

Media Update

08 October 2024

UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY-GENERAL MESSAGE

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL MESSAGE FOR WORLD POST DAY 9 October 2024

On this World Post Day, we mark a historic milestone – the 150th anniversary of the Universal Postal Union.

In times of war and peace, crises and upheaval, the international postal network has delivered -- connecting communities and upholding the fundamental right to communicate.

The UPU is also one of the earliest examples of multilateralism in action.

Global cooperation helped guarantee a single postal territory worldwide – one that leaves no one behind by delivering messages, goods, and financial services to some of the most remote places on earth.

Looking ahead, the UPU continues to leverage new technologies to provide essential services to humanity.

On this important day, let's honour and celebrate the work of the Universal Postal Union to bridge distances and unite the world.

UN-HABITAT

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STATEMENT

Statement by
Ms. Anacláudia Rossbach,
Executive Director of UN-Habitat
World Habitat Day 2024
Engaging youth to create a better urban future

This World Habitat Day, we celebrate **you – the young, the brave, and the change makers of today and tomorrow.** You are the heartbeat of our cities, the force driving us toward a better future.

As baby-boomers and Generation X pass the baton, we need millennials and Gen Z to step up and shape our world.

World Habitat Day was set up by the UN General Assembly to reflect on the state of cities and human settlements and the right to adequate housing. But today, we invite you not simply to reflect, but to ACT.

This year's theme, "Engaging youth to create a better urban future," calls on young people to lead the way in shaping a world that reflects our shared dreams. Adequate and equitable housing is not just a right – it must become a reality for all.

We live in a time of multiple crises: housing, conflict, and climate. **One billion people** are struggling in slums, and over **300 million** face the unbearable reality of homelessness.

These are not just numbers – they are young families, your friends, and your peers calling out for safety, dignity, and hope.

Sustainable urban planning and housing are the heart of our fight for a better urban future. Housing is the foundation of sustainable development – it impacts everything from poverty reduction and gender equality to climate action. And it **empowers you, the youth,** to build the future you deserve.

On this World Habitat Day, we invite **you** to engage **with us** to find solutions and ensure that the right to housing and sustainable cities and communities is our reality.

Together, we can create a world where no one is left behind.

UN-HABITAT

PRESS RELEASE

Press Release World Habitat Day 2024 "Engaging Youth to Create a Better Urban Future"

Islamabad, October 7, 2024 – UN-Habitat in collaboration with **National University of Science and Technology celebrated World Habitat Day 2024**. Under this year's theme, *Engaging Youth to Create a Better Urban Future*, the event brought together a diverse array of voices, from youth activists and government officials to urban planners and environmentalists, all united in their vision for a more sustainable and inclusive urban future.

The event began with a welcome address by Mr. Jawed Ali Khan, HPM, UN-Habitat, who emphasized that engaging young people is crucial for designing cities that are resilient, livable, and forward-thinking. Localization of SDGs and the creativity and enthusiasm of Pakistan's youth are key assets in addressing the issues of overcrowding, inadequate infrastructure, and environmental degradation that many of the country's cities face today. Dr. M. Irfan Principal & Dean, School of Civil & Environmental Engineering (SCEE) highlighted the role of academia for sustainable development and said that NUST plays a crucial role in fostering innovative solutions for urban and environmental challenges, driving research that informs policy and practice. By equipping students with sustainable skills, it prepares future leaders to tackle global issues and promote a greener, more resilient society.

The event gained momentum as **Ms. Coco Yushiana**, Country Director World Food Programme (WFP) and Acting UN Resident Coordinator for Pakistan, took the stage to speak about the **six transition areas for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**. She outlined how youth can play a pivotal role in areas like climate action, sustainable infrastructure, and green

energy. Ms. Yushiana called for the inclusion of young voices in policymaking and urban planning, emphasizing that the future of urban development in Pakistan lies in the hands of its youth. Ms. Gulmina Bilal, Chairman of NAVTTC, highlighted the role of development authorities in engaging youth to achieve the SDGs. She emphasized the need for collaboration between government and youth initiatives and explained how vocational training can equip young people with skills for urban development, particularly in sustainable construction, renewable energy, and waste management. “Youth are not just beneficiaries of urban development—they are its drivers,” she noted, asserting that Pakistan’s young population is key to achieving urban sustainability and broader SDG goals.

The keynote speaker, **Ms. Romina Khurshid Alam**, Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Climate Change, urged youth to step forward as leaders in combating climate change and urban issues. She highlighted the critical intersection between urbanization and environmental sustainability, noting that Pakistan’s cities must adapt to the challenges posed by climate change. Ms. Alam’s underscored the role that young people must play in this urgent global effort.

One of the most engaging parts of the event was the panel discussion, titled The Role of Youth in Urban Transformation. Moderated by Ms. Faiqa Aziz, the panel featured notable speakers such as Dr. Zafar Iqbal Zafar, Director General of the Capital Development Authority (CDA); Dr. Safi Ullah, Dean School of Art, Design & Architecture (SADA); and Mr. Akbar Mahmood Zaidi, Youth Activist. The discussion delved into how youth-led projects are already reshaping urban environments across Pakistan. Dr. Zafar spoke about CDA’s initiatives to engage young people in urban renewal projects. Harnessing the innovative potential of youth in Pakistan can significantly address urban challenges through education and training, mentorship, and supporting youth led initiatives through seed funding. Dr. Safi Ullah highlighted the importance of incorporating youth perspectives into academic research and urban policy. Dr. Abdul Waheed explained that there must be close collaboration between academia and government for informed decision making. Mr. Akbar highlighted that there is a need to establish committees focused on urban issues, ensuring diverse representation and leverage platforms for crowdsourcing solutions and feedback.

An exciting showcase of youth-led initiatives followed, featuring presentations from the innovative projects Ecobricks presented by Ms. Kashaf Akhtar, Eco-gen by Ms. Hafsa Syed, and Ecopulp by Ms. Aqsa Aftab. These initiatives, led

by young demonstrates practical solutions to urban issues, such as reducing plastic waste, alternate building materials, and introduction of AI for solving problems of solid waste management. The presenters shared their stories of grassroots activism and community engagement, inspiring the audience with their dedication to making cities more sustainable and livable.

The event wrapped up with an engaging Q&A session, primarily attended by youth, allowing them to interact with panelists and presenters. Questions addressed scaling youth-led projects and how government bodies can better support these initiatives. The discussion emphasized the need for platforms that enable youth participation in urban planning. As the event concluded, participants captured the day's energy in a group photo. The conversations initiated at World Habitat Day 2024 are set to foster new partnerships among government agencies, development organizations, and youth movements. This event celebrated the potential of Pakistan's youth while highlighting their critical role in shaping urban futures. By amplifying young voices and providing them with essential tools, it marked a significant step toward a more resilient and inclusive urban future for Pakistan.