WUF10 Highlights

On Wednesday, WUF10 continued with two dialogues in the morning, followed by a series of roundtables, side events, special sessions, and workshops.

Dialogues

DIALOGUE 5: Urban Planning and Heritage Preservation - Regeneration: The first panel discussion was moderated by Dena Assaf, UN Resident Coordinator to the United Arab Emirates (UAE). UN-Habitat Executive Director Maimunah Mohd Sharif, describing her own involvement in restoration efforts in Malaysia, stressed the importance of preserving heritage sites and buildings in cities, saying “once it is lost, it will only be retrieved at great cost.”

In a keynote address, Jyoti Hosagrahar, UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, said urban regeneration is usually synonymous with reversing decline, addressing unemployment, improving poor housing, and reducing social exclusion, and urged integrating heritage conservation with urban development.

In the first panel discussion, Inés Samudio, Minister of Housing and Land Management, Panama, shared her country’s recent establishment of a Ministry of Culture and resultant restoration efforts in Panama City, emphasizing the value of creating “living museums” where local communities continue to live and work, instead of being evicted and losing the intangible wealth of their experiences. Arbjan Mzniku, Deputy Mayor of Tirana, noted that while people are “change-averse,” including them in planning processes leads to lasting and gratifying results.

Shatha Al Mulla, Ministry of Culture and Knowledge, UAE, stressed the importance of developing heritage projects as spaces of co-existence where modernity and tradition are integrated. Cameron Rashiti, Aga Khan Trust for Culture, noted the need for regeneration projects that spur social, economic, and cultural development that, in turn, supports quality of life. Milena Ivkovic, International Society of City and Regional Planners, highlighted that her organization focuses on “active adaptive” re-use of urban areas through workshops and capacity building.

Participants posed questions about: including climate and disaster risk mitigation measures when restoring sites and buildings; and balancing economic growth, tourism objectives, and the preservation of fragile ancient structures.

In the second panel, Ahmed Eiweida, World Bank, said integrating culture and people in regeneration projects was essential to attracting private investment. Similarly, Maung Maung Soe, Mayor of Yangon, noted the importance of participatory approaches to heritage conservation.

Dwinita Larasati, Indonesia Creative Cities Network, described a programme promoting innovative urban regeneration ideas through small-scale interventions in Bandung’s public spaces. Alaina Beverly, University of Chicago, noting that universities can have a transformative role in communities, described efforts to revitalize Chicago’s South Side neighborhoods by facilitating investments in local businesses and capacity-building workshops.

Donovan Rypkema, International Council on Monuments and Sites, said that, because “no government in the world will give sufficient funding to built heritage” and because civil society is unable to fill that gap, creating a strong economic case to attract private sector investment.
in urban preservation is key. Patrick Domingos Tembwa, REAL, said affordable housing was an untapped market worth USD 17 trillion globally and can be more commercially viable than upscale housing.

In discussion, panelists underlined that built heritage includes all the spaces where people live and work, as opposed to just the World Heritage Sites, and described how communities themselves can leverage financing in the urban regeneration of their neighborhoods.

**DIALOGUE 6: Partnerships and Initiatives**

**Supporting Culture and Innovation in Cities:** Jason Pomeroy, Pomeroy Studio, moderated this dialogue. In the first panel, Mukhuza Kituyi, Secretary-General, UN Conference on Trade and Development, suggested current challenges to globalization and the “fracturing of global value chains” also provide an opportunity for engagement with the local level.

Siraj Sait, Noon Centre for Equality and Diversity, described how faith-based practices and culture relating to ethical finance and customary land rights can contribute to sustainable urbanization.

Cautioning against “hype of smart innovation,” Maruxa Cardama, Partnership on Sustainable Low Carbon Transport, called for attention to cost-effective mobility innovations for millions of urban dwellers in the global South, and for greater focus on managing space, and practical applications for informal transport.

