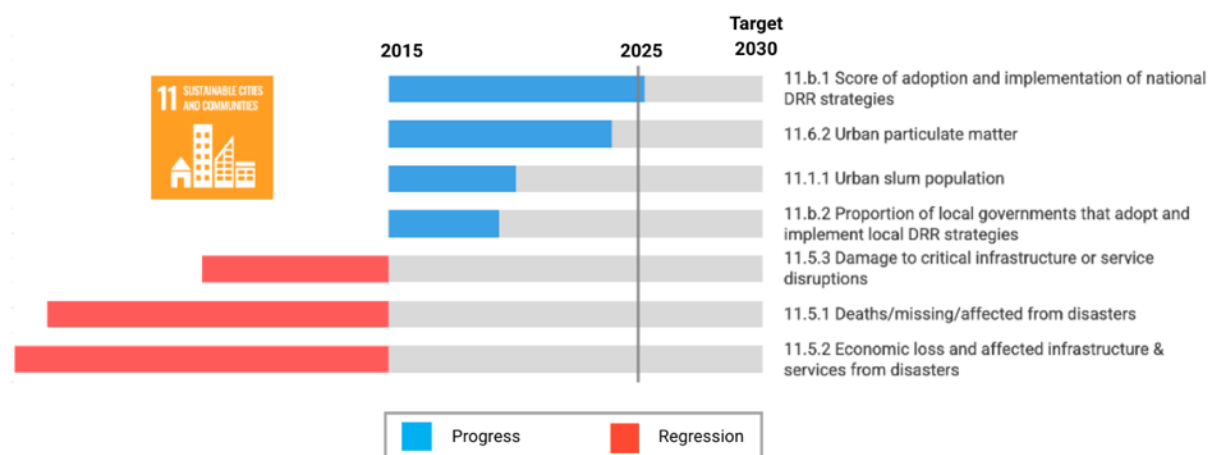
infrastructure and capacity constraints. The only indicator on track at the regional level is Target 11.b.1 on Disaster Risk Reduction, reflecting stronger national commitments to risk-informed planning. There has been moderate progress on air quality (Target 11.6) and access to green and public spaces (Target 11.7), particularly in East and South-East Asia. Targets 11.5 and 11.2, which address resilience and sustainable transport, remain significantly behind. In 2023, 12.7 million people were displaced by disasters and transport-related emissions continued to increase. Persistent housing and service delivery gaps are most visible in South and South-West Asia, where rapid urban growth has outpaced infrastructure and institutional capacity.¹

Regional Progress Snapshot for SDG 11

- **Asia and the Pacific is significantly off-track in achieving SDG 11** and the 2030 Agenda.
- **Limited progress on indicators: Only Target 11.b.1** on the adoption of national and local disaster risk reduction strategies is currently on track. Most other indicators show fragmented, uneven and, in many cases, stalled progress.
- **Disaster-related targets (11.b.1) are regressing**, with increasing economic losses, millions of people displaced annually, and critical infrastructure systems remaining highly vulnerable.
- **Air quality (11.6) has shown modest improvement**, yet levels across the region remain well above the global average, continuing to pose major public health risks.
- **Sustainable transport lagging (Target 11.2)**: Transport-related emissions continue to rise, with limited progress on inclusive and sustainable mobility systems.
- **Persistent housing and service gaps (Target 11.1)**: Stakeholders identified slum reduction, sustainable mobility and equitable access to basic services as the most pressing challenges for urban development. Particularly acute in South and South-West Asia, where rapid urban growth has outpaced infrastructure and institutional capacity.

¹ United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (2024). *Developments in Low-Carbon Mobility and Logistics: Review of Developments in Transport in Asia and the Pacific 2024*. Bangkok: United Nations. United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (2025). *Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report 2025: Engaging Communities to Close the Evidence Gap*. Bangkok: United Nations.

Figure 1. SDG goal profile by indicators



Source: ESCAP Asia-Pacific SDG Gateway, SDG Progress Snapshot. Available at <https://data.unescap.org>

In advance of the forum, ESCAP conducted a survey of stakeholders across the region to assess progress of implementation of SDG11 and NUA. Survey respondents and discussions identified **five key barriers** that continue to hinder accelerated progress on these agendas.

- **Financing:** Limited and unpredictable financial resources constrain investments in sustainable infrastructure, climate action and inclusive service delivery.
- **Governance and Institutions:** Weak multi-level governance, fragmented mandates and limited leadership capacity undermine coordinated urban action.
- **Capacity Constraints:** Technical, human and institutional capacity gaps restrict the ability of cities, particularly smaller and intermediary ones, to address urbanization pressures and climate risks.
- **Planning Frameworks:** Shortcomings in urban and territorial planning, including weak integration of informality, peri-urban growth and uneven territorial development, impede effective urban management.
- **Innovation and Digitalization:** Gaps in digital infrastructure and underdeveloped innovation ecosystems limit the deployment of smart, data-driven solutions that could accelerate progress.

70 per cent of respondents actively working on SDG 11 targets & indicators.

Over 60 cities have completed or supported VLRs/VSRs.

Despite the gaps, positive developments are emerging. The increasing use of Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) and SDG 11 National Roadmaps is strengthening multi-level governance and improving urban data ecosystems. These tools are linking national policy frameworks with local implementation, improving policy coherence and enabling evidence-based decision-making. Malaysia's SDG 11 National Roadmap illustrates how a structured national approach can align local priorities with global goals and accelerate progress toward sustainable urbanization. Participants acknowledged the strategic importance of the NUA as a unifying implementation framework for achieving SDG 11 and advancing the urban dimensions of the 2030 Agenda. Survey responses and discussions reflected strong

stakeholder commitment to the NUA but also pointed to gaps in translating its principles into measurable actions, operational mechanisms, and investment priorities. These gaps signaled the need for clearer pathways to align national and local implementation with NUA commitments and leverage them more effectively to drive transformative urban change.

The Forum reviewed progress on the implementation of the NUA ahead of the 2026 midterm review. UN-Habitat is leading the preparation of the Quadrennial Report, supported by revised reporting guidelines and the integration of SDG review data and indicators from the Global Urban Monitoring Framework. As of August 2025, fifty-three Member States are expected to submit National Progress Reports (NPRs), up from forty in 2022, indicating stronger regional engagement. Smart city initiatives, housing programs, and digital governance reforms across several countries, including Indonesia, Japan, Lao People Democratic Republic, and the Philippines, are shaping the global urban narrative. UN-Habitat and ESCAP continue to provide technical assistance, capacity-building support, and knowledge platforms to strengthen national and subnational implementation. However, only 37 per cent of stakeholders reported through the RPF survey that they had coordination mechanisms linking SDG 11, the NUA, and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). This signals the need for greater institutional alignment to leverage urban action for climate goals.

The Forum identified cross-cutting regional trends that are reshaping urban development in Asia and the Pacific. Demographic transitions, including ageing populations, youth migration, and social diversification, are altering service needs and urban planning priorities. Climate change is increasing disaster risks, making adaptation and mitigation an integral part of urban governance and investment. Resource scarcity and environmental stress are accelerating the transition toward circular economy models that prioritize reuse, recycling, and regeneration. Digital transformation, including the growing use of artificial intelligence, is transforming governance, service delivery, and citizen engagement, while also requiring strong regulatory frameworks, capacity-building measures, and inclusive access to technology.

The Forum reaffirmed the region's collective commitment to advancing SDG 11 and the NUA. It emphasized the importance of integrated planning and multi-level governance approaches, innovative financing mechanisms, and strengthened regional cooperation to bridge the gap between ambition and implementation.

As the region prepares for the NUA midterm review and APUF-9 in Yokohama in August 2027, the knowledge, innovations, and partnerships generated at the Forum will play an important role in shaping a more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable urban future for Asia and the Pacific. The Forum also affirmed the urgency of coordinated inclusive action to ensure that no city and no community is left behind in the pursuit of sustainable urban development.

The Forum identified **five thematic priority areas** for APUF-9:

- **Urban planning, settlements and housing;**
- **Climate action and urban resilience;**
- **Smart cities and digital transformation;**

- **Circular economy and urban resource management; and**
- **Innovative finance for local governments.**

Together, these priorities reflect the interconnected nature of the challenges cities face and highlight the need for coordinated, multisectoral solutions. Discussions also emphasized the potential of public–private partnerships, climate finance and digital technologies such as blockchain and artificial intelligence to scale sustainable urban solutions, improve transparency and enhance impact.



Photo Credit: ESCAP / Yan Shen

Acronyms

APLP-Cities: Asia-Pacific Localization Partnership for Sustainable Cities

APFSD: Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development

APUF-9: Ninth Asia-Pacific Urban Forum in Yokohama

BSP: Bank South Pacific

BRT: Bus Rapid Transit

ESCAP: United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

FHOS: First Home Ownership Scheme

HLPF: High-Level Political Forum

LDC: Least Developed Country

NDCs: Nationally Determined Contributions

NEASPEC: North-East Asian Subregional Programme for Environmental Cooperation

NPR: National Progress Report

NUA: New Urban Agenda

RPF: Regional Partners Forum

UNCC: United Nations Conference Center

UN-Habitat: United Nations Human Settlements Programme

VLR: Voluntary Local Review

VSR: Voluntary Subnational Review

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1. Introduction

[The Fifth International Forum on Low Carbon Cities and the 2025 RPF on Sustainable Urban Development](#) were held back-to-back from 25 to 27 August 2025 in Bangkok and online. The events were convened by the United Nations ESCAP in collaboration with the NEASPEC, the APLP-CITIES, UN-Habitat, and Incheon Metropolitan City.

The RPF consolidated regional perspectives, good practices, and policy recommendations to guide sustainable urban transformation in Asia and the Pacific. The outcomes are intended to inform global and regional processes, including the review of Sustainable Development Goal 11 (SDG 11) and the implementation of the NUA (NUA). Discussions emphasized how demographic shifts, such as ageing populations and youth migration, combined with escalating climate risks, are reshaping housing demand, mobility systems, service delivery, and governance in cities across the region.

By bringing together national and local governments, city leaders, civil society, academia, and development partners, the Forum created a platform to exchange knowledge, share experiences, and highlight innovations that can be adapted to different local contexts. Deliberations also contributed to shaping regional priorities for the Ninth Asia-Pacific Urban Forum (APUF-9) to be held in Yokohama, Japan, in 2027.

The discussions were informed by a [joint discussion paper prepared by ESCAP and UN-Habitat and by a regional stakeholder survey on urbanization trends, SDG 11 progress, and NUA priorities](#). These inputs highlighted persistent challenges such as uneven data availability, limited institutional and financial capacity, and rising climate impacts. They point to the need for stronger multi-level governance, enhanced financing, and stronger regional cooperation.

This outcome report consolidates insights and recommendations from the Forum. It will inform the regional review of SDG 11 at the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development in February 2026, provide inputs to the global synthesis report for the HLPF in July 2026, contribute to the United Nations Secretary-General's third Quadrennial Report on the NUA, and support the preparatory process for APUF-9.

The report is structured to provide a clear overview of progress and priorities. Section 2 reviews regional progress on SDG 11 through six thematic areas. Section 3 focuses on implementation of the NUA. Section 4 highlights follow-up actions and intergovernmental processes since APUF-8. Section 5 sets out milestones, emerging themes, and partner commitments in the lead-up to APUF-9.

A list of participants, including 97 representatives with 19 attending online, is provided in Annex 4.

2. Assessment of Progress on Sustainable Development Goal 11

Sustainable Development Goal 11 (SDG 11), ‘Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable,’ lies at the heart of advancing the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific. Urban areas in the region generate over 80 percent of GDP² and act as engines of economic growth, innovation, and opportunity. At the same time, they are at the frontline of complex and accelerating challenges, including rapid urbanization, widening socioeconomic inequalities, climate change, and rising disaster risks.

Table 1. List of SDG 11 Targets

SDG 11 Targets	
11.1	By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums
11.2	By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons
11.3	By 2030, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries
11.4	Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world’s cultural and natural heritage
11.5	By 2030, significantly reduce the number of deaths and the number of people affected and substantially decrease the direct economic losses relative to global gross domestic product caused by disasters, including water-related disasters, with a focus on protecting the poor and people in vulnerable situations
11.6	By 2030, reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management
11.7	By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities

² United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (2025). *Urban Transformation in Asia and the Pacific: From Growth to Resilience*. Bangkok: United Nations.

11.a	Support positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning
11.b	By 2020, substantially increase the number of cities and human settlements adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans towards inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, resilience to disasters, and develop and implement, in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, holistic disaster risk management at all levels
11.c	Support least developed countries, including through financial and technical assistance, in building sustainable and resilient buildings utilizing local materials

These pressures are intensifying at scale. The region accounts for 55 percent of global emissions, with cities responsible for more than 70 percent of that total.³ Transport-related emissions alone rose by 6.6 per cent in 2023, reaching 2.8 gigatons of carbon dioxide.⁴ Climate-related disasters are displacing millions annually, eroding development gains and exposing the structural fragilities of urban systems. Infrastructure networks and governance frameworks are increasingly overstretched, particularly in smaller and intermediary cities, where institutional capacity and financing remain limited.

The region remains one of the largest polluters in the world, accounting for more than half of the global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

Despite these challenges, many cities are emerging as drivers of transformation. Local governments are piloting digital innovations, developing local climate action plans, investing in resilient blue-green infrastructure, and experimenting with participatory governance models. Yet persistent disparities remain, especially in smaller and intermediary cities, where financing constraints, weak institutions, and data deficits continue to undermine the delivery of inclusive housing, services, and climate-resilient infrastructure.

Urban growth patterns further intensify these disparities. The expansion of informal settlements, peri-urban sprawl, and uneven demographic trends deepen exposure to risks, particularly in low-lying coastal areas and island cities facing acute climate threats. Rising sea levels and land subsidence are already undermining infrastructure resilience and public service delivery. These interconnected challenges call for coordinated, multisectoral approaches that embed resilience, equity, and sustainability at the core of urban development strategies.

Urban areas remain at the frontline of global challenges, but also at the heart of the solutions.

³ United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (2024). *Economic and Social Council, eighth session of the Committee on Environment and Development: Document ESCAP/CED(8)/2*. Bangkok: United Nations.

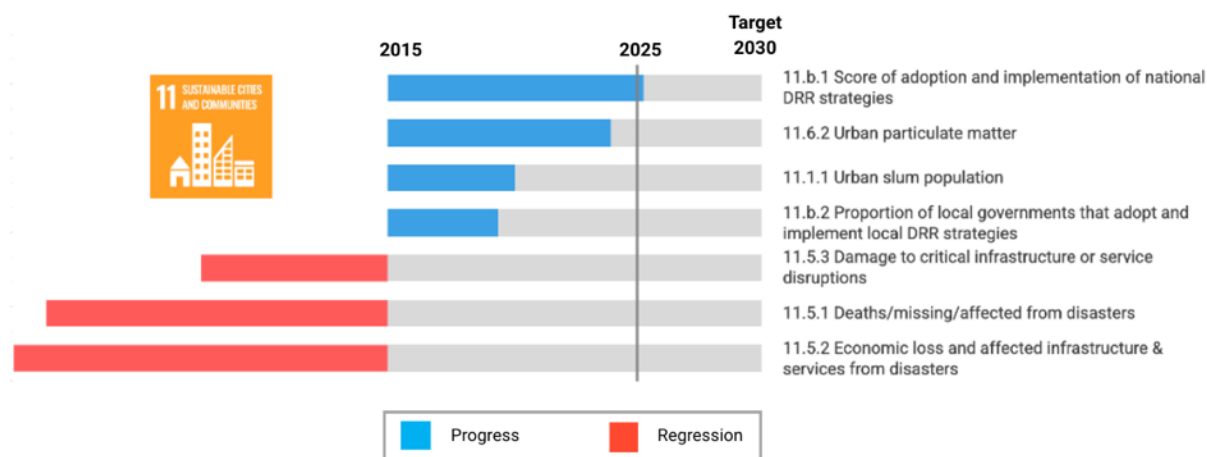
⁴ Asian Transport Observatory (2024). *Climate Tracker for Transport in Asia & Pacific (COP29 Primer)*. [\[Online\]](#). (Reports 2.8 Gt CO₂ in 2023; +6.6% YoY.)

Key Regional Challenges & Persistent Gaps

Discussions at the RPF confirmed that systemic barriers continue to slow progress on SDG 11 and the NUA:

- **Fragmented governance and weak multi-level coordination** undermine policy coherence and alignment between national, local, and sectoral actors.
- **Financing gaps and inequitable access to resources** constrain investments in housing, mobility, resilience, and basic services, especially in smaller cities and Least Developed Countries.
- **Capacity and data deficits** hinder evidence-based planning, monitoring, and reporting, particularly where local systems remain underdeveloped.
- **Exclusion of marginalized groups** from decision-making limits inclusivity and undermines trust, particularly for migrants, women, informal workers, and climate-vulnerable populations.
- **Escalating disaster and climate vulnerabilities** place additional stress on already overstretched urban systems, threatening to reverse development gains.

Figure 1. SDG goal profile by indicators



Source: ESCAP Asia-Pacific SDG Gateway, SDG Progress Snapshot. Available at <https://data.unescap.org>

2.1 Progress on SDG 11 Targets

Despite some areas of progress, several Sustainable Development Goals 11 targets remain significantly off track, particularly those related to disaster resilience, environmental sustainability, and basic urban services. Overall, progress across the ten SDG 11 targets reveals both positive trends and persistent structural gaps. While certain targets demonstrate clear momentum, driven by strengthened national commitments, local innovation, and expanding digital and participatory approaches, others highlight systemic weaknesses in urban planning, service delivery, and infrastructure investment. This uneven trajectory reflects the diversity of urban contexts in Asia and the Pacific and highlights the urgent need to translate commitments into actionable, inclusive, and scalable solutions, especially for smaller and intermediary cities where implementation gaps remain most acute.



