



**Executive Board of the United Nations
Human Settlements Programme
Second session of 2020**

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Item 9 of the provisional agenda*

**Normative and operational activities of UN-Habitat,
including reporting on the programmatic activities of
UN-Habitat in 2020 and the implementation of
subprogrammes, flagship programmes and technical
cooperation activities**

Tenth session of the World Urban Forum

Report of the Executive Director

1. The World Urban Forum was established in 2001 by the United Nations to address one of the most pressing issues facing the world: rapid urbanization and its impact on communities, cities, economies, the environment and policymaking. Convened by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, the Forum is a high-level, open and inclusive platform for addressing the challenges of sustainable urbanization in the world's cities. As it has evolved, the Forum has covered the concerns of developed countries in addition to those of developing and least developed countries, becoming a truly global forum.
2. Promoting strong participation from stakeholders, the Forum has a convening power to mobilize a wide range of participants from local, national and regional governments, parliamentarians, civil society, older persons, women, youth, children, persons with disabilities, grass-roots groups, indigenous peoples, local communities, the private sector, foundations and philanthropic organizations, international and regional organizations, academia, professionals and other stakeholders.
3. Abu Dhabi hosted the tenth session of the World Urban Forum from 8 to 13 February 2020 under the theme "Cities of opportunities: connecting culture and innovation", four years after the adoption of the New Urban Agenda as the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), held in Quito from 17 to 20 October 2016. The New Urban Agenda highlights the way in which culture, creativity and innovation are at the centre of the global conversation about the liveability, vitality and sustainability of cities. Creativity and cultural diversity have always been key drivers of urban success and for the first time they took centre stage at a World Urban Forum, contributing to the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development (the political declaration of the Sustainable Development Goals Summit) to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
4. Abu Dhabi was the first Arab city to host a World Urban Forum and particular efforts were made to raise the profile of urban stakeholders from the region and ensure that the concerns of the region were considered at the Forum. The voice of Arab urbanism is inspiring the world with examples of inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable human settlements for all, with a strong cultural component.

* HSP/EB.2020/19.

5. The tenth session of the World Urban Forum was a resounding success, with more than 13,000 participants from 169 countries. In the six days of the session, more than 500 high-quality knowledge exchanges took place through assemblies, dialogues, round tables, special sessions, urban talks and other events and meetings organized by a variety of stakeholders.
6. The tenth session began with a call to action, which was carried throughout the week and reflected in the outcome document of the session, the Abu Dhabi Declared Actions, which brought together voluntary actions and diverse commitments made by various partners and stakeholder groups. The tenth session demonstrated to the world that cities are the solution to some of the most pressing common challenges to the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals, and also offer some of the greatest opportunities. One of the priorities of the Forum was to create an open environment where people could share with the world the best of multi-stakeholder, cross-agency and international initiatives. In the Abu Dhabi Declared Actions, participants set out key solutions and best practices for the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development,¹ in particular for the implementation of the urban elements of the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda.
7. In the coming two years, the World Urban Forum will continue to call for actions and mobilization and will track progress with regard to the Abu Dhabi Declared Actions. The goal will be to ensure that the actions to which participants in the tenth session committed themselves are realized and the most positive results possible delivered to the communities most in need of them in the run-up to the eleventh session of the Forum, to be held in Katowice, Poland, in 2022.
8. The full report of the tenth session of the World Urban Forum can be accessed at <https://unhabitat.org/2020-second-session-of-the-executive-board>.

¹ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/decade-of-action/>.