In discussion, Kituyi said the development community should recognize the economic value of creative industries. Sait stressed the need to establish a “right to culture,” including through creating communal spaces for cultural actors. Cardama identified as tasks for accelerating sustainable mobility: collecting data on informal transport; innovating to integrate informal and formal transport; and information sharing for stakeholder engagement.

Irina Ilina, Higher School of Economics University, opened the second panel with a keynote outlining the development of a “digital university” model that integrates university education into city infrastructure.

In the discussion, Vladimir Bataev, Zaz Ventures, highlighted barriers to smart city development: poor understanding of the problems facing cities; limited possibilities to pilot projects; and difficulties with bringing solutions to scale.

Tulio Vazquez López, Inter-American Housing Union, stressed the need to put citizens at the center of decision-making processes to ensure smart cities are not just more productive, but also more equitable.

Marcela Villarreal, Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), emphasized the infeasibility of feeding the projected urban population growth if future citizens consume as much meat as those in the global North do today. She called on the food industry to provide more sustainable and healthy choices to urban residents.

In the third panel, Mamou Daffe, Arterial Network, spoke of his work creating the Niger Festival for arts and music in Ségou, Mali, which has grown to attract 30,000 visitors and aims to reaffirm identity and social cohesion while improving livelihoods.

Shamoy Hajare, Radicle Global, called for good policies, alternative financing mechanisms, and entrepreneurship education to promote social entrepreneur ecosystems and economic development to “uplift people and the planet.”
Bettina Tucci Bartsiotas, UN Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, spoke of the need to build good artificial intelligence policies to leverage its potential across the economy in a socially-inclusive and ethical manner. In a discussion, Tucci Bartsiotas noted that Daffe’s festival is also a tool for channeling youth’s talent and energy, and for providing opportunities. Hajare urged integrating youth into urban design, planning and implementation, noting a need to recognize youth as implementers and not only activists.

**Roundtables**

**Children and Youth Roundtable:** Youth activist Raphael Obonyo moderated the session. In opening remarks, Douglas Ragan, UN-Habitat, said climate change was an “entry point” to talk about other issues such as equity and consumption.

In a first panel, Leah Namugerwa, Fridays for Future, circulated a petition calling the Executive Director of UN-Habitat and the Deputy Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme to declare a climate emergency. Martin Lucas Sortland Eick, Norwegian youth delegate, described his efforts to see youth “take true ownership” of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) implementation in his country. Marina Joseph, Youth for Unity and Voluntary Action, said empowering youth collectives was far more effective than empowering individuals. Erik Berg, Habitat Norway, said he hoped to see youth pressure the sports industry to become carbon neutral. Kehkashan Basu, Green Hope Foundation, called for the UN to stop organizing “tokenistic” youth summits, and instead provide youth seat at a table.

In a second panel, Katarzyna Smętek, Polish youth climate activist, said WUF11 in Katowice hopes to feature a dedicated youth hub and children and youth representation on all panels. Jennie Moore, British Columbia Institute of Technology, said reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the global North was the first step in tackling the climate crisis. Carrik Reddin, UN Major Group for Children and Youth (UNMGCY), said students in tertiary education should pressure university management to adopt climate-friendly policies. Ruxanda Renitaisco, Accenture and UNMGCY, said it was thanks to her experience organizing with UNMGCY that she created a group of over 150 young colleagues seeking to influence Accenture’s corporate sustainability policies.

Sofya Ignatenko, Moscow State Institute of International Relations, noted youth climate activism is all the more useful in Russia where state bureaucracy hinders national climate action.

Joyati Das, University of Melbourne, emphasized sections of the ‘Youth DeclarAction’ adopted at the Urban Youth Assembly that relate to youth and new technologies.

In concluding remarks, Fabrizio Hochschild Drummond, Special Adviser to the UN Secretary-General on the UN’s 75th Anniversary, said the world faces a worrisome retreat from multilateralism, and conducted a short consultation of youth views on how the UN could best move forward.

**Traditional Authorities Roundtable:** Moderated by Joan Erakit, American journalist and writer, this roundtable explored the role of traditional