Photo Credit: ESCAP / Yan Shen

2.1.1 Targets Showing Progress

Target 11.b.1 (DRR Strategies) stands out as the only indicator currently on track regionwide. This reflects strengthened national commitments to risk-informed planning, supported by the adoption and integration of DRR strategies into national and subnational development frameworks.

Indicator 11.6.2 (Air Quality) and **Target 11.7 (Green and Public Spaces)** show localized improvements. Several cities have invested in air quality monitoring systems and low-carbon transport initiatives, leading to measurable reductions in particulate matter in specific areas. In Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, per capita green space has increased significantly between 1990 and 2020, signaling a growing emphasis on environmental sustainability and urban liveability in local development agendas.

Target 11.a (Integrated Planning) is also gaining traction through the increasing use of VLRs and SDG 11 National Roadmaps. These tools are helping countries strengthen multi-level governance and build more coherent urban data ecosystems, which are critical for evidence-based decision-making, monitoring, and accountability.

Target 11.3 (Participatory Planning) is advancing through the deployment of digital platforms, civic engagement mechanisms, and smart city innovations. Countries such as the Republic of Korea and Japan are scaling participatory governance models, demonstrating how technology and inclusive planning can be combined to enhance transparency, accountability, and responsiveness in urban management.

2.1.2 SDG 11 Targets Lagging Behind

Despite these encouraging trends, several SDG 11 targets remain significantly off track, reflecting structural vulnerabilities that cut across the region.

Target 11.5 (Urban Resilience & DRR) has regressed, with 12.7 million people displaced by disasters in 2023 alone⁵, accompanied by escalating economic losses. This underscores the growing vulnerability of urban populations to climate-related and natural hazards, as well as the urgent need to strengthen urban resilience strategies, early warning systems, and risk-informed investment.

Target 11.6 (Urban Environmental Impact) also remains a critical challenge. Urban air quality is deteriorating in many areas, with PM2.5 concentrations rising in Eastern and Central Asia, now ranking among the most polluted subregions globally. Waste management is a persistent gap, leaving millions exposed to unsafe and unsustainable disposal practices.

Target 11.2 (Sustainable Transport Systems) continues to lag behind global averages. Public transport systems in many cities are underdeveloped, with limited coverage, affordability, and integration. These gaps reinforce car dependency, congestion, pollution, and mobility inequities, particularly affecting low-income and vulnerable groups.

These deficits reveal systemic weaknesses in urban planning, infrastructure investment, and service delivery. Without decisive action to scale resilient infrastructure, sustainable mobility, and circular waste management, the region risks reversing hard-won development gains. At the same time, these gaps also present clear entry points for acceleration, linking climate action with improved service delivery, innovative financing, and enhanced regional cooperation.

Air quality remains a significant concern. The regional average for urban particulate matter levels is still 11 per cent higher than the global average. On top of that, disaster impacts are worsening and economic losses from disasters are increasing. In 2023 alone, disasters displaced 12.7 million people in the region.

Without decisive action to scale resilient infrastructure, sustainable mobility, and circular waste management, the region risks reversing hard-won development gains.

⁵ United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (2025). *Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report 2025: Engaging Communities to Close the Evidence Gap*. Bangkok: United Nations.

Regional Progress Snapshot for SDG 11

- **Asia and the Pacific is significantly off-track in achieving SDG 11** and the 2030 Agenda.
- **Limited progress on indicators: Only Target 11.b.1** on adoption of national and local disaster risk reduction strategies is currently on track. Most other indicators show fragmented, uneven and, in many cases, stalled progress.
- **Disaster-related targets (11.b.1) are regressing**, with increasing economic losses, millions of people displaced annually, and critical infrastructure systems remaining highly vulnerable.
- **Air quality (11.6) has shown modest improvement**, yet levels across the region remain well above the global average, continuing to pose major public health risks.
- **Sustainable transport lagging (Target 11.2)**: Transport-related emissions continue to rise, with limited progress on inclusive and sustainable mobility systems.
- **Persistent housing and service gaps (Target 11.1)**: Stakeholders identified slum reduction, sustainable mobility and equitable access to basic services as the most pressing challenges for urban development. Particularly acute in South and South-West Asia, where rapid urban growth has outpaced infrastructure and institutional capacity.

Across all subregions, DRR is advancing in terms of national strategies, but implementation gaps remain, leaving infrastructure and communities highly vulnerable. Air quality improvements are emerging but uneven, with several subregions experiencing deterioration alongside urban expansion. Housing deficits and service delivery gaps persist, particularly in South and South-West Asia and South-East Asia, where slum proliferation and weak resilience are acute. These trends reveal both the diversity of regional contexts and a shared need for integrated approaches that link resilience, housing, environmental sustainability, and governance. Accelerating progress requires scaling good practices, prioritizing support to the most vulnerable subregions, and strengthening regional cooperation to close the gap between commitment and implementation.

Subregional Trends

- **North & Central Asia**: Moderate progress on air quality (11.6) and adoption of national DRR strategies (11.b), but slow in reducing disaster-related impacts (11.5)
- **Pacific**: Strong adoption of DRR strategies (11.b.1), yet limited gains in infrastructure resilience (Target 11.5) and economic loss reduction (11.5.2). Highlights critical vulnerabilities despite policy uptake.
- **East & North-East Asia**: Advances in DRR adoption (11.b.1) and air quality improvements (11.6.2), but disaster-related losses (11.5.2) and infrastructure vulnerability (11.5.3) remain high.
- **South-East Asia**: Limited progress in slum reduction (11.1) and infrastructure resilience (11.5.3), with only modest gains in air quality (11.6.2) and basic service delivery.
- **South & South-West Asia**: Faces the most acute challenges. Air quality (11.6.2) continues to deteriorate, progress on DRR (11.5.1/11.5.2) remains limited, and infrastructure resilience (11.5.3) is weak across many cities.

2.2 Survey Results on SDG 11 and NUA Implementation

In advance of the RPF, the ESCAP conducted a regional stakeholder survey to assess progress on Sustainable Development Goal 11 (SDG 11) and the implementation of the NUA. The survey engaged national and local governments, civil society, city networks, and development partners, and its findings were presented during the opening session of the Forum.

The results provide a clear snapshot of regional priorities, ongoing initiatives, and structural challenges shaping the trajectory of sustainable urban development in Asia and the Pacific. They highlight where momentum is strongest, where gaps persist, and how the region can better align local action with global agendas.

The survey confirmed strong stakeholder engagement on SDG 11, with 70 percent of respondents actively implementing actions and more than 60 cities completing VLRs or Voluntary Subnational Reviews (VSRs). These mechanisms are increasingly being used to localize SDG implementation and strengthen multi-level governance, although respondents noted ongoing challenges in integrating local and national data systems for monitoring and accountability.

70 per cent of respondents actively working on SDG 11 targets & indicators.

Over 60 cities have completed or supported VLRs/VSRs.

Priority Areas Identified by Stakeholders

- **Urban resilience & DRR (Target 11.5)** emerged as the foremost priority, reflecting growing recognition of the region's vulnerability to climate-related risks and natural hazards.
- **Sustainable Transport Systems (Target 11.2)** was the second most cited priority, underscoring the urgency of expanding safe, affordable, and accessible public transport systems to reduce emissions and improve equity.
- **Housing & Basic Services (Target 11.1)** ranked third, highlighting persistent gaps in service delivery and affordability that disproportionately affect the urban poor and marginalized groups.

Other priorities included **participatory planning (Target 11.3)**, **air quality and waste management (Target 11.6)**, and safeguarding cultural and natural heritage (Target 11.4). Public spaces (Target 11.7) received moderate attention, reflecting growing but still secondary emphasis on liveability and identity.

Figure 2. SDG 11 targets and NUA commitments assessment

B1. Which SDG 11 targets or New Urban Agenda commitments are most critical in your context?



Survey respondents also identified **five key barriers** that continue to hinder accelerated progress on SDG 11 and NUA implementation:

1. **Financing:** Limited and unpredictable financial resources constrain investments in sustainable infrastructure, climate action, and inclusive service delivery.
2. **Governance and Institutions:** Weak multi-level governance, fragmented mandates, and limited leadership capacity undermine coordinated action.
3. **Capacity Constraints:** Technical, human, and institutional capacity gaps limit the ability of cities, particularly smaller and intermediary ones, to address urbanization pressures and climate risks.
4. **Planning Frameworks:** Many countries face shortcomings in urban and territorial planning, including weak integration of informality, peri-urban growth, and uneven territorial development.
5. **Innovation and Digitalization:** Gaps in digital infrastructure and underdeveloped innovation ecosystems restrict the deployment of smart, data-driven urban solutions.

Political and institutional factors, including limited political commitment and high transaction costs, were also noted as cross-cutting challenges that slow progress and weaken accountability.

While stakeholders affirmed strong commitment to the NUA, the survey revealed less clarity on how its principles translate into measurable action. This indicates a need for clearer tools, reporting mechanisms, and stronger integration of NUA commitments into national and local planning frameworks.

The survey findings reflect both momentum and complexity. Cities across Asia and the Pacific are taking tangible steps to localize SDG 11, yet structural and institutional barriers continue to impede transformative action. Strengthening multi-level governance, improving financing mechanisms, integrating data systems, and operationalizing NUA commitments are critical to accelerating progress toward inclusive, resilient, and sustainable urban development.

Only 37 per cent report coordination mechanisms linking NDCs, SDG 11, and NUA. 42 per cent unsure, 21 per cent in progress → risk of fragmented implementation.

NUA Commitment 3 on urban rules and regulations was most cited, highlighting importance of governance, legal frameworks, spatial planning

While stakeholders affirmed strong commitment to the NUA, the survey revealed less clarity on how its principles translate into measurable action.

2.3 Thematic Priorities for Accelerating SDG and NUA Implementation

Building on the [discussion paper](#) and the regional stakeholder survey, the RPF served as a platform for governments, city leaders, civil society, academia, and development partners to validate regional realities, share lessons, and highlight emerging solutions and good practices for sustainable urban development. Through plenary presentations, interactive panels, and focused breakout sessions, participants collectively shaped a consolidated evidence base to guide the review and acceleration of Sustainable Development Goal 11 (SDG 11) and the implementation of the NUA, as well as validate regional thematic focus areas for sustainable urban development.

The analysis that follows reflects a synthesis of these deliberations, structured around six thematic focus areas, each closely linked to specific SDG 11 targets and indicators as well as the transformative commitments of the NUA. Together, these discussions illustrate both the progress achieved and the persistent gaps that must be addressed to build inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable cities and human settlements across Asia and the Pacific.

The six thematic focus areas are:

1. **Inclusive Housing, Services & Governance:** advancing SDG 11.1 on access to adequate housing and basic services, aligned with NUA commitments on social inclusion and poverty eradication.
2. **Mobility, Public Spaces & Participation:** addressing SDG 11.2 on sustainable transport and 11.7 on inclusive public spaces, linked to NUA priorities on accessibility and participatory governance.

3. **Urban Planning, Governance & Urban Rural Linkages:** supporting SDG 11.3 on participatory and integrated planning and 11.a on urban–rural connectivity, reflecting NUA’s emphasis on integrated territorial development and multi-level governance.
4. **Environmental Sustainability, Cultural Heritage & Inclusive Public Spaces:** advancing SDG 11.4 on safeguarding cultural and natural heritage and 11.6 on reducing cities’ environmental impact, consistent with NUA commitments on ecological sustainability and resilience.
5. **DRR & Resilience Planning:** reinforcing SDG 11.5 and 11.b on reducing disaster impacts and scaling risk-informed strategies, aligned with NUA’s focus on resilient urban development and climate adaptation.
6. **Support to LDCs & Sustainable Capacity Building:** addressing SDG 11.c on support to least developed countries for sustainable and resilient construction, tied to NUA commitments on international cooperation, financing, and capacity-building.

Participants stressed that integrated, people-centred approaches combining secure tenure, resilient construction, and equitable service provision are needed to address both social and climate vulnerabilities.

By structuring the Forum’s outcomes around these thematic areas, the discussions effectively bridge regional experiences with global frameworks, ensuring that Asia-Pacific perspectives and solutions feed directly into the global review of SDG 11 and global synthesis report, the 2026 HLPF, and the Quadrennial Report on the NUA.

2.3.1 Inclusive Housing, Services & Governance

Inclusive housing and equitable access to basic services are core pillars of sustainable urban development in Asia and the Pacific. The region is home to over 1.1 billion people living in slums and informal settlements, representing 60 per cent of the global total.⁶ Persistent service delivery gaps continue to reinforce inequality, limit access to economic and social opportunities, and heighten vulnerability to climate and disaster risks.

SDG 11.1, which calls for adequate, safe, and affordable housing and basic services for all, was identified by stakeholders as one of the region’s highest priorities, closely aligned with the NUA commitments on social inclusion, secure tenure, and people-centred housing policies. Integrated, climate-resilient housing strategies are not only critical for improving living conditions but also for advancing spatial equity, poverty reduction, and urban resilience.

Discussions highlighted the urgent need to strengthen housing policies and expand access to affordable, safe, and adequate housing, particularly for vulnerable and marginalized groups such as informal settlers, migrants, renters, and climate-affected communities.

⁶ United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (2025). *Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report 2025: Engaging Communities to Close the Evidence Gap*. Bangkok: United Nations.

A key message was that housing cannot be addressed in isolation. Participants stressed that integrated, people-centred approaches combining secure tenure, resilient construction, and equitable service provision are needed to address both social and climate vulnerabilities.

Stakeholders also pointed to the importance of participatory governance, emphasizing community-driven solutions, the role of city networks, and the use of VLRs and national SDG 11 roadmaps to localize global agendas and improve accountability.

Financing was a recurring concern. Many cities face severe financing gaps, particularly small and intermediary cities, while subsidies and pro-poor schemes remain limited. Innovative partnerships and diversified financing mechanisms were identified as essential to scale up inclusive housing delivery.

Innovative partnerships and diversified financing mechanisms were identified as essential to scale up inclusive housing delivery.

Several speakers noted that housing and services are foundational to resilience, particularly in rapidly urbanizing areas facing disaster and climate risks. Strengthening governance mechanisms, enhancing tenure security, and investing in climate-resilient infrastructure were seen as preconditions for sustainable development.



Photo Credit: ESCAP / Yan Shen

Regional Highlights and Good Practices

Malé, Maldives: Preparation of the city's first VLR revealed critical data and governance gaps and underscored the need to institutionalize VLR processes and strengthen engagement with marginalized groups. Malé's climate vulnerability highlights the dual imperative of resilience and carbon neutrality in housing and urban planning.

Philippines: At the national level, the Philippines has demonstrated how institutional frameworks can translate global agendas into localized action. The creation of the Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development (DHSUD) and the adoption of frameworks such as the National Urban Development and Housing Framework, the National Housing and Urban Development Sector Plan 2040, and the Resilient and Green Human Settlements Framework provide the strategic backbone for sustainable urbanization. Flagship programmes like the Pambansang Pabahay para sa Pilipino Program (4PH) are tackling the housing backlog by constructing affordable, resilient, and sustainable homes for low-income and underserved families. The PLANADO program is also digitizing and streamlining land use and urban planning to support smart, green, and inclusive development. Integrated approaches that mainstream gender, social inclusion, and climate/disaster risk assessment into planning are helping to operationalize SDG 11.1. However, challenges persist in securing sustainable financing, improving data coherence across agencies, and building local government capacity to deliver risk-informed, equitable, and climate-ready housing and services.

Jeetpur Simara (Nepal) and Port Moresby (Papua New Guinea): Community-driven and scalable solutions illustrate how inclusive housing initiatives can address both social vulnerability and climate risks.

Thailand: National reforms demonstrate the value of multi-level governance and inclusive participation platforms for improving coordination and accelerating the implementation of SDG 11.1.

Suva, Fiji: The city's first VLR process emphasized inclusive service delivery, integration of housing and urban planning, and stakeholder engagement to strengthen the resilience of informal settlements and vulnerable communities.

Key Challenges

- **Fragmented governance and coordination gaps:** Housing, land, and service delivery remain siloed across ministries and levels of government, weakening policy coherence and marginalizing vulnerable communities.
- **Financing constraints and inequities:** Limited public resources, insufficient subsidies, and weak support for community-led models constrain the scaling of inclusive housing.
- **Institutional and cultural barriers:** Policy inertia and entrenched practices hinder progressive reforms, including tenure security and rights-based approaches for informal settlers, migrants, and renters.

- **Data gaps:** Inconsistent or missing local data on housing and service delivery limit evidence-based planning and reporting.

Strategic Recommendations

- **Strengthen collaborative governance mechanisms:** Establish or reinforce multi-stakeholder platforms to enable integrated planning, shared accountability, and inclusive participation.
- **Expand targeted financial support and incentives:** Promote pro-poor financing schemes, concessional loans, and subsidies for cooperatives, and encourage blended finance for social and affordable housing.
- **Institutionalize progressive policies and leverage social capital:** Update regulatory frameworks to support community land trusts, participatory upgrading, and inclusive tenure systems.
- **Mainstream resilience in housing policy:** Integrate climate risk assessments, nature-based solutions, and adaptive building standards into housing strategies.
- **Invest in local data systems:** Strengthen local monitoring and reporting capacities to better align local realities with national and global SDG frameworks.

The deliberations reflected a clear regional shift toward people-centred housing systems that link inclusion, governance, and resilience. By aligning housing and service delivery with SDG 11.1 and the NUA, Asia-Pacific cities can tackle systemic inequalities, strengthen climate resilience, and enable more equitable urban development.

Box 1. Empowering Marginalized Communities with Sustainable, Inclusive Housing Solutions in Jeetpur Simara Sub Metropolitan City

The project in Jeetpur Simara Sub Metropolitan City, Bara district, Nepal, is focused on enabling low-income communities to access sustainable housing solutions. Scheduled from January 2024 to December 2026, it supports 140 families from ten Dalit and economically disadvantaged groups across four municipal wards. Significant progress has been made, including the completion of 27 housing units in one community and nearly 80 per cent completion of another 25 units in the Paswan community. The project is a response to ongoing challenges such as persistent poverty and inadequate housing among marginalized populations. It aims to provide dignified and secure living environments, directly engaging the beneficiaries in planning and execution to ensure both relevance and ownership. Community involvement is a cornerstone, promoting capacity-building and social solidarity. The initiative marks a clear improvement in the safety, health, and inclusiveness of the built environment for those traditionally at risk of exclusion. The project's impact demonstrates practical pathways toward urban equity and sets a precedent for replicable, community-led housing models in similar contexts. Directly contributing to SDG 11.1, it advances the agenda for inclusive, safe, and affordable housing in urban areas. Furthermore, the project is in line with the NUA's commitment to prioritize those most in need and uphold the principle of leaving no one behind in urban development.

Box 2. First Home Ownership Scheme (FHOS) in Port Moresby

The First Home Ownership Scheme was launched in 2014 as a joint initiative between the Government of Papua New Guinea and Bank South Pacific (BSP) to address the country's chronic housing shortage. The scheme offers affordable housing loans with a fixed interest rate of 4 per cent and a repayment period of up to 40 years, making it the longest-term home loan product in the market. Targeting first-time home buyers, the programme requires a 10 per cent equity contribution and is limited to new homes under six months old, which has posed challenges for low- and middle-income earners. Despite these barriers, BSP has funded over 1,100 loans valued at more than K330 million, helping thousands of families secure housing. The majority of beneficiaries are located in Port Moresby, where demand and property development are highest. The scheme's objectives include wealth creation, family security, and stimulating private sector housing development. Implementation has involved concessional financing and partnerships with developers, though calls for policy reform - such as accepting customary land titles and reducing equity requirements - remain strong. The FHOS has had a catalytic impact on the housing market, encouraging new construction and expanding homeownership opportunities. This initiative directly supports SDG 11.1 by promoting access to adequate, safe, and affordable housing, and aligns with the NUA's commitment to ensure housing for all through inclusive, sustainable urban finance mechanisms.

2.3.2 Mobility, Public Spaces & Participation

Mobility, public spaces, and civic participation are critical foundations of sustainable and inclusive urban development in Asia and the Pacific. SDG 11.2, which calls for safe, affordable, accessible, and sustainable transport systems for all, was identified by stakeholders as one of the region's top priorities. Integrated mobility systems that connect public and non-motorized transport are essential for reducing emissions, enhancing accessibility, and advancing equity.

In parallel, SDG 11.7 emphasizes the importance of safe, inclusive, and green and public spaces in strengthening health, well-being, and community cohesion. Civic participation was highlighted as a key enabler of these outcomes, aligned with the NUA focus on inclusive governance. Digital engagement tools and multi-level coordination mechanisms are expanding opportunities for co-creation between governments, communities, and the private sector.

Discussions highlighted the intersection of transportation infrastructure, accessibility, equity, and civic engagement as central to sustainable urban development. While some cities are advancing metro systems, bus rapid transit (BRT), and transit-oriented development, challenges remain in ensuring equitable service delivery, last-mile connectivity, and accessibility for vulnerable groups.

Discussions highlighted the intersection of transportation infrastructure, accessibility, equity, and civic engagement as central to sustainable urban development.

Participants noted that inclusive mobility and well-designed public spaces can support broader climate and equity goals by connecting communities to opportunities, improving air quality, and building social cohesion. However, they also emphasized that achieving these outcomes requires coordinated investments in infrastructure, governance, and participatory planning.

A recurring theme was the importance of participation. Stakeholders observed limited engagement of grassroots communities, youth, and private sector actors in mobility and public space planning. Many cities are now exploring digital platforms for real-time community feedback and participatory budgeting to strengthen transparency, responsiveness, and service quality. Participants also stressed the importance of gender-sensitive planning, universal accessibility, and community co-design to ensure transport systems and public spaces meet the needs of diverse users, particularly women, older persons, people with disabilities, and marginalized groups.

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Photo Credit: ESCAP / Yan Shen

Regional Highlights and Good Practices

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: The GOKL Smart Mobility Bus demonstrated how affordable, accessible, and green public transport can reduce congestion and emissions while expanding mobility options for low-income groups.

Pasig City, Philippines: The People's Streets Initiative reclaimed road space for pedestrians and community activities, creating safer and more inclusive urban environments and improving walkability.

Incheon, Republic of Korea: The Island Connection subsidy and I-Pass ferry integration scheme showcased how targeted government support can strengthen connectivity for island residents, improving access to services and economic opportunities.

Nanjing, China: Despite significant investment in advanced metro and transit systems, persistent accessibility gaps remain for older persons, people with disabilities, and underserved districts, underscoring the need to embed universal design principles in mobility planning.

Moscow, Russian Federation: Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) and autonomous vehicle initiatives are being used to improve road safety and mobility for ageing populations. Technologies such as adaptive cruise control, biometric fare systems, and driver monitoring tools are enhancing accessibility and safety. Pilot programmes in autonomous trams and smart city infrastructure illustrate how technology can support inclusive, tech-driven urban mobility.

Key Challenges

- **Accessibility gaps:** Many transport systems are not designed for universal access, excluding older persons, people with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups.
- **Safety and enforcement deficiencies:** Weak enforcement of traffic regulations and insufficient investment in safety infrastructure reduce public trust and limit modal shifts to sustainable transport.
- **Financing and capacity constraints:** Many cities face resource limitations and fragmented institutional capacity to implement and sustain inclusive mobility and public space initiatives.
- **Limited civic participation:** Inadequate engagement of citizens, communities, and private actors undermines accountability and reduces the impact of infrastructure investments.

Strategic Recommendations

- **Advance inclusive transport reform:** Align mobility policies with broader housing, health, and equity objectives to ensure transport contributes to inclusive and sustainable urban development.
- **Strengthen safety and regulatory frameworks:** Expand investments in road safety measures, law enforcement, and monitoring systems as the foundation for advanced mobility reforms.

- **Mobilize targeted financing and capacity support:** Use subsidies, concessional loans, and innovative financing tools to prioritize inclusive mobility, particularly for vulnerable groups, while strengthening local government capacity.
- **Institutionalize participatory governance:** Embed civic engagement platforms and digital feedback mechanisms into mobility and public space planning, enabling communities to shape priorities and hold institutions accountable.

The deliberations reflected a regional shift toward people-centred mobility systems and participatory governance. By linking inclusive transport, public space design, and civic participation, Asia-Pacific cities can accelerate progress toward SDG 11.2 and SDG 11.7 and advance the implementation of the NUA.

Box 3. Smart Mobility Bus GOKL in Kuala Lumpur

The Smart Mobility Bus GOKL initiative in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, was launched in 2019 by Kuala Lumpur City Hall (KLCH) to encourage public transport use by providing reliable, accessible, safe, and comfortable free bus services, prioritizing the B40 lower-income group. The project faced challenges including securing sustainable funding and managing fluctuating demand, particularly overcrowding during peak hours. Objectives included reducing traffic congestion in high-density areas, lowering carbon emissions, and providing alternative transportation options within the Central Business District (CBD). Implementation involved transitioning the diesel bus fleet to electric buses, introducing real-time monitoring and data analytics, and developing a mobile app for route and arrival information. The electric buses, locally manufactured and environmentally friendly, contribute significantly to Kuala Lumpur's goal of reducing carbon emission intensity by up to 70 per cent by 2030. The service expanded its fleet and routes, with user numbers growing from 6.4 million in 2021 to an expected 11.5 million in 2023, demonstrating its acceptance and impact. The programme supports SDG 11.2 by providing accessible, affordable, and sustainable transport systems essential for urban mobility. It also aligns with the NUA commitment to fostering sustainable urban transport that reduces emissions and congestion. Additionally, the service enhances inclusivity through facilities designed for persons with disabilities and free rides for children under 12. GOKL exemplifies a model for integrating smart, green technologies to promote sustainable urban transport and well-being in a rapidly growing metropolitan context.



Photo Credit: ESCAP / Yan Shen

Box 4. People's Streets initiative in Pasig City

The "People's Streets" initiative in Pasig City, Philippines, launched in 2021 and ongoing, focuses on pedestrianizing city streets to foster open public spaces and promote sustainable, non-motorized transportation. Initially piloted in 2011 as "Carless Streets," the programme addresses challenges such as resistance from businesses and concerns over transportation flow. Its main objectives are to improve walkability, reduce traffic congestion, lower carbon emissions, and create inclusive public spaces for vulnerable groups including women, children, persons with disabilities, and older persons. Implementation involved community consultations, collaboration with local businesses, traffic management, and clear operational guidelines. By mid-2023, several streets were pedestrianized on weekends, leading to reduced vehicular traffic, improved air quality, and decreased noise pollution. The initiative has also boosted neighborhood satisfaction and offered local vendors new opportunities through community markets. The programme links to SDG 11.2 by enhancing access to safe, affordable, and sustainable transport systems and supporting walking and cycling as alternatives to vehicles. It aligns with the NUA's commitment to ensuring sustainable urban mobility and promoting walkable streets for improved urban quality of life. The success of People's Streets demonstrates effective community engagement and incremental urban transformation through tactical urbanism. This initiative is a valuable model for other cities looking to integrate sustainable transport and inclusive urban public spaces.

2.3.3 Urban Planning, Governance & Urban-Rural Linkages

Urban planning and governance are fundamental to achieving inclusive, resilient, and sustainable cities in Asia and the Pacific. SDG 11.3, which calls for enhancing inclusive and sustainable urbanization through participatory, integrated, and sustainable planning, was identified by stakeholders as a core regional priority. In parallel, SDG 11.a emphasizes strengthening national and regional development planning and urban–rural linkages. Together, these targets underpin the NUA commitments on integrated territorial development, multi-level governance, and the empowerment of local authorities.

SDG 11.3, which calls for enhancing inclusive and sustainable urbanization through participatory, integrated, and sustainable planning, was identified by stakeholders as a core regional priority.

Integrated planning and governance are essential for managing rapid urbanization, addressing fragmented growth, and reducing inequalities. They are also critical for enabling balanced territorial development that connects urban and rural systems. Strengthening coordination mechanisms, investing in institutional capacity, and leveraging digital planning tools were highlighted as key priorities to achieve these goals.

Discussions highlighted uneven progress across the region. While several cities are embracing smart city strategies, GIS-based systems, and digital twins to enhance planning, others continue to face outdated zoning regulations, fragmented mandates, and insufficient fiscal and institutional capacities.

Stakeholders emphasized that effective urban planning must be forward-looking, risk-informed, and participatory, supported by robust data systems that enable local engagement, transparency, and accountability. Strengthening multi-level governance, improving urban–rural connectivity, and integrating climate adaptation and resilience were identified as core priorities.

A recurring theme was the importance of participatory governance and the need to empower local governments with the resources, autonomy, and tools required to plan effectively. Stakeholders also highlighted that intermediary cities play a critical role as connectors between urban and rural areas, particularly in service delivery, mobility, and food systems. Several countries are adopting open data systems and participatory planning innovations to enhance policy coherence and responsiveness.

Stakeholders emphasized that effective urban planning must be forward-looking, risk-informed, and participatory, supported by robust data systems that enable local engagement, transparency, and accountability.

Regional Highlights and Good Practices

Sejong, Republic of Korea: As a purpose-built administrative capital, Sejong integrates sustainability, innovation, and resilience into its development model from the outset. The city’s master planning emphasizes compact urban design, transit-oriented development, and integrated land use to minimize environmental impact. Smart governance platforms and participatory planning tools are used to monitor urban performance and engage residents, supporting alignment with national sustainable development goals. Sejong’s model demonstrates how new city development can embed green infrastructure, smart technologies, and inclusive governance mechanisms from the start.

Lao People’s Democratic Republic: National planning processes are increasingly integrating urban sustainability objectives into socio-economic development frameworks. Investments in affordable housing, sustainable transport, including the planning of the country’s first Bus Rapid Transit system in Vientiane and targeted capacity-building for local governments are enhancing urban governance and service delivery. The Lao National Urban Forum provides a platform for multi-stakeholder collaboration, supporting national urban policy dialogue and helping strengthen urban–rural linkages.

Suva, Fiji: Climate adaptation is increasingly embedded in planning systems, addressing existential risks such as sea-level rise and extreme weather events through integrated territorial development approaches.

Key Challenges

- **Fragmentation and Weak Coordination:** Overlapping mandates, siloed institutions, and limited fiscal decentralization undermine policy coherence and effective implementation.
- **Capacity and Resource Gaps:** Many local governments lack technical expertise, data systems, and financing to conduct integrated and risk-informed planning.
- **Limited Participation and Accountability:** Civic engagement mechanisms remain weak or tokenistic, limiting meaningful citizen involvement in planning and decision-making.
- **Urban–Rural Disconnects:** Rural areas are often under-integrated into national and regional planning frameworks, reducing opportunities for balanced territorial development.

Strategic Recommendations

- **Institutionalize Participatory Planning:** Embed citizen engagement, VLRs, VSRs, and inclusive consultations into urban and territorial planning to enhance accountability and legitimacy.
- **Strengthen Multi-Level Governance:** Establish and strengthen platforms that align national policies with local priorities, supported by fiscal decentralization and intersectoral coordination.
- **Invest in Data and Digital Tools:** Expand the use of spatial data systems, GIS, and digital planning technologies to support evidence-based, risk-informed, and forward-looking planning.
- **Enhance Urban–Rural Connectivity:** Position intermediary cities as hubs for service delivery, mobility, and economic opportunity, supported by governance frameworks that integrate rural areas and enable balanced territorial development.

The deliberations reflected a regional shift toward integrated and participatory planning systems, aligning territorial governance with sustainability, resilience, and inclusion goals. By linking urban planning, multi-level governance, and urban–rural connectivity, Asia-Pacific cities can accelerate progress toward SDG 11.3 and 11.a and advance the implementation of the NUA.

By linking urban planning, multi-level governance, and urban–rural connectivity, Asia-Pacific cities can accelerate progress toward SDG 11.3 and 11.a and advance the implementation of the NUA.



Photo Credit: ESCAP / Yan Shen

Box 5. Sustainable Administrative City of Sejong

Sejong, Republic of Korea's "Administrative City," was implemented from 2007 and is planned for completion by 2030, the initiative was designed to create a self-sufficient city with a target population of 500,000. The main objectives included balanced national development, relocation of central government agencies, and the creation of advanced urban infrastructure. Key challenges faced were rapid urbanization, the need for environmental conservation, and ensuring economic self-sufficiency. The city's urban plan features the world's first ring-shaped city layout, integrated public transport, and a high green space ratio (50 per cent). Implementation strategies emphasized eco-friendly design, mandatory green building standards, carbon neutrality by 2040, and smart city technologies. Impact has included improved urban resilience, increased renewable energy use, and international recognition as a pilot smart city. The project's approach aligns with SDG 11.3 (inclusive and sustainable urbanization), SDG 11.a (integrated policies across levels), and the NUA's commitment to urban spatial planning and resilience. International cooperation, including MOUs and capacity building with global partners, has further strengthened outcomes. Overall, Sejong's experience demonstrates how integrated planning and innovation can address urban challenges and serve as a model for sustainable city development in the Asia-Pacific region.

Box 6. Regional and National Sustainability Initiatives of Smart City in Lao People's Democratic Republic

The case study focuses on the development of the National Smart City Strategy (NSCS) in Lao People's Democratic Republic, with Vientiane Capital City as a key pilot. The initiative has been implemented from January 2024, with the final strategy expected to be endorsed by late 2025. The main objectives are to promote inclusive and resilient urbanization, leverage digital innovation for efficient city management, and enhance the quality of life for urban residents. Key challenges include limited financial resources, the need for regulatory alignment, and ensuring stakeholder participation across sectors. Implementation has involved developing a GIS-based urban management platform ("VirGo" with JICA), integrating smart infrastructure (buildings, transport, energy, waste), and revising urban planning regulations. The strategy emphasizes smart governance, public participation, and partnerships with ASEAN and external partners. Early impacts include improved urban monitoring, stakeholder engagement, and the foundation for smart city projects in areas like waste management, clean energy, and digital public services. The NSCS aligns with SDG 11.3 (inclusive urbanization), SDG 11.a (strengthening national and regional development planning), and the NUA's commitment to integrated, participatory urban planning. The approach seeks to ensure that digital transformation supports sustainable, safe, and resilient cities, with a focus on adaptability and local context. Moving forward, the country aims to scale up smart city initiatives, foster multi-stakeholder cooperation, and attract investment for sustainable urban growth.

2.3.4 Environmental Sustainability, Cultural Heritage & Inclusive Public Spaces

Environmental sustainability, cultural heritage preservation, and inclusive public spaces are interdependent pillars of resilient and livable cities in Asia and the Pacific. Rapid urbanization, growing waste volumes, and worsening air pollution continue to threaten ecosystems, infrastructure, and public health, while climate risks increase vulnerabilities for marginalized communities.

SDG 11.6 calls for reducing cities' per capita environmental impact, particularly in relation to air quality and waste management. SDG 11.4 emphasizes the protection of cultural and natural heritage, and SDG 11.7 emphasizes the need for accessible, green, and inclusive public spaces. Together, these targets align closely with the NUA, which emphasizes ecological sustainability, cultural identity, and inclusive urban development.

Regional priorities include:

- Scaling integrated approaches to air quality management, waste reduction, and circular economy solutions.
- Strengthening protection and adaptive reuse of cultural and natural heritage, ensuring communities benefit from conservation.
- Expanding inclusive and green public spaces as essential assets for resilience, social cohesion, and health.
- Embedding climate and environmental sustainability in urban planning, infrastructure investment, and governance frameworks.

These priorities reflect a strategic shift toward cities that safeguard heritage, reduce environmental footprints, and deliver inclusive, people-centered urban spaces.

Discussions highlighted the urgent need for transformative and systemic approaches to address environmental impacts while preserving cultural assets and ensuring equitable access to public spaces. Stakeholders emphasized that environmental degradation, cultural erosion, and uneven access to green spaces are mutually reinforcing challenges that demand integrated policy and planning responses.

A strong consensus emerged around waste management and air quality as immediate priorities. Many cities still lack adequate recycling systems, circular economy frameworks, or enforcement mechanisms for environmental standards. This has resulted in mounting landfills, air pollution, and degraded urban ecosystems, with serious health consequences in dense urban centers. Stakeholders noted that these impacts disproportionately affect low-income and marginalized communities, exacerbating existing inequities.

Stakeholders emphasized that environmental degradation, cultural erosion, and uneven access to green spaces are mutually reinforcing challenges that demand integrated policy and planning responses.

Climate risks were a recurring concern. Rising temperatures, air pollution, flooding, and coastal erosion are compounding existing urban vulnerabilities, undermining infrastructure resilience and community well-being. Cities increasingly recognize that environmental management cannot be treated as a separate agenda, it must be mainstreamed across urban planning, service delivery, and investment decisions.

Cultural heritage preservation was identified as both a challenge and an opportunity. Many cities struggle to protect tangible and intangible heritage due to rapid urban expansion, insufficient funding, and institutional gaps. At the same time, heritage conservation, when linked to adaptive reuse and sustainable tourism, can drive local economic development and reinforce cultural identity.

Nature-based solutions and green infrastructure were highlighted as high-impact, cost-effective interventions. Cities across the region are investing in green corridors, riverfront restoration, urban forests, and biodiversity networks to improve air quality, reduce heat islands, enhance resilience, and restore ecological functions.

Inclusive public space development emerged as a central theme. Participants emphasized that the design and equitable distribution of parks, pedestrian networks, and communal spaces are essential for strengthening social cohesion, supporting public health, and providing refuge during climate and disaster shocks. Ensuring accessibility for women, children, older persons, and persons with disabilities is critical to maximizing their value. Many cities also identified public spaces as an entry point for local climate action, community participation, and social resilience.

Finally, stakeholders stressed that addressing these challenges requires multi-level governance, participatory planning, and stronger financing frameworks. Building local data ecosystems, improving policy coherence, and scaling public–private–community partnerships were identified as critical enablers.

Cities increasingly recognize that environmental management cannot be treated as a separate agenda, it must be mainstreamed across urban planning, service delivery, and investment decisions.



Photo Credit: ESCAP / Yan Shen

Regional Highlights and Good Practices

Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan: The city's experience highlighted how coal-based heating has severely degraded winter air quality, leading to major public health risks. In response, Bishkek is implementing a multipronged strategy that includes replacing coal boilers with natural gas, gasifying residential areas, and renewing its public transport fleet with compressed natural gas buses. The city is also investing in traffic flow monitoring and green infrastructure, such as extensive tree planting and urban park development as nature-based solutions to improve air quality, environmental resilience, and livability.

Guangzhou, China: The city presented a comprehensive approach to urban heat island mitigation, combining cutting-edge digital technologies with ecosystem preservation. Its strategy integrates "thermal walks," wind corridor mapping, and smart misting systems to enhance urban cooling and climate adaptation. These interventions are complemented by ecological corridor protection and biodiversity monitoring using remote sensing, which help maintain ecosystem continuity while accommodating urban growth.

Yokohama, Japan: The SDGs Locker Initiative at SDG Stations reduces food loss and waste while mobilizing citizens in sustainability initiatives, reinforcing the city's broader circular economy agenda.

Key Challenges

- **Rising Environmental Pressures:** Many cities lack the capacity and financing to effectively manage waste, reduce pollution, and monitor environmental impacts.
- **Weak Heritage Protection:** Cultural and natural heritage sites face threats from unplanned expansion, inadequate resources, and limited community engagement.
- **Inequitable Access to Public Space:** Green and safe spaces are often concentrated in wealthier districts, leaving vulnerable communities underserved.
- **Fragmented Policy and Planning:** Environmental and cultural policies often operate separately from urban planning and infrastructure investments, reducing effectiveness.

Strategic Recommendations

- **Integrate Environmental Sustainability in Urban Planning:** Mainstream circular economy models, renewable energy, climate adaptation measures, and nature-based solutions into city development strategies.
- **Strengthen Heritage Protection Frameworks:** Expand regulatory and financial mechanisms for heritage conservation, promote adaptive reuse, and foster community stewardship.
- **Expand and Safeguard Inclusive Public Spaces:** Prioritize equitable distribution of safe and accessible green spaces, embedding universal design and gender-responsive approaches.
- **Enhance Data and Monitoring Systems:** Invest in local-level monitoring of air quality, waste flows, and public space access to support evidence-based policymaking.

The deliberations reflected a holistic regional approach to advancing environmental sustainability, cultural preservation, and inclusive urban spaces. By aligning SDG 11.4, 11.6, and 11.7 with the NUA, cities in Asia and the Pacific can strengthen climate resilience, safeguard cultural identity, reduce ecological pressures, and ensure that urban environments remain inclusive, equitable, and people-centered.

Box 7. Air pollution reduction measures in Bishkek

The issue of air pollution, especially during winter, is driven by coal heating and vehicle emissions, with 60 per cent of households using coal and waste materials. The main sources include high-sulfur coal from the private sector, outdated vehicles, and a CHP plant contributing less than 10 per cent of emissions. The city has implemented key measures such as converting 22 municipal boiler houses to gas, building 100 km of gas pipelines, and gasifying 52 residential areas, benefiting over 72,000 families. Concessional loans at 3 per cent have supported household gasification. Bishkek is also developing a General Plan until 2050, integrating climate data and urban design standards. Under the Socio-Economic Development Program (2026–2028) and the Environmental Safety Concept (2023–2028), the city is expanding green spaces and improving infrastructure accessibility. Sustainable transport initiatives include a CNG bus fleet, 120 new e-buses, and bike lanes, alongside digital upgrades like GPS monitoring and cashless payments. The city aims to reduce chaotic construction and promote eco-friendly mobility. Overall, Bishkek's efforts reflect a multi-sectoral approach to tackling air pollution and enhancing urban sustainability. These initiatives directly support SDG 11.6 by reducing the environmental impact of cities through improved air quality and waste management, and SDG 11.7 by expanding access to safe, inclusive, and green public spaces. Furthermore, the integration of climate data and long-term planning aligns with the NUA's emphasis on sustainable urban development, participatory governance, and inclusive infrastructure.

Box 8. Food Loss Reduction through SDGs Locker Initiative in Yokohama

The Food Loss Reduction through SDGs Locker Initiatives in Yokohama, Japan, began in January 2024. This was initiated to reduce food waste by selling leftover bread in locker-type vending machines at various areas in the city including transit stations. Currently, Yokohama is under consideration to expand selling other food items as well. Yokohama's initiative also serves as an opportunity for citizens to learn about sustainability while accessing discounted foods that would otherwise go to waste. Japan faces significant challenges with 2.36 million tons of annual food loss in addition to the environmental burden posed by waste disposal and transportation-related CO2 emissions. In response, this project aims to reduce food waste, promote responsible consumption, and foster inclusive participation in the implementation of the SDGs. Implementation featured partnerships among city bureaus, bakeries, and locker manufacturers, lowering carbon footprints. From the launch of the project through the end of September 2025, it is estimated that approximately 17.2 tons of food waste was prevented and around 66.9 tons of CO2 emissions were reduced. These outcomes have attracted media attention. The project aligns with the SDGs and this pioneering effort are underway to expand the locker programme citywide, broadening impact.

2.3.5 DRR & Resilience Planning

Asia and the Pacific is the most disaster-prone region in the world, facing increasing frequency and intensity of floods, cyclones, earthquakes, and droughts driven by climate change. Urban areas are particularly vulnerable due to high population density, unplanned settlements, infrastructure deficits, and limited adaptive capacity.

SDG 11.5 calls for significantly reducing the number of people affected by disasters, while SDG 11.b urges the adoption of integrated policies and plans for DRR and resilience. The NUA reinforces these goals, emphasizing risk-informed planning, resilient infrastructure, and community-based preparedness as critical components of sustainable urban development.

Regional priorities include:

- Mainstreaming risk-informed planning into urban development and land-use systems.
- Strengthening resilient infrastructure that integrates climate adaptation and nature-based solutions.
- Enhancing early warning systems and community preparedness, particularly in informal settlements and vulnerable coastal and riverine areas.
- Promoting regional cooperation and knowledge-sharing to address transboundary disaster risks.

These priorities reflect a shift from reactive disaster response to proactive, resilience-based planning as a foundation for sustainable urban futures.

Forum discussions highlighted the urgent need to embed disaster and climate resilience into urban planning, governance, and investment frameworks. Participants stressed that cities cannot achieve sustainable development without integrating risk considerations into housing, infrastructure, service delivery, and land-use systems.

Stakeholders highlighted the increasing exposure of vulnerable communities to multiple hazards, particularly those in informal settlements, peri-urban zones, and coastal areas. With climate impacts intensifying these risks, discussions emphasized multi-level governance, community engagement, and multi-sector coordination as critical enablers of urban resilience.

Participants stressed that cities cannot achieve sustainable development without integrating risk considerations into housing, infrastructure, service delivery, and land-use systems.

Speakers stressed the value of participatory approaches, engaging communities in decision-making to ensure plans reflect diverse needs across population segments differentiated by age, gender, and socio-economic status. Strengthened horizontal and vertical integration between national and local governments was identified as essential to effective, city-level disaster resilience.

A key challenge raised in discussions was fragmented and inconsistent data on disaster losses, particularly regarding economic impacts and infrastructure damage. Participants stressed the need to institutionalize DRR functions within local governments to enable timely action, strengthen coordination, and improve communication between authorities and communities.

Regional Highlights and Good Practices

Shanghai, China: Green, low-carbon, and resilient community practices in Beixinjing demonstrate how integrated green infrastructure, sponge facilities, and community engagement can strengthen urban climate resilience and support SDG 11.5 and 11.b.

Penang, Malaysia: The Nature-based Climate Adaptation Programme integrates green infrastructure into urban planning to reduce flood risks, enhance biodiversity, and increase adaptive capacity.

Philippines: National urban frameworks are being linked to local DRR strategies, advancing climate-informed planning, resilient infrastructure, and targeted protection for vulnerable groups.

Key Challenges

- **High Exposure and Vulnerability:** Informal settlements and low-income communities remain disproportionately exposed to floods, landslides, and climate shocks.
- **Weak Integration of DRR in Planning:** Land use, housing, and infrastructure decisions often overlook hazard and climate risk considerations.
- **Limited Local Capacity and Resources:** Municipalities lack technical expertise, financing, and tools to design and implement resilience strategies.
- **Fragmented Coordination and Data Gaps:** Weak vertical and horizontal coordination among agencies and insufficient disaster loss monitoring undermine planning and response.

Strategic Recommendations

- **Mainstream Risk-Informed Urban Planning:** Integrate DRR and climate adaptation into urban master plans, zoning regulations, and building codes.
- **Invest in Resilient Infrastructure and Nature-Based Solutions:** Prioritize hybrid infrastructure systems that reduce risks while providing environmental and social co-benefits.
- **Strengthen Early Warning and Preparedness Systems:** Expand inclusive early warning systems and build community capacity for preparedness and recovery, ensuring accessibility for vulnerable groups.
- **Enhance Multi-Level Governance and Regional Cooperation:** Improve coordination mechanisms across national, subnational, and local levels, and foster regional knowledge exchange on urban resilience.
- **Institutionalize Local DRR Mechanisms:** Establish DRR cells or focal units within city governments to strengthen accountability, enable rapid response, and sustain community engagement.

The deliberations reflected a regional shift toward resilience-based urban development. By embedding DRR into urban planning and governance frameworks, Asia-Pacific cities can accelerate progress toward SDG 11.5 and 11.b and advance the NUA vision of safe, resilient, and sustainable cities for all.

Box 9. Green, Low-carbon and Resilient Community Practices in Shanghai

The Green, Low-carbon and Resilient Community Practices in Beixinjing, Changning District, Shanghai was implemented from 2022 to the present, focusing on disaster risk reduction and resilience planning. The Green, Low-carbon and Resilient Community Practices in Beixinjing, Changning District, Shanghai was implemented from 2022 to the present, focusing on DRR and resilience planning. Beixinjing, a residential sub-district in western Changning with over 50,000 residents, faced challenges such as an ageing population with over 40 per cent aged over 60, outdated infrastructure from the 1980s to 1990s, and the need for integrated urban systems. The initiative aimed to build age-friendly, low-carbon, and resilient communities by aligning safety and environmental goals. Implementation involved bottom-up community engagement and top-down district-level planning, integrating green technologies, sponge facilities, and public service enhancements. Key strategies included feedback loops, multi-stakeholder consultations, and data-driven evaluation systems. The impact included a 95 per cent household waste sorting rate, 100 per cent coverage of 15-minute living circles, and 23.95 per cent green space coverage, among other indicators. The project mobilized resources from municipal, sub-district, private, and social sectors, fostering inclusive governance. It also developed manuals and emergency plans to ensure sustainability and adaptability. This initiative directly supports SDG 11.5 (reducing disaster impacts), SDG 11.b (adopting integrated policies), and aligns with the NUA

Box 10. Nature-based Climate Adaptation Program for Urban Areas of Penang

The Nature-based Climate Adaptation Program for Urban Areas of Penang, Malaysia, was implemented from 2020 to 2025 to boost urban resilience against climate change and extreme weather using nature-based solutions (NbS). Penang faces rising temperatures and frequent flooding due to urbanization, poor drainage, and impervious surfaces, jeopardizing health and infrastructure. The program reduces urban heat island effects, manages stormwater, and strengthens social and institutional resilience through community engagement and capacity building. Key actions include creating green spaces like pocket parks, green façades, tree-lined streets, and water retention systems. Vulnerable groups such as the elderly, low-income communities, women, and youth are involved to promote equity. The project supports SDG 11.5 by reducing disaster risks from floods and heatwaves, SDG 11.b by incorporating inclusive climate adaptation, and SDG 11.7 by expanding green public spaces. Aligning with the NUA, it promotes sustainable urban development through nature-based solutions and inclusive governance. Outcomes include improved public health, less economic damage from floods, enhanced biodiversity, and raised climate awareness. The program aims to build institutional capacity and serve as a model for other Malaysian cities. Penang's approach shows how green infrastructure combined with social resilience creates livable, climate-adaptive urban environments.

2.3.6 Support to Least Developing Countries & Sustainable Building Capacity

Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in Asia and the Pacific face unique challenges in advancing sustainable urban development. Limited fiscal space, weak institutional capacity, and high exposure to climate and disaster risks constrain their ability to deliver adequate housing, resilient infrastructure, and sustainable urban services. SDG 11.c specifically calls for supporting LDCs through financial and technical assistance to promote sustainable and resilient building practices that utilize local materials and knowledge. The NUA reinforces this commitment by emphasizing capacity development, international cooperation, technology transfer, and strengthened local systems to enable countries to design and implement context-appropriate, climate-resilient urban solutions.

Regional priorities include:

- Expanding financial and technical assistance to LDCs for sustainable building and infrastructure development.
- Strengthening capacity-building initiatives for local governments to design and implement inclusive, climate-resilient urban solutions.
- Promoting the use of locally sourced, sustainable building materials and circular construction practices.
- Enhancing regional and South-South cooperation to exchange knowledge, technology, and innovative solutions tailored to LDC contexts.

These priorities highlight the urgency of ensuring that LDCs are not left behind in the global shift toward sustainable urban development.

Forum discussions underscored that capacity building and financial innovation are central to realizing SDG 11.c's target of supporting sustainable and resilient building practices in developing countries. Participants highlighted persistent gaps in technical skills, data systems, policy alignment, and institutional mechanisms that limit local governments' ability to implement integrated urban development solutions.

A recurring theme was the need to move beyond fragmented project support toward systemic and long-term capacity strengthening. Peer learning, regional city networks, and targeted technical assistance were identified as critical levers for building local capacity in data architecture, financial management, and integrated planning. These measures were viewed as essential to unlocking finance, attracting private investment, and enabling locally led development.

Speakers also highlighted financial innovation as a key accelerator for scaling sustainable urban interventions. Blended finance models, concessional funds, and risk-sharing arrangements with the private sector were cited as strategies to overcome funding barriers for sustainable housing, transport, and climate adaptation.

A recurring theme was the need to move beyond fragmented project support toward systemic and long-term capacity strengthening.

Diversity of Strategies and Examples

- **Suva, Fiji:** Through the Joint SDG Fund project on accelerating multi-level action for SDG localization,⁷ Suva City Council undertook a VLR process with inclusive stakeholder engagement.⁸ Grassroots groups, youth, civil society, business, and media participated in shaping local priorities. Suva established a dedicated sustainable development budget line and a research unit to institutionalize VLR-generated data and strengthen long-term planning capacity.
- **JICA Technical Cooperation – Thailand and Indonesia:** Long-term urban development cooperation supported transit-oriented development projects through multi-stakeholder engagement and risk-sharing arrangements with the private sector. These experiences demonstrated how regulatory clarity, coordinated institutional mandates, and capacity development are critical to de-risking investment and scaling complex urban projects.

These cases illustrate how international partnerships, local leadership, and innovative finance can converge to build sustainable capacity for urban development in developing contexts.

Key Challenges

- **Limited Access to Finance:** LDCs face significant barriers in mobilizing affordable, long-term financing for sustainable and resilient infrastructure.
- **Technical and Institutional Capacity Gaps:** Local governments often lack the expertise and tools needed for sustainable construction, planning, and risk management.
- **Dependence on Imported Materials:** High reliance on expensive imported construction materials undermines affordability and environmental sustainability.
- **Fragmented International Support:** External assistance remains short-term, project-based, and often insufficiently aligned with national and local priorities.

Strategic Recommendations

- **Expand International and Regional Support:** Scale up financial and technical assistance for LDCs, ensuring alignment with local priorities and long-term capacity needs.
- **Promote Sustainable, Locally Sourced Building Materials:** Support the use of traditional, low-carbon materials (such as bamboo, compressed earth, and recycled aggregates) and circular construction approaches.
- **Strengthen Local Capacity and Institutions:** Invest in training, data systems, and regulatory frameworks that enable local governments to lead on sustainable urban development.

⁷ Joint SDG Fund. “Accelerating Multi-level Action for SDG Localization in Fiji.” Joint Programme on SDG Localization, May 27 2025. Available at: <https://www.jointsdgfund.org/programme/accelerating-multi-level-action-sdg-localization-fiji> (accessed October 2025).

⁸ Suva City Council (SCC), Fiji. *Suva City Voluntary Local Review 2025: A City of the Future – Smart, Safe, and Resilient*. Suva, Fiji: SCC, 2025.

- **Enhance South-South and Triangular Cooperation:** Leverage peer learning, regional platforms, and partnerships to accelerate the transfer of knowledge, technology, and innovative practices among LDCs and other developing countries.
- **Institutionalize Long-Term Support:** Move beyond project-based aid to systemic investments in governance, finance, and human capacity.

The deliberations reflected a growing recognition that building capacity in developing countries is fundamental to advancing SDG 11.c and the NUA. Strengthened institutions, innovative financing, and international cooperation can empower LDCs to design and implement inclusive, climate-resilient, and sustainable urban solutions, ensuring no country is left behind in the region's urban transformation.

Box 11. JICA's Technical Cooperation in Urban and Regional Development

Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), as the executing agency for Japan's Official Development Assistance (ODA), serves as a crucial partner in supporting developing countries. Its mission is to address global issues, promote human security, and achieve quality growth in line with the Development Cooperation Charter. The agency's integrated approach utilizes various assistance schemes, including technical cooperation, ODA loans, and grant aid, to meet the diverse needs of partner nations. A core aspect of JICA's work involves providing technical and financial support for urban and regional development, which it recognizes as a key driver of national economic progress. This support includes formulating urban master plans, improving legal systems, and strengthening urban management capacity through the use of geospatial information and other modern technologies. By fostering a virtuous circle of economic growth and poverty reduction, JICA aims to make urban centers more inclusive and dynamic. In this way, its work in providing technical assistance for integrated urban planning directly contributes to achieving SDG 11, specifically target 11.c, which calls for providing financial and technical assistance to least developed countries for sustainable and resilient buildings using local materials. This approach also aligns with the NUA's commitment to promote integrated and people-centered urban and territorial development.



Photo Credit: ESCAP / Yan Shen

2.4 Updates on National Progress Reports (NPRs) on the Implementation of the NUA

At the Forum, UN-Habitat provided global, regional, and national updates on the progress of the implementation of the NUA. This year marks the halfway point since the adoption of the NUA at Habitat III in Quito in 2016 and presents a strategic opportunity to accelerate implementation in the lead-up to 2030.

The NUA serves as the principal global framework for sustainable urbanization, linking urban transformation with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement, and the Sendai Framework for DfRR. Discussions at the Forum emphasized the need to integrate NUA implementation with these global agendas to advance inclusive, climate-resilient, and sustainable urbanization pathways.

Asia and the Pacific – home to over sixty per cent of the world’s population⁹ – was recognized as having a decisive role in shaping the global urban agenda. The region’s pace and diversity of urbanization position it as both a driver of global urban trends and a critical test bed for innovative and scalable solutions.



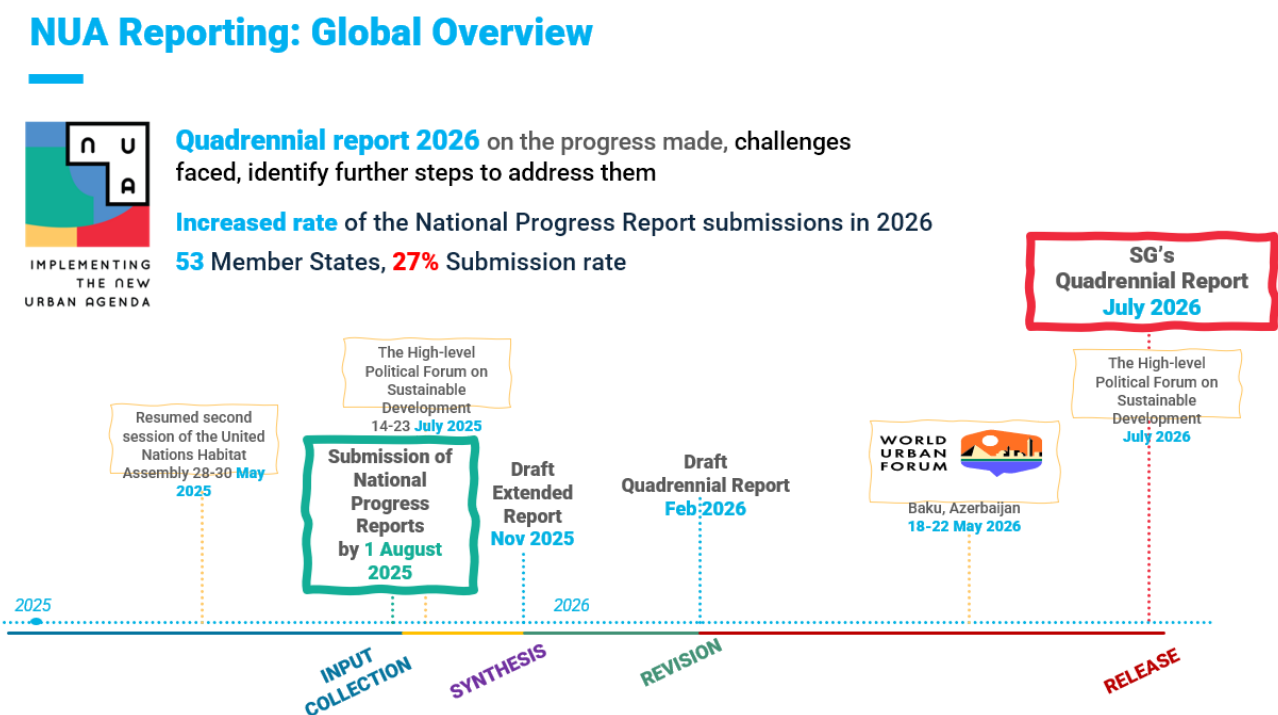
Photo Credit: ESCAP / Yan Shen

⁹ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. *Asia-Pacific Population and Development Report 2023*. Bangkok: United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ST/ESCAP/3112), 2023.

2.4.1 2026 Global Progress and Midterm Review of the NUA

UN-Habitat is spearheading preparatory work for the [2026 Quadrennial Report](#) - a pivotal “Quito +10” midterm review of the NUA. The Report will provide a comprehensive overview of progress, challenges, and future directions for the NUA. The review process includes synthesis, revision, and release phases, with the draft report scheduled for February 2026, clearance by May 2026, and final publication in July 2026.

Figure 3. NUA timeline for 2026 United Nations Secretary-General's Quadrennial Report



To support Member States in this cycle, UN-Habitat released [revised guidelines](#) in 2024, which simplify reporting procedures, integrates data from voluntary national and local SDG reviews, and propose clear indicators drawn from the [Global Urban Monitoring Framework](#). Guided by the [Quadrennial Report recommendations from 2022](#) - including strengthening mainstreaming, enhancing evidence-based guidance, integrating housing, leveraging COVID-19 lessons, protecting ecosystems, supporting post-disaster contexts, and bolstering multilevel governance - UN-Habitat's 2026 midterm review aims to assess their implementation status.

Between 2022 and 2025, the implementation of the NUA has seen notable progress. The second Quadrennial Report in 2022¹⁰ recorded 40 NPRs globally which represented 21 per cent of the countries, with contributions from countries like Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, and Malaysia with their first report. As of August 2025, 53 Member States are expected to submit NPRs,

¹⁰ United Nations Secretary-General. *Progress in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda (A/76/639-E/2022/10)*. United Nations General Assembly, 7 March 2022.

representing a 27 per cent submission rate. This includes efforts to promote inclusive, sustainable, and resilient urban development through comprehensive urban planning, climate resilience strategies, and the integration of social inclusion into urban governance. The 2024 update of NPRs highlights key achievements such as improvements in housing policies, increased investments in sustainable infrastructure, and efforts to reduce urban inequality.

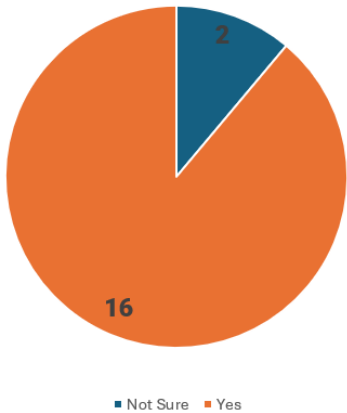
However, significant challenges remain, particularly in addressing urban poverty, informal settlements, and the impacts of climate change on vulnerable urban populations. Looking towards the UN Secretary-General's Quadrennial Report on the Implementation of the NUA, there is a clear need for enhanced collaboration between governments, civil society, and the private sector to accelerate progress on urban sustainability goals. Efforts to strengthen data collection, monitoring mechanisms, and reporting processes will be critical in providing a comprehensive assessment of global progress and identifying gaps that need urgent attention.

2.4.2 Asia-Pacific Contributions to the 2026 Midterm Review

In the perception survey that was undertaken before the Forum for the Asia-Pacific region, there were some interesting points to consider for further follow-up and review process moving ahead. When asked whether the partners were contributing to the implementation of the NUA, 89 per cent of the respondent replied positively, however they sought more guidance to help support their implementation actions.

Figure 4. Survey result on assessing contributions to the NUA

C3. Are you contributing to the implementation of the New Urban Agenda (NUA)?



- **89% of respondents** see themselves contributing to NUA implementation
- NUA is a **common reference point** yet some still seek clearer guidance

In the Asia-Pacific, UN-Habitat is co-leading efforts to progress regional contributions: efforts include a [National Urban Policy: Asia-Pacific Report](#), which surveys and evaluates policy developments across the region. Asia-Pacific countries have made notable contributions to the NUA midterm review through detailed national reports and regional platforms. Countries like Indonesia, Japan, Lao People's Democratic Republic and the Republic of Korea have submitted or are preparing their second NPRs, showcasing progress in areas such as slum upgrading, smart city development, and climate resilience.

For instance, Indonesia reported an increase in green space per capita from 22.6 m² in 2020 to 35.8 m² in 2024, alongside expanded smart city programs in 251 cities. Lao People's Democratic Republic highlighted rapid urbanization and climate vulnerability, calling for stronger digital infrastructure and inclusive planning. These reports reflect a shift from issue-based reporting to systems-level integration, with growing use of geospatial tools, climate-tagged budgets, and participatory governance mechanisms.

To go further, the Philippines and Lao PDR both demonstrated strong alignment with the NUA commitments and the priorities identified in the stakeholder survey. The Philippines showcased its Philippine New Urban Agenda (PNUA), operationalized through frameworks like the National Urban Development and Housing Framework and flagship programs such as PLANADO (digital urban planning) and 4PH (affordable housing), directly addressing NUA's commitments on social inclusion, urban prosperity, and environmental resilience. Lao People's Democratic Republic, meanwhile, is advancing a National Smart City Strategy, a Green City Action Plan for Vientiane, and digital platforms like VirGo for urban management, focusing on climate resilience, digital transformation, and inclusive urban planning reflecting NUA's transformative commitments.

In addition, regional processes like the ESCAP commissions and urban forums continue to serve as spaces for dialogue. For example, the [81st ESCAP Commission Session](#) brought leaders together to explore how inclusive urban growth can drive the region's sustainable urban development agenda. Given projected urban growth and its pivotal role in global urbanization, these engagements are particularly significant. ESCAP has also provided direct technical support to countries advancing the NUA, such as Cambodia and Lao People's Democratic Republic, particularly in the area of smart cities. This support has included capacity-building workshops, guidance on digital governance, and pilot projects to help local authorities integrate smart city concepts into urban planning. By facilitating knowledge exchange and offering tailored assistance, ESCAP has helped these countries strengthen their urban policies and reporting, ensuring that regional priorities are reflected in national implementation efforts.

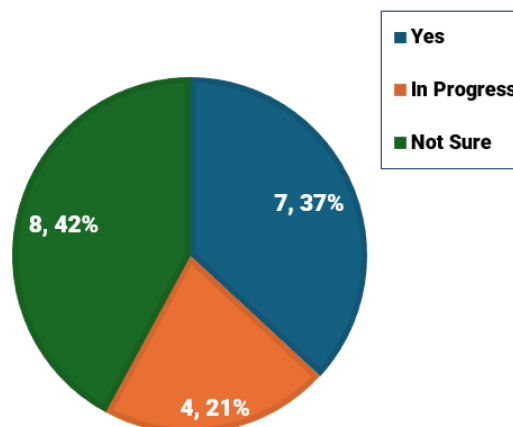
2.4.3 Capacity Development & Mobilization

UN-Habitat has supported capacity development through regional workshops, e-learning platforms, and revised reporting guidelines published in 2024. Malaysia's new [Asia-Pacific Urban Agenda Platform \(AP-UAP\)](#) functions as a regional hub, supporting voluntary reporting and facilitating learning across Member States in voluntary follow-up processes. Despite these efforts, the survey results revealed that only 37 per cent of surveyed stakeholders report having coordination mechanisms linking SDG 11, NUA, and NDCs, indicating a need for stronger institutional alignment. Key areas for support include enhancing urban governance, improving data systems, and fostering multi-level partnerships. Mobilizing resources and expertise across sectors will be critical to scaling up successful practices and addressing persistent gaps in implementation.

Figure 5. Survey result on assessment of coordination mechanisms

H4. Are there coordination mechanisms in place between national, regional, and local levels to align NDC implementation with SDG11 and the New Urban Agenda?

- Only 37% report coordination mechanisms linking NDCs, SDG 11, and NUA.
- **42% unsure, 21% in progress** → risk of fragmented implementation
- **Commitment 3 on urban rules and regulations** was most cited, highlighting importance of governance, legal frameworks, spatial planning



To maximize reporting participation and quality, UN-Habitat launched a multi-modal capacity development strategy:

Learning Series:

- An e-learning module (in English and French) plus moderated webinars on monitoring the NUA's transformative commitments.
- The initial webinar in February 2025 drew 36 participants. Further in-person and virtual sessions, including during multilevel urban forums are scheduled for 2025 to 2026.

Urban Agenda Platform Renewal:

- Revamped in May 2025, this renewed [global platform](#) offers interactive, multilingual resources, data tools, best-practice databases, training, and case studies to support reporting and implementation.

Regional Mobilization and Urban Forums:

- Multilevel urban forums serve as strategic spaces to localize the NUA, engage stakeholders, and inform NPR. A [2024 guide](#) on leveraging these forums was published to support these efforts.
- Events like the World Urban Forum in Cairo (November 2024) reinforced the NUA's relevance and encouraged broader engagement with 2026 reporting. Key lessons emerging include strengthening mainstreaming into policies, enhancing indicators, addressing housing and equity, embedding inclusion, and reframing narratives around coordination and finance.

2.4.4 Next Steps

In the lead-up to the 2026 Secretary-General's Quadrennial Report, there will be continued efforts to review and refine NPRs, incorporating feedback from regional forums, local government initiatives, and civil society organizations. Key steps include strengthening data-driven assessments, integrating climate adaptation strategies into urban development plans, and ensuring that NPRs reflect the diversity of urban experiences across countries. Moreover, ongoing capacity-building initiatives will support countries in improving their reporting mechanisms, with a special focus on those facing the most significant urban development challenges, including small island nations and low-income urban centers.

In preparation for this global milestone, UN-Habitat in partnership with regional and national stakeholders, will continue to work closely with governments to finalize their progress reports and ensure that the next Quadrennial Report serves as an accurate reflection of the global and regional journey toward achieving the transformative vision set out in the NUA.

Global-Level Actions:

- Continue synthesis of inputs from: national reports, Global Urban Monitoring Framework indicators, UN system data, regional expertise, urban best practices, and local stakeholder input - six key streams feeding into the quadrennial report.
- Ensure alignment with the 2026 SDG 11 Synthesis Report and promote synergies across reporting instruments.
- Convene a high-level midterm review during the 2026 HLPF, aligned with the UN General Assembly.

Asia-Pacific Actions:

- Promote submission of national reports; utilize AP-UAP to facilitate and regionalize reporting.
 - Organize capacity-building events regionally—webinars, forums, training clinics—to build national focal point competencies.
 - Populate regional platform with Asia-Pacific case studies, indicators, and localization examples.
- Strengthen links between regional development agendas and the NUA.

2.5 Synthesis of Thematic Discussions: Accelerating SDG 11 and the NUA in Asia and the Pacific

The RPF reaffirmed that achieving SDG 11 and advancing the NUA in Asia and the Pacific requires urgent, coordinated, and inclusive action. As the region undergoes demographic shifts, while simultaneously facing escalating climate risks and deepening inequalities, the need to move beyond fragmented project-based interventions toward systemic, long-term, and equity-driven transformations has become increasingly clear.

Throughout three days of plenary discussions, interactive panels, and breakout sessions, stakeholders from governments, cities, civil society, academia, and development partners explored six interconnected thematic areas linked to specific SDG 11 targets and the transformative commitments of the NUA. A series of cross-cutting issues emerged from these exchanges. Stakeholders noted that fragmented governance remains a major constraint to effective implementation. Persistent misalignments between national, sectoral, and local levels lead to siloed policies, duplication, and uneven progress. This is compounded by financing gaps that limit investment in inclusive housing, sustainable mobility, resilient infrastructure, and environmental protection. Many cities, particularly intermediary cities and least developed countries, face significant challenges in mobilizing the resources and accessing the international financing needed to deliver transformative urban solutions.

Stakeholders noted that fragmented governance remains a major constraint to effective implementation. Persistent misalignments between national, sectoral, and local levels lead to siloed policies, duplication, and uneven progress.

Capacity and data deficits were also identified as structural barriers. Many local governments lack the technical skills, spatial data, and monitoring systems needed to support risk-informed planning, heritage protection, climate adaptation, and basic service delivery. Participatory mechanisms such as VLRs remain unevenly institutionalized, reducing their potential to strengthen accountability and policy coherence. Stakeholders also highlighted the exclusion of marginalized groups, including informal settlers, migrants, women, youth, older persons, and persons with disabilities, from planning and decision-making processes. This exclusion limits trust, weakens accountability, and undermines the effectiveness of urban policies.

Participatory mechanisms such as VLRs remain unevenly institutionalized, reducing their potential to strengthen accountability and policy coherence.

Another core issue identified was the increasing exposure of urban communities to climate change and disasters. Intensifying environmental degradation and disaster risks are reversing hard-won development gains, exacerbating inequalities, and amplifying vulnerabilities, particularly in informal settlements, peri-urban zones, and coastal areas.

Subnational governments require adequate resources, autonomy, and accountability to lead implementation.

Participants emphasized the need to strengthen governance systems by embedding inclusive, participatory, and multi-level approaches to urban development. Subnational governments require adequate resources, autonomy, and accountability to lead implementation. Financing mechanisms must be expanded and diversified to support pro-poor housing, sustainable transport, and resilience-building initiatives. Greater investment in capacity, data, and digital tools is essential to enable local governments to plan, implement, and monitor effectively. Integrating climate adaptation, low-carbon development, and circular economy approaches across housing, mobility, planning, and infrastructure will be critical to strengthening urban resilience.

Greater investment in capacity, data, and digital tools is essential to enable local governments to plan, implement, and monitor effectively.



Photo Credit: ESCAP / Yan Shen

Regional cooperation and South–South collaboration were also identified as powerful levers for progress. By sharing knowledge, technology, and best practices, countries in the region can build collective capacity to respond to shared challenges. Special emphasis was placed on supporting least developed countries through sustained capacity-building and the use of locally sourced, sustainable building materials and construction methods suited to their contexts.

The discussions also demonstrated that many of the tools and solutions needed to overcome these barriers are already being deployed. Cities and countries are advancing practical innovations such as VLRs, SDG 11 National Roadmaps, SDG Centers, nature-based solutions, and clean energy transitions. These approaches illustrate how data-driven governance, participatory planning, and climate-smart design can drive progress at scale. Regional leadership and local innovation are also generating valuable lessons with global relevance.

Tools & Innovations Driving Progress

Stakeholders emphasized that a range of **tools and innovations are already helping cities and countries accelerate progress on SDG 11 and the NUA**, particularly in addressing governance gaps, strengthening data systems, and advancing climate-responsive solutions.

- **Voluntary Local and Subnational Reviews (VLRs/VSRs)** are expanding rapidly and proving valuable for localizing the SDGs, strengthening policy coherence, and improving data availability at the city and subnational levels.
- **National SDG 11 Roadmaps** provide structured approaches to governance, stakeholder engagement, data mapping, progress assessment, and monitoring. ESCAP's **six-step National Roadmap Methodology** supports countries from governance set-up through to monitoring and review. Malaysia's National Roadmap for SDG 11 is the first such initiative in the region, demonstrating how national frameworks can accelerate local action and coherence.
- **City-level innovations** are showcasing practical pathways forward. These include SDG centers that institutionalize monitoring, the **15-minute city model** to strengthen accessibility and livability, **nature-based solutions** for resilience and climate adaptation, and **clean energy transitions** that reduce emissions and improve air quality.

Together, these tools and innovations illustrate how **data-driven governance, participatory planning, and climate-smart urban design** can overcome persistent barriers of fragmentation, financing, capacity, and inclusion. Scaling them across the region will be critical for advancing SDG 11 targets and the transformative commitments of the NUA.

Asia and the Pacific is demonstrating transformative solutions for sustainable urban development that have clear global significance. Regional inputs to the 2026 global review of SDG 11 will highlight how scaling resilience, sustainable mobility, inclusive housing, and governance innovation can drive progress globally. At the same time, the region requires stronger financing, more robust data ecosystems, and effective multi-level governance to fully realize its potential.

By aligning regional action with SDG 11 targets and the transformative commitments of the NUA, countries in Asia and the Pacific can accelerate the transition to cities that are inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable. In doing so, they can help ensure that no one and no place is left behind, while contributing meaningfully to the global urban agenda.

Strategic Messages for the Global Review

- Asia-Pacific houses 60 percent of the global population and will account for the majority of new urban residents by 2050, making progress on SDG 11 central to global success.
- Resilience must be prioritized, as disaster-related regression and climate-induced displacement are reversing hard-won development gains.
- Financing, governance, and data systems are critical enablers for accelerating progress, particularly for smaller and intermediary cities.
- Local leadership and innovation are mobilizing momentum, but stronger national frameworks and international cooperation are essential to scale solutions.
- Regional success stories must be amplified to balance the crisis narrative with evidence of replicable, scalable pathways to inclusive and climate-resilient urbanization.

Contribution to Global SDG 11 Profile and Synthesis

Asia-Pacific inputs should emphasize:

- Scaling urban resilience and disaster risk reduction, linking urban action to the Sendai Framework and climate adaptation agendas.
- Expanding sustainable mobility and inclusive housing as foundational investments for equity, productivity, and emissions reduction.
- Strengthening multi-level governance, data ecosystems, and financing mechanisms to enable evidence-based planning and investment.
- Mainstreaming urban-climate linkages, aligning SDG 11 with the NUA, Nationally Determined Contributions and circular economy pathways.
- Showcasing replicable good practices and innovations such as Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs), blue-green infrastructure, nature-based solutions, 15-minute city models, and SDG 11 National Roadmaps.
- Elevating the role of city networks and subnational leadership to drive action and inform global processes.

Key Message

Asia-Pacific is at the forefront of the global urban transition. Cities in the region are driving innovation in resilience, mobility, housing, circular economy, and governance, offering scalable solutions with global relevance. However, without accelerated investment in financing, data, and equity, progress will remain uneven. The global synthesis should reflect both the disparities and the transformative leadership emerging from Asia-Pacific, positioning the region as a driver of innovation and resilience in the global urban agenda.

3. Eighth Session of the Asia-Pacific Urban Forum Follow-up Progress Update

For the past three decades, APUF has served as the region's leading platform for discussions on sustainable urban development. The [8th Asia-Pacific Urban Forum](#) (APUF-8) took place from 23 to 25 October 2023 in Suwon, Republic of Korea, bringing together a wide range of stakeholders to address the multifaceted crises affecting cities across Asia and the Pacific. During the forum, ESCAP and UN-Habitat released the joint publication [Crisis Resilient Urban Futures: The Future of Asian & Pacific Cities 2023](#), offering policy recommendations aimed at fostering sustainable recovery from these crises. Two years after the Forum took place, the stakeholders survey affirmed that the challenges, priority areas and policy recommendations are still relevant to today's situation. The four pillars from the publication reflected that the participants' work were in strong alignment.

[Sessions at APUF-8](#) provided valuable insights from urban experts, government leaders, and key stakeholder groups, drawing on real-world experiences in resilience-building, urban transformation, and innovative solutions to support the NUA and the SDGs. A notable feature of the forum was a High-Level Ministerial session, which led to the adoption of the [High-Level Communique for Sustainable Urban Development in Asia-Pacific](#). This document outlined key priority actions, established collaborative partnerships, and made recommendations for continued follow-up and review, signaling a strong commitment to advancing sustainable urban development in the region.

The following are progresses that have been made after APUF-8 and explain the buildup to the momentum towards the next APUF-9.

3.1 Asia-Pacific Localization Partnership for Sustainable Cities

The [Penang Platform for Sustainable Urbanization](#) was first launched at the Seventh Asia-Pacific Urban Forum (APUF-7) in 2019 and was renamed the [Asia-Pacific Localization Partnership for Sustainable Cities \(APLP-CITIES\)](#) in 2024. APLP-CITIES is a collaborative and inclusive platform comprising 18 member organizations, designed to leverage the expertise and capacities of leading urban development agencies to assist local, state, and national governments in implementing sustainable urbanization initiatives. The platform focuses on supporting the localization of the Sustainable Development Goals and the NUA through tailored technical assistance, capacity building, and advocacy. Additionally, APLP-CITIES promotes research and policy reporting on localization, fostering evidence-based discussions at urban forums that center on advancing sustainable urban development in Asia-Pacific cities.

Since adopting its new identity in 2024, APLP-CITIES has been guided by co-chairs from Urbanice Malaysia and ICLEI, who oversee various strategic activities. Notable recent undertakings include the [Second Local and Regional Government Assembly](#) in Bangkok held in February 2025, which focused on enhancing multilevel collaboration for SDG localization and ran concurrently with the [12th Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development](#) (APFSD12). During this gathering, APLP-CITIES' coordinating

bodies officially endorsed the assembly's [final statement](#), reinforcing commitments to sustainable urban partnerships. Other significant events comprise the launch of the [Asia-Pacific SDG Localization Platform](#) at the [8th session of the Committee on Environment and Development](#) in 2024 and a dedicated session organized by APLP-CITIES at the [81st Commission Session](#) held in April 2025. These initiatives emphasize the platform's vital role in advancing urban sustainability and supporting cities throughout the Asia-Pacific region.

3.2 Twelfth Session of the World Urban Forum

At the [12th World Urban Forum](#) held from 4 to 8 November 2024 in Cairo, Egypt, ESCAP co-organized a One UN event titled [“Reforging Post-Pandemic Pathways to Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific; Commitments from the Eighth Asia-Pacific Urban Forum”](#) alongside Suwon City. The event shared key outcomes from APUF-8 and fostered ongoing dialogues among multi-stakeholder members of the APLP-CITIES and others. It aimed to strengthen collaboration and collective action to address the complex challenges of sustainable urbanization in Asia and the Pacific by implementing recommendations from the [APUF-8 High-Level Communique](#). Bringing together committed partners, the event facilitated knowledge sharing, showcased best practices, and identified innovative solutions. Its core objective was to disseminate the outcomes and commitments from APUF-8 to a wider audience and engage member states and urban development partners on implementing key recommendations. This gathering generated momentum for collective regional efforts to advance sustainable urban development in preparation for the forthcoming APUF-9 in 2027.

Beyond this event, ESCAP actively participated in multiple other sessions at the 12th World Urban Forum, emphasizing critical aspects of sustainable urban development. ESCAP's involvement facilitated strategic discussions on multi-sectoral collaboration, financing urban infrastructure, advancing circular economy transitions, and supporting localization of the Sustainable Development Goals. By engaging with partner organizations, governments, and local authorities, ESCAP contributed to broadening the impact of the Forum's outcomes. This comprehensive participation confirmed ESCAP's commitment to shaping urban policy dialogues and fostering effective solutions to global urbanization challenges in the Asia-Pacific region.

3.3 Eighth Session of the Committee on Environment and Development

At the [CED-8](#) which was held in Bangkok from 16 to 18 October 2024, the Member States had the opportunity to be briefed about the outcomes of APUF-8. The Committee approved [Decision 5](#) and noted the key role of the Asia-Pacific Urban Forum in facilitating cooperation on sustainable urban development in the region with the involvement of multi-stakeholders and invites members and associate members of ESCAP to consider submitting a proposal to host the Ninth Asia-Pacific Urban Forum, to be held in 2027.

The *Agenda item 2: Pursuing sustainable urban development to address regional environment and development crises*, provided the opportunity to present regional environmental and development challenges. Member States were informed that rapid urbanization and shifting consumption patterns in Asia and the Pacific have led to housing shortages, inadequate services, environmental degradation, and growing social inequalities. The secretariat emphasizes localization as a critical strategy for translating global agendas into local action, proposing integrated urban planning, nature-based solutions, and regional cooperation. It also identifies areas for regional support and highlights pioneering efforts to accelerate sustainable urban development and environmental protection.

3.4 Eighty-first Session of ESCAP and Resolution 81/2

The Eighty-first session of the ESCAP was held from 21 to 25 April 2025 in Bangkok, Thailand. The theme study, "[*Regional Cooperation for Resilient and Sustainable Urban Development in Asia and the Pacific*](#)," highlighted the region's rapid urbanization and demographic shifts, which presents both opportunities and challenges, including housing shortages, climate vulnerability, and social inequality. Cities are urged to adopt climate-resilient, inclusive, and people-centric development strategies, supported by smart governance and regional cooperation. The report emphasized the importance of digital innovation, green infrastructure, and circular economy principles to enhance urban resilience and sustainability. It also calls for empowering local governments through decentralization and participatory planning to better address local needs. Regional collaboration and alignment with global frameworks like the SDGs and the NUA are seen as essential for achieving equitable and sustainable urban futures.

A high-level thematic roundtable highlighted the role of innovation, equity, and community participation in advancing sustainable urban transformation. During the deliberations, local government representatives emphasized the value of VLRs for aligning planning with global goals, while the private sector stressed the importance of small and medium-sized enterprises in green infrastructure, digital innovation, and circular economy models. Civil society representatives called for stronger collaboration between governments and marginalized communities, particularly women, persons with disabilities, and informal workers, to ensure inclusive housing and services. The Commission also adopted [*Resolution 81/2*](#), noting the summary of the theme study on regional cooperation for sustainable urban development, and called for further action and reporting on progress at the eighty-fourth session. The resolution was sponsored by Malaysia and co-sponsored by several countries, including Bangladesh, China, and the United Kingdom.

4. Priorities Towards the Ninth Session of the Asia-Pacific Urban Forum (APUF-9)

The Ninth Asia-Pacific Urban Forum (APUF-9), to be held in Yokohama, Japan, in 2027, will provide an important platform for advancing regional urban cooperation and aligning the urban transformation agenda with the 2030 Agenda and the NUA. Building on the outcomes of APUF-8 and the deliberations of the 2025 RPF, APUF-9 is envisioned as both a stock-taking platform and a forward-looking catalyst to accelerate progress on SDG 11 through integrated, inclusive, and climate-responsive solutions that drive synergistic and scalable change.



Photo Credit: ESCAP / Yan Shen

Discussions at the Forum validated and confirmed five thematic areas and four cross-cutting regional trends to guide the agenda of APUF-9. These thematic areas reflect the region's strategic priorities for advancing sustainable urban development: (i) urban planning, settlements and housing; (ii) climate action and urban resilience; (iii) smart cities and digital transformation; (iv) circular economy and urban resource management; and (v) innovative finance for local governments.

The thematic priorities are reinforced by four cross-cutting regional trends, including demographic transitions, climate change, resource scarcity, and digital innovation, which are particularly influential in shaping the urban agenda. These trends provide a strategic lens to ensure thematic discussions are regionally relevant, grounded in current urban realities, and positioned to build systemic, multi-level responses that connect global commitments with local action.

Through a message from the Mayor, Yokohama City reaffirmed its commitment to convening an inclusive and impactful Forum, inviting partners across government, civil society, academia, and the private sector to shape a bold, forward-looking regional agenda for sustainable urban development.

4.1 Urban Planning, Settlements and Housing

Urban planning, settlements, and housing emerged as a core thematic priority for accelerating sustainable urban development in Asia and the Pacific. Discussions during the 2025 RPF highlighted the centrality of inclusive, climate-adaptive, and age-sensitive planning in shaping equitable and resilient cities. Participants emphasized that housing is not merely a shelter outcome, but a strategic entry point for advancing climate action, social inclusion, and local economic development.



Photo Credit: ESCAP / Yan Shen

Integrating Climate-Responsive Design and Materials

Examples from Indonesia, Cambodia, and India showcased how passive cooling techniques and vernacular construction materials are being integrated into housing strategies to increase resilience and affordability in informal settlements. These innovations include:

- Passive design elements that improve indoor thermal comfort and reduce energy consumption.
- Use of bamboo and compressed stabilized earth blocks (CSEB) as sustainable and affordable building materials.
- Modular and incremental construction approaches that enable communities to build and upgrade over time.

These approaches demonstrate how context-appropriate design and materials can make climate resilience more accessible to low-income populations while lowering long-term costs.

Empowering Communities through Housing

A community-led bamboo housing initiative in Jeetpur Simara Sub-Metropolitan City, Nepal demonstrated how housing can act as a catalyst for social transformation. The project empowered marginalized communities by combining:

- Participatory governance processes that involved residents in design and decision-making.
- Gender-inclusive approaches that supported women's leadership in housing and upgrading activities.
- Land tenure security mechanisms that enabled long-term investment and improved living conditions.

This experience illustrates how housing interventions can strengthen community agency and resilience, supporting broader urban development goals.

Responding to Demographic Shifts and Social Needs

Demographic transitions were identified as key drivers shaping future housing demand across the Asia and the Pacific region. Cities are experiencing rapid urbanization and the expansion of informal settlements, growing youth populations that increase demand for affordable housing connected to jobs and services, and population ageing that requires universal design, accessibility, and care infrastructure. These dynamics call for integrated housing strategies that support intergenerational living, improve mobility access, and adapt to changing household structures. Rapidly urbanizing secondary cities were highlighted as critical entry points where well-designed housing and urban planning interventions can generate transformative impact.

Strengthening Multi-Level Governance

Forum participants emphasized the importance of multi-level governance frameworks that align national housing policy, local planning, and community action to deliver more effective and equitable housing solutions. National policies play a key role in providing enabling regulatory and financing frameworks. Local planning integrates housing with mobility, health, water and sanitation, and green infrastructure to address interconnected urban needs. Community participation ensures that solutions are grounded in local realities and respond to the needs of residents. Such coordinated governance strengthens equity, scalability, and climate resilience in housing strategies.

Urban Planning, Settlements, and Housing as a Strategic Anchor

Urban planning, settlements, and housing serve as a strategic anchor for climate adaptation, social inclusion, and economic empowerment in cities across the Asia-Pacific region. Embedding climate-smart design, community empowerment, and governance innovation into housing systems was identified as a critical pathway to advance SDG 11 and the NUA.

Strategic Directions for APUF-9

To advance regional dialogue on urban planning, housing, and settlements, APUF-9 can provide a platform to explore the following sub-topics:

- Policy frameworks for climate-adaptive and inclusive housing that integrate environmental design, social inclusion, and land governance.
- Toolkits and design libraries for climate-resilient housing typologies tailored to informal and low-income communities.
- Scaling models for community land trusts and tenure security adapted to diverse governance and legal contexts.
- Intergenerational housing solutions linked to health, mobility, and social protection systems.
- Strengthening subnational implementation capacity through fiscal decentralization, regulatory reforms, and community-government partnerships.

4.2 Climate Action and Urban Resilience

Climate action and urban resilience emerged as a central theme, reflecting the region's heightened exposure to climate-induced risks and the urgent need to embed resilience into urban systems. Discussions highlighted that achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and the NUA depends on cities' ability to adapt to rising climate pressures, reduce emissions, and safeguard communities, infrastructure, and ecosystems.



Photo Credit: ESCAP / Yan Shen

Strengthening Global and Regional Commitments

A key reference point during the discussions was the Multisectoral Actions Pathways Declaration for Resilient and Healthy Cities, launched at COP 29 in Baku, Azerbaijan. The Declaration seeks to mainstream climate resilience into urban planning and infrastructure development through several action areas: integrating DRR and adaptation into land use and infrastructure planning; strengthening early warning systems and emergency response mechanisms; promoting low-emission development through energy-efficient building design; and expanding the scope of climate action to include nature, health, urban agriculture, and technology-enabled solutions.

This global framework provides a common foundation for aligning national and local climate action in the Asia-Pacific region and can serve as a reference point for coordinated regional efforts on urban climate resilience.

Localized Climate Adaptation and Green Infrastructure

The **Penang Nature Climate Adaptation Plan (PNBCAP)** in **Malaysia** was highlighted as a leading example of urban adaptation. The plan integrates:

- Tree-lined streets, green roofs, and canal retrofits to reduce urban heat island effects and improve stormwater management.
- Urban cooling strategies that help reduce ambient temperatures by up to several degrees Celsius in target zones.
- Infrastructure measures designed to deliver co-benefits for biodiversity, air quality, and public health.

The North Seafront Living Shoreline Project in Penang further illustrates how green and blue infrastructure can restore coastal ecosystems, strengthen natural buffers, and provide new public spaces.

Low-Carbon Urban Development and Innovation

The experience of Shenzhen, China, demonstrated the potential of low-carbon urban development models to drive both mitigation and resilience. Shenzhen's approach includes:

- City-wide integration of electric mobility, supported by an extensive charging network.
- Green infrastructure embedded in urban redevelopment projects.
- Smart planning tools and pilot zones that function as living laboratories to test, monitor, and scale climate solutions.
- Knowledge-sharing platforms, such as the city's International Low Carbon Forum, which support peer learning and replication of successful models.

These efforts show how cities can accelerate transition toward net-zero pathways while strengthening local resilience.

Standardizing Nature-Based Solutions and Data Systems

Participants called for scaling up climate adaptation through standardized nature-based solution (NBS) metrics, improved urban climate data systems, and regional cooperation. Key priorities identified included:

- Establishing common design standards and performance metrics for NBS that cities can adopt and adapt.

- Investing in data-driven risk mapping to identify climate hotspots and prioritize adaptation investments.
- Developing regional knowledge platforms to share lessons learned and support replication across diverse urban contexts.
- Expanding access to climate and disaster-risk finance to enable city-level implementation.

Coordinated Multi-Level Climate Action

Participants emphasized the need to strengthen multi-level climate action and urban resilience through enhanced coordination among national, subnational, and local governments, in partnership with civil society and the private sector. The discussions highlighted that effective climate action requires national policies to provide clear regulatory and financial frameworks, while city-level initiatives drive localized innovation and implementation. Community participation is essential to ensure that solutions are equitable, inclusive, and adapted to local contexts. Participants also emphasized the role of regional cooperation in supporting knowledge exchange, replication, and scaling of successful approaches across cities and countries.

Climate Action as a Core Urban Development Priority

Forum participants emphasized that climate change is not an isolated environmental concern but a systemic urban development challenge that affects infrastructure, housing, mobility, and service delivery. Embedding resilience into urban planning, infrastructure investment, and governance was identified as essential to safeguard lives, livelihoods, and ecosystems.

Strategic Directions for APUF-9

To advance climate action and urban resilience, APUF-9 can provide a platform to explore the following sub-topics:

- Ways to strengthen policy coherence between national climate strategies, local adaptation plans, and urban development frameworks.
- Development and application of regional standards and toolkits for the design, implementation, and monitoring of nature-based solutions in cities.
- Climate finance pathways to improve city access to adaptation and mitigation funding.
- The role of pilot zones and living labs in testing and scaling innovative climate solutions.
- Building regional data ecosystems for risk assessment, monitoring, and impact measurement to inform policy and investment decisions.

4.3 Smart Cities and Digital Transformation

Smart cities and digital transformation emerged as critical enablers of inclusive, efficient, and responsive urban governance. The discussions emphasized that digital innovation should not be an end in itself but a tool to improve service delivery, strengthen accountability, and ensure that no one is left behind in the urban transition. Across the region, cities are increasingly leveraging data systems, artificial intelligence (AI), and participatory digital tools to address complex urban challenges while building more transparent and people-centered governance systems.



Photo Credit: ESCAP / Yan Shen

Digital Tools for Responsive Urban Services

An illustrative case from Nakhon Si Thammarat, Thailand, showcased how simple, low-cost digital tools can enable real-time citizen engagement and urban service delivery. A mobile application was developed to crowdsource flooding data, allowing citizens to:

- Submit geotagged photos of clogged waterways and flooded streets.
- Feed data directly into AI and GIS systems, which automatically identified drainage hotspots.
- Enable municipal authorities to prioritize maintenance, allocate resources more efficiently, and track response times.

This initiative reduced flooding in vulnerable neighborhoods, improved urban service delivery, and introduced a staff incentive system that rewarded municipal teams based on performance metrics.

National Smart City Strategies and Integrated Urban Systems

The experience of Lao People's Democratic Republic demonstrated how the draft national smart city strategy can serve as a framework to align urban development, digital governance, and infrastructure investment. The strategy:

- Integrates land use, transport, infrastructure, and environmental planning under a unified urban operating system.
- Is structured around six thematic pillars, including smart governance, smart environment, smart economy, smart mobility, smart people, and smart living.
- Emphasizes multi-level governance, ensuring policy coherence between national agencies, cities, and communities.
- Lays the foundation for interoperable data systems that support evidence-based decision-making.

This integrated approach highlights how national strategies can **set standards and frameworks** while enabling local innovation and adaptation.

Inclusion, Trust, and Ethical AI

Speakers identified digital inclusion, trust, and ethics as critical cross-cutting considerations in smart city implementation. As digital infrastructure expands, cities must address:

- Bridging the digital divide, ensuring equitable access to technology for women, youth, persons with disabilities, and marginalized groups.
- Developing regulatory frameworks to safeguard privacy, enhance data governance, and build citizen trust.
- Institutionalizing gender-responsive digital audits, such as women’s safety mapping, to ensure that digital innovation supports social inclusion and safety.
- Embedding ethical AI frameworks that guide deployment of technology in public services and urban management.

Data-Driven Decision-Making and Partnerships

The theme was reframed to emphasize “people-centered smart cities”, shifting the focus from technology deployment to strategic governance and inclusive urban transformation. Key elements of this reframing include:

- Promoting public-private partnerships to develop scalable, affordable, and interoperable solutions.
- Building municipal capacity to collect, manage, and analyze data effectively.
- Strengthening open data ecosystems to foster transparency and citizen engagement.
- Creating regional standards and shared digital infrastructure to support city-to-city learning and interoperability.

Smart Cities for People-Centered Urban Transformation

Forum participants emphasized that smart cities in Asia and the Pacific are not only about deploying technology but about empowering people, improving public services, and strengthening trust between

governments and citizens. They highlighted the importance of inclusive governance, ethical digital transformation, and interoperable data systems as essential foundations for digital innovation that is equitable and sustainable.

Strategic Directions for APUF-9

To advance the regional smart cities agenda, APUF-9 can provide a platform to explore the following sub-topics:

- Policy frameworks that promote people-centered and gender-inclusive digital transformation, aligning governance, technology, and inclusion.
- Digital toolkits and data governance standards to help local governments deploy scalable and context-appropriate smart city solutions.
- Regional platforms to share interoperable standards, data protocols, and regulatory good practices that support cross-border learning.
- Capacity-building initiatives for municipal and national authorities to enhance digital literacy, technical expertise, and innovation capabilities.
- Approaches to institutionalize inclusive digital practices, including gender audits, safety mapping, and participatory data collection.

4.4 Circular Economy and Urban Resource Management

Circular economy and urban resource management emerged as key strategies to address resource scarcity, environmental stress, and climate change in rapidly urbanizing cities across the Asia-Pacific region. Discussions underscored the need to shift from linear “take-make-dispose” models toward circular and regenerative urban systems that minimize waste, reduce emissions, and create green economic opportunities.



Photo Credit: ESCAP / Yan Shen

Integrated Solid Waste Management Systems

A case study from Guangzhou, China illustrated how cities can lead in advancing circular approaches through integrated waste management systems. Facing rapid urbanization and rising waste volumes, the city implemented a comprehensive program that includes:

- Waste sorting at source, supported by targeted awareness campaigns and community engagement.
- A robust recycling and materials recovery system, ensuring valuable resources are recirculated into the economy.
- Waste-to-energy facilities that process residual waste while reducing dependence on landfills.
- The deployment of smart bins and digital monitoring platforms to track collection and processing in real time.

This technology-enabled approach has significantly increased recycling rates, reduced landfill use, and improved operational efficiency, demonstrating how data-driven waste systems can strengthen circularity at the city level.

Urban Resource Transformation and Climate Co-Benefits

Discussions also explored the broader urban resource management landscape in the region, emphasizing that cities must go beyond managing waste to transforming it into a resource. Across multiple cities, circular practices are emerging, including:

- Composting and biogas generation from organic waste streams to provide renewable energy and agricultural inputs.
- Water reuse and greywater systems that reduce freshwater demand.
- Material recovery initiatives that convert construction and demolition waste into new building materials.
- Integration of urban agriculture and green infrastructure to close resource loops within cities.

These measures not only reduce pressure on landfills but also generate climate mitigation co-benefits through lower greenhouse gas emissions, improved air quality, and energy recovery.

Shifting from Linear to Circular Models

Participants highlighted that the transition to circular urban systems requires a systemic shift that addresses planning, policy, technology, and behavioral change. Key drivers identified include:

- Embedding circular economy principles into urban planning and infrastructure development.
- Aligning regulatory and fiscal frameworks to incentivize reuse, recycling, and regeneration of materials.
- Mobilizing private sector participation and investment through circular business models.

- Building institutional and technical capacities within local governments to manage circular systems effectively.

This approach links circularity directly to urban resilience, economic diversification, and environmental sustainability.

Linking Circular Economy to Climate Action

A strong link was made between circular economy practices and climate mitigation. By reducing waste, improving material efficiency, and recovering resources, cities can:

- Significantly lower greenhouse gas emissions, particularly methane from landfills.
- Reduce pressure on natural resources and lower upstream emissions associated with material extraction and transport.
- Create localized, low-carbon value chains, contributing to more sustainable urban economies.

Circular Economy for Sustainable Urban Transformation

Forum participants highlighted the circular economy as a transformative pathway for sustainable urban development, linking resource efficiency, waste reduction, and climate mitigation. Embedding circular principles into urban planning, policy, and infrastructure was identified as a key opportunity to help cities transition toward more resilient, low-carbon, and regenerative economies that support both environmental sustainability and local economic development.

Strategic Directions for APUF-9

To deepen the regional conversation on circular economy and urban resource management, APUF-9 can provide a platform to explore the following sub-topics:

- Regional approaches to circular urban roadmaps that emphasize reuse, recycling, and regenerative design.
- Policy and regulatory options to support circular procurement, extended producer responsibility, and fiscal incentives.
- The use of technology-enabled solutions, including digital waste tracking and real-time monitoring systems, to strengthen resource management.
- Capacity-building and knowledge-sharing mechanisms to help cities scale successful circular models.
- Opportunities to integrate circular economy pathways into national climate commitments and urban resilience strategies.

4.5 Innovative Finance for Local Governments

Innovative finance for local governments was identified as a critical enabler of sustainable urban transformation across the Asia-Pacific region. The discussions focused on public-private partnerships (PPPs), climate finance, and digital innovations as key pathways to unlock and scale investments for inclusive and climate-resilient urban development.



Photo Credit: ESCAP / Yan Shen

Public-Private Partnerships for Infrastructure Investment

A case from Uzbekistan showcased how PPP models can be structured to mobilize capital for large-scale urban infrastructure projects such as wastewater treatment and water supply systems. The approach is based on:

- Establishing a strong regulatory framework that clearly defines roles, responsibilities, and risk-sharing mechanisms between public and private partners.
- Ensuring transparent governance structures that provide confidence to both investors and communities.
- Facilitating blended finance solutions, combining public funding, private investment, and concessional finance to de-risk projects.
- Creating mechanisms for long-term sustainability, including tariff structures and performance-based contracts.

This model illustrates how PPP frameworks can be replicated or adapted across the region to expand financing options for cities, particularly for critical infrastructure services.

Climate Finance and Local Resource Mobilization

Discussions also examined climate finance as a key pillar for advancing sustainable urban development. An example from Thailand highlighted efforts to track climate finance flows through:

- Mapping and monitoring projects financed through local government budgets, commercial loans, and bond instruments.
- Identifying opportunities to leverage green bonds and blended finance instruments to scale investment in adaptation and mitigation.
- Strengthening systems for data collection at the local level, including household-level financing, to improve transparency and accountability.
- Building institutional capacity to access and manage climate finance effectively.

This approach reflects a growing trend toward bottom-up climate financing, where cities and municipalities play a direct role in designing, implementing, and financing climate solutions.

Digital Innovation for Financial Transparency

Speakers underscored how artificial intelligence and blockchain technologies can enhance transparency, efficiency, and accountability in urban finance. Applications discussed included:

- Blockchain-enabled platforms to track public expenditures and project progress in real time.
- AI-driven tools to strengthen financial forecasting, identify funding gaps, and improve budget allocation.
- Open financial data systems that enhance citizen trust, attract private investment, and enable better oversight.

These innovations demonstrate the potential of digital finance solutions to strengthen local governments' capacity to mobilize and manage resources effectively.

Addressing Barriers and Building Capacity

The discussions also recognized several barriers that cities face in accessing and deploying finance, including limited creditworthiness, weak fiscal autonomy, and insufficient technical capacity. Key recommendations included:

- Strengthening subnational fiscal frameworks and enabling greater decentralization of financial authority.
- Supporting capacity building for local governments to manage PPPs, blended finance, and green bonds.
- Enhancing regional cooperation and knowledge exchange to replicate successful financing models.
- Developing risk-sharing and guarantee mechanisms to de-risk investments in climate and infrastructure projects.

Innovative Finance for Sustainable Urban Development

Forum participants emphasized that securing innovative and sufficient financing is essential for cities to advance inclusive, climate-resilient, and sustainable urban development. Public–private partnerships, climate finance mechanisms, and digital financial technologies were identified as key enablers for bridging financing gaps, strengthening local governance, and accelerating progress on SDG 11.

Strategic Directions for APUF-9

To deepen regional dialogue on innovative urban finance, APUF-9 can provide a platform to explore the following sub-topics:

- Approaches for developing and adapting PPP frameworks and toolkits for local governments.
- Opportunities to expand access to green bonds, blended finance instruments, and climate funds to scale sustainable urban investments.
- The role of digital finance solutions, including blockchain and AI, in improving transparency, accountability, and efficiency in local financial systems.
- Mechanisms to establish regional financing platforms and networks that facilitate access to capital, de-risk projects, and support project implementation.
- Ways to strengthen subnational institutional capacity to plan, negotiate, and manage financing instruments for urban development.

4.6 Analysis of Cross-Cutting Regional Trends

Regional analysis presented during the Forum, including findings from the ESCAP 2025 Theme Study on Urban Transformation and the 2023 Future of Asian and Pacific Cities Report, highlighted four cross-cutting regional trends that are particularly influential in shaping APUF-9's thematic focus:

- **Demographic transitions** are reshaping cities and service demands, calling for inclusive planning that addresses the needs of youth, elderly, migrants, persons with disabilities and marginalized groups. Integrated approaches linking housing, health, education, and employment are vital to anticipate migration and population aging.
- **Climate change** continues to intensify risks across the region. Mainstreaming adaptation and mitigation into urban planning and investments supported by climate finance, nature-based solutions, and data-driven risk management, remains central to urban resilience.
- **Resource scarcity and environmental stress** are accelerating the shift from linear to circular urban systems. Cities are prioritizing reuse, recycling, and regeneration, supported by policy frameworks that promote sustainable production and consumption and strengthen transboundary resource management.

- **Artificial intelligence and digital innovation** are transforming governance and service delivery. Equitable access, capacity building, and robust regulatory frameworks are essential to ensure digital transformation is inclusive, trusted, and people-centered.

These cross-cutting trends are **key considerations across the five thematic areas** identified for APUF-9: urban planning and housing, climate action and urban resilience, smart cities and digital transformation, circular economy and resource management, and innovative finance.

Demographic transitions call for inclusive and age-sensitive urban planning and service delivery. Climate imperatives demand that resilience be integrated into infrastructure, housing, mobility, and governance systems. Resource transitions highlight the urgency of circular approaches to how cities plan, build, and manage growth. Digital transformation acts as both an enabler and disruptor, driving new models of governance, service delivery, and financing.

These cross-cutting trends are key considerations across the five thematic areas identified for APUF-9. They help deepen and sharpen thematic discussions, ensuring they are regionally relevant and grounded in the realities shaping urban development. By framing these trends strategically, APUF-9 discussions can integrated, forward-looking solutions that respond to complex and interlinked challenges across Asia and the Pacific.



Photo Credit: ESCAP / Yan Shen

Table 2. Analysis of Cross-cutting Regional Trends

Trend	Key Insights	Urban Implications
Demographic Transitions	Rapid urbanization, aging, migration, youth bulges; diverse needs for services	Inclusive, age-sensitive planning; integrated housing, health, education, employment; migration policies
Climate Change	Escalating risks, need for resilience, nature-based solutions, local action	Mainstream adaptation/mitigation; scale nature-based solutions; data-driven risk management
Resource Scarcity	Pressure on land, water, materials; waste management; circular economy opportunities	Shift to circular models; incentivize sustainable consumption/production; regional cooperation
Digital Innovation	Data-driven governance, smart city platforms, need for inclusivity and trust	People-centered digitalization; partnerships; regulatory frameworks; bridge digital divide

4.7 Partnership Commitments

Partnerships are central to the success of APUF-9, as they enable the integration of diverse expertise, resources, and perspectives across sectors and regions. Multi-stakeholder partnerships including city governments, UN agencies, academia, civil society and private sector were repeatedly highlighted as essential and instrumental in shaping thematic tracks, flagship reports, and collaborative initiatives. The Forum's discussions emphasized the need for multi-stakeholder collaboration to address complex urban challenges such as climate resilience, inclusive housing, digital transformation, and circular economy. Moreover, regional cooperation and knowledge exchange were identified as key mechanisms to support capacity building, harmonize standards, and promote context-specific solutions that reflect the diversity of Asia and the Pacific.

The APLP-CITIES represents a valuable network of potential partners to support the APUF-9 in Yokohama, Japan. The partners include local governments, city networks, development agencies, and knowledge institutions, and are well-positioned to contribute to the Forum's objectives through technical expertise, policy dialogue, and localized implementation experiences. Their involvement would enhance the Forum's focus on localizing the SDGs and fostering inclusive urban development. In

addition to APLP-CITIES members, other relevant organizations, city networks and stakeholders will also be approached to ensure broad-based support and diverse participation in APUF-9.

4.8 Milestones Going Forward

4.8.1 Seventh Session of the Pacific Urban Forum (March 2026, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea)

The 7th Pacific Urban Forum (PUF7) will take place in March 2026, in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, the Pacific's largest urban center. This milestone event marks 20 years since urbanization was formally recognized in the region through the 2005 Pacific Plan by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. Hosted by the Papua New Guinean Government and the Pacific Urban Partnership at APEC Haus, PUF7 will convene a diverse group of stakeholders, including national and local government representatives, development partners, civil society, academia, urban practitioners, and the private sector—to share innovative solutions for managing urban growth across Pacific cities and towns. The Forum is also part of Papua New Guinea's 50th Independence anniversary celebrations, adding national significance to the regional dialogue. Preceding the main event, side events will be held by Pacific Urban Partnership members, and optional site visits hosted by the National Capital District Commission will follow on 24 October 2025. Building on the momentum of PUF6 held in Suva, Fiji in 2023, PUF7 aims to deepen collaboration and knowledge exchange on sustainable urban development. The event is expected to highlight both the challenges and opportunities of rapid urbanization in the Pacific. It will also serve as a platform to align regional urban strategies with global development agendas such as the SDGs and the NUA.

4.8.2 Thirteenth Session of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (24-27 February 2026, Bangkok, Thailand)

The APFSD is an annual, inclusive intergovernmental platform that supports the regional follow-up and review of progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs. It aims to empower and assist Asia-Pacific countries, particularly least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, and small island states, in achieving the 17 SDGs by identifying regional trends and sharing best practices. The forum brings together UN bodies, member states, international organizations, civil society, and other stakeholders, whose input contributes to the global review process at the 2025 HLPF in New York.

The 13th APFSD will take place from 24 to 27 February 2025 at the United Nations Conference Center (UNCC) in Bangkok, Thailand, under the theme "Advancing sustainable, inclusive, science- and evidence-based solutions for the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs for leaving no one behind in Asia and the Pacific". In line with the focus of the 2025 HLPF, the event will assess progress on the SDGs being reviewed, including Goal 6 (water), Goal 7 (energy), Goal 9 (industry), Goal 11 (cities), and Goal 17 (partnerships). As SDG 11 will be a key topic of discussion, the Forum's outcomes will offer critical insights and inform the ongoing dialogue. Additionally, the Forum will serve as a platform for countries

preparing to present their voluntary national reviews at the 2026 HLPF and contribute to regional preparations for the Secretary-General's Third Quadrennial Report on the Implementation of the NUA.

4.8.3 Thirteenth Session of the World Urban Forum (17-22 May 2026, Baku, Azerbaijan)

The thirteenth session of the World Urban Forum (WUF13) to be held from 17 to 22 May 2026, organized by UN-Habitat, will bring together diverse urban stakeholders to address the escalating global housing crisis and emphasize the role of housing in creating safe, resilient cities and communities. The theme for WUF13 is "Housing the World: Safe and Resilient Cities and Communities." Established by the United Nations in 2001, the WUF serves as a platform to tackle the urgent challenges posed by rapid urbanization, including its impact on communities, economies, climate change, and policies. The first WUF took place in Nairobi, Kenya, in 2002, and since then, it has been hosted in various global locations. WUF13 is expected to attract thousands of participants, including representatives from national, regional, and local governments, academia, business, community organizations, urban planners, and civil society, with the Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan co-organizing the event.

4.8.4 Ninth Session of the Committee on Environment and Development (1-3 July 2026, Bangkok, Thailand)

The ninth session of the Committee on Environment and Development, organized by the United Nations ESCAP, will be held from 1 to 3 July 2026 in Bangkok, Thailand. This session will bring together key stakeholders from across the region to discuss critical environmental and developmental issues, focusing on advancing sustainable solutions to the challenges faced by Asia-Pacific countries. The Committee session will provide an important opportunity to align regional priorities and strategies, ensuring that the outcomes of APUF-9 are effectively integrated into broader regional development frameworks.

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Annex 1: List of Participants for Regional Partners Forum (26-27 August 2025)

No	Name	Position	Organization	City	Country
Country					
1	Mr. Adil Suleymanov	Counsellor	Embassy of Azerbaijan in Thailand	Bangkok	Azerbaijan
2	Mr. Elmar Mammadov	Head of Economic Cooperation Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan	Baku	Azerbaijan
3	Mr. Maciusela N. Lumelume	Acting Head of Financial Services	Suva City Council	Suva	Fiji
4	Mr. Kazuya Yamauchi	Director for Global Market Development	Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism	Tokyo	Japan
5	Mr. Noriaki Yokouchi	Director for Development Cooperation, International Affairs Bureau	City of Yokohama	Yokohama	Japan
6	Mr. Satoru Naganuma	Manager	City of Yokohama	Yokohama	Japan
7	Mr. Yuki Fujita	Urban and Regional Development Group, Infrastructure Management Department	Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)	Tokyo	Japan
8	Ms. Yoshiko Motoyama	DPR to ESCAP and Chief of International Organizations	Embassy of Japan in Thailand	Bangkok	Japan
9	Mr. Elmir Dosaliyev	Deputy Chairman of the Bishkek City Council	Bishkek City Council	Bishkek	Kyrgyzstan
10	Mr. Souksavanh Hanephom	Senior Officer	Ministry of Public Works and Transport, Laos	Vientiane	Lao, People's Democratic Republic
11	Mr. Abdul Jafer	Senior Town Planner	City Council of Penang Island	Penang	Malaysia
12	Mr. Adam Azim	Mayor of Male' City	Male City Council	Male City	Maldives
13	Mr. Ismail Sobah	Chief statistician	Male City Council	Male City	Maldives
14	Mr. Mohamed Areesh	Councilor	Male City Council	Male City	Maldives
15	Ms. Nahula Ali	Councilor	Male City Council	Male City	Maldives

16	Ms. Doljinsuren Myagmar	Senior expert in Climate change adaptation	Ministry of Environment and Climate change	Ulaanbaatar	Mongolia
17	Mr. Chandra Puri	Agriculture Development Officer at Planning Department	Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development, NTCDB	Kathmandu	Nepal
18	Mr. Jon N' Ddramei	Executive Director Operations	National Housing Corporation	Port Moresby	Papua New Guinea
19	Mr. Kobby Bomareo	Minister of Housing	Government of Papua New Guinea	Port Moresby	Papua New Guinea
20	Ms. Glenn Rose Lim	Environmental Management Specialist II	Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability Department, Quezon City Government	Quezon City	Philippines
21	Ms. Leijh Hanne Alianza	Executive Assistant III	Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development	Quezon City	Philippines
22	Ms. Mylene Rivera	Assistant Secretary	Department of Human Settlement and Urban Development	Quezon City	Philippines
23	Ms. Theresa Jane Medenilla	Division Chief	Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development	Quezon City	Philippines
24	Mr. Seon Mo Yang	Researcher	Incheon Carbon Neutrality Center (Incheon Institute)	Incheon	Republic of Korea
25	Mr. Seung Eun Lee	Director	National Agency for Administrative City Construction (NAACC)	Sejong	Republic of Korea
26	Mr. Seung-hwan Joung	Director General of Environment Bureau	Incheon Metropolitan City	Incheon	Republic of Korea
27	Mr. Sungwoo Kim	Director General	Incheon Carbon Neutrality Center	Incheon	Republic of Korea

28	Mr. Woojin Baek	person in charge	Incheon Metropolitan city	Incheon	Republic of Korea
29	Ms. Eunmi Kim	Deputy Director	National Agency for Administrative City Construction	Sejong	Republic of Korea
30	Ms. Hanna Lee	Deputy Director	National Agency for Administrative City Construction	Sejong	Republic of Korea
31	Ms. Sukhee Kim	Senior Research Fellow	Suwon Research Institute	Suwon City	Republic of Korea
32	Mr. Non Arkaraprasertkul	Senior Expert in Smart City Promotion	Digital Economy Promotion Agency of Thailand	Bangkok	Thailand
33	Mr. Yutaka Mikami	Chief Representative	The Office of the City of Yokohama Representative to Southeast and South Asia	Bangkok	Thailand
34	Ms. Atipha Vadhanaphong	Counsellor	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand	Bangkok	Thailand
35	Ms. Cataleya Phatoomros	Deputy Director-General	Department of International Organizations, MFA Thailand	Bangkok	Thailand
36	Ms. Natasha Isarabhakdi	Third Secretary	Department of International Organizations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Bangkok	Thailand
37	Ms. Sukontip Pinso	Climate and Nature Officer	British Embassy Bangkok	Bangkok	Thailand
38	Mr. Javohir Juraev	Public Private Partnership Advisor on Energy Sector	Ministry of Economy and Finance of the Republic of Uzbekistan	Tashkent	Uzbekistan
Non-Governmental Organization					
39	Ms. Jingning Liu	Analyst	iGDP	Beijing	China
40	Mr. Bharani Visweswara Kumar Emani	Deputy Secretary General	ICLEI Local Governments for Sustainability	New Delhi	India
41	Mr. Mohammad Helmi Abidin	Regional Project Manager	UCLG Asia Pacific	Jakarta	Indonesia

42	Ms. Aisa Dokmauly Tobing	Deputy Secretary General	CityNet	Jakarta Selatan	Indonesia
43	Datuk Seri Mahadi Bin Ngah	Adviser on International Cooperation	CityNet	Putrajaya	Malaysia
44	Ms. Sri Husnaini Sofjan	Senior Policy Advisor & Strategist	Huairou Commission Women, Homes & Community	Shah Alam	Malaysia
45	Ms. Enid Madarcos	Associate Director, for Urban, Land, and Policy	Habitat For Humanity International	Makati City	Philippines
46	Ms. Mia Marina	Senior Director Programs	Habitat for Humanity International	Metro Manila	Philippines
47	Ms. Lajana Manandhar	Coordinator	Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR)	Kathmandu	Nepal
Research and Training Institute					
48	Mr. Xianfeng Xu	General Manager	Guangzhou Urban Planning and Design Survey Institute	Guangzhou	China
49	Mr. Zhong Xun	Director	Guangzhou Urban Planning and Design Survey Institute	Guangzhou	China
50	Ms. Jie Wu	Director of Low Carbon & Eco-Planning Center	Guangzhou Urban Planning & Design Survey Research Institute	Guangzhou	China
51	Ms. Jieli Wu	Deputy Chief Engineer of Innovation Centre	Guangzhou Urban Planning and Design Survey Institute	Guangzhou	China
52	Ms. Erdenechimeg Eldev-Ochir	Executive Director	Asian Infrastructure Research Institute	Ulaanbaatar	Mongolia
53	Mr. Han Allan	Global Innovation Officer	UNITAR SDGs Singapore Center	Singapore	Singapore
54	Ms. Chloe Pottinger-Glass	Research Fellow	Stockholm Environment Institute	Bangkok	Thailand

Other entities

55	Mr. Dong Wang	Executive Secretary General, SHENZHEN Development Center of International Low Carbon Forum	SHENZHEN Development Center of International Low Carbon Forum	Shenzhen	China
56	Ms. Huan Zheng	Technical Advisor	Shanghai Changning Urban Renewal and Low Carbon Management Center	Shanghai	China
57	Mr. Aditya Kumar	Managing Director	Aabhat Association	Bhuj	India
58	Ms. Sonali Zol	Software Engineer/Director/UN Delegate	Sonali Zol Foundation	Pune	India
59	Ms. Bernadia Irawati Tjandradewi	Secretary General	United Cities and Local Governments Asia Pacific	Jakarta	Indonesia
60	Ms. Gracelyn Atmadja	Youth Sustainability Advocate	HiveFondasi	Jakarta	Indonesia
61	Ms. Oyunsuren Munkhsaikhan	Private consultation provider, Founder	Oyunsuren Munkhsaikhan	Ulaanbaatar	Mongolia
62	Ms. Iris Nam	Founder & Executive Lead	Sonju Project	Seoul	Republic of Korea
63	Ms. Min-kyung Kang	Research Fellow	Incheon Carbon Neutrality Center	Incheon	Republic of Korea
64	Mr. Siraphop Pinhom	Volunteer	UNV	Pathum Thani	Thailand
65	Ms. Shreema Rana	Foreign Expert	Faculty of Environment and Resource Studies, Mahidol University	Bangkok	Thailand
66	Ms. Thanida Lawseriwanich	Head of Research	Climate Finance Network Thailand	Bangkok	Thailand
Funds and Programmes					
67	Mr. Chai Ming Lau	Head of Sarawak Programme	UNDP Malaysia Country Office	Kuching	Malaysia
68	Mr. Clinton Moore	Partnership Consultant - Strengthening Urban Governance	UNDP Asia and the Pacific	Bangkok	Thailand
69	Mr. Mushtaq Memon	Regional Coordinator for Resource Efficiency in Asia-Pacific	UNEP	Bangkok	Thailand

70	Mr. Niall Delahunty	Communications & Research Intern	UNDP	Bangkok	Thailand
71	Ms. Diana Torres	Regional Governance Advisor	UNDP Asia and the Pacific	Bangkok	Thailand
UN Secretariat					
72	Mr. Shigeo Murata	Head	United Nations Centre for Regional Development	Nagoya	Japan
73	Ms. Nana Inaguma	Programme Analysis Assistant	United Nations Centre for Regional Development	Nagoya	Japan
Organizer					
74	Mr. Riccardo Mesiano	Deputy Head/Senior Economic Affairs Officer	ESCAP Subregional Office for East and Northeast Asia	Incheon	Republic of Korea
75	Ms. Sojung You	Research Assistant	ESCAP Subregional Office for East and Northeast Asia	Incheon	Republic of Korea
76	Ms. Bosi Ding	Intern	ESCAP Subregional Office for East and Northeast Asia	Shenzhen	Republic of Korea
77	Ms. Zhuoqing Gu	Intern	ESCAP Subregional Office for East and Northeast Asia	Shanghai	Republic of Korea
78	Mr. Curt Garrigan	Chief of Sustainable Urban Development Section	ESCAP Environment and Development Division	Bangkok	Thailand
79	Mr. Sanjeevani Dilanthi Singh	Economic Affairs Officer	ESCAP Environment and Development Division	Bangkok	Thailand
80	Mr. Kyungkoo Philip Kang	Economic Affairs Officer	ESCAP Environment and Development Division	Bangkok	Thailand

81	Mr. Matthew Perkins	Economic Affairs Officer	ESCAP Environment and Development Division	Bangkok	Thailand
82	Ms. Rebecca Gaen Purba	Associate Economic Affairs Officer	ESCAP Environment and Development Division	Bangkok	Thailand
83	Ms. Sirikul Suvannanetra	Administrative Assistant	ESCAP Environment and Development Division	Bangkok	Thailand
84	Ms. Kanda Rangsimawong	Research Assistant	ESCAP Environment and Development Division	Bangkok	Thailand
85	Ms. Ashita Sharma	Cities and Climate Change Technical Advisor	ESCAP Environment and Development Division	Bangkok	Thailand
86	Ms. Sara Libera Zanetti	Sustainable Urban Development Advisor	ESCAP Environment and Development Division	Bangkok	Thailand
87	Ms. Lisa Saskia Schimetat	Consultant	ESCAP Environment and Development Division	Bangkok	Thailand
88	Mr. Liam O'Connor	Individual Contractor	ESCAP Environment and Development Division	Bangkok	Thailand
89	Ms. Yan Shen	Individual Contractor	ESCAP Environment and Development Division	Bangkok	Thailand
90	Ms. Sol Jeong	Intern	ESCAP Environment and Development Division	Bangkok	Thailand
91	Mr. Oliver Paddison	Chief of Countries with Special Needs Section	ESCAP Office of the Executive Secretary	Bangkok	Thailand
92	Ms. Wei-Shiuen Ng	Economic Affairs Officer	ESCAP Transport Division	Bangkok	Thailand
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96	Mr. Tam Hoang	Sustainable Urbanisation Specialist	UN-Habitat Bangkok Programme Office	Bangkok	Thailand
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Annex 2: Report on the 5th International Forum on Low Carbon

Annex 3: ESCAP Resolution 81/2 Regional cooperation for resilient and sustainable urban development in Asia and the Pacific

Annex 4: High-Level Communique for Sustainable Urban Development in Asia-Pacific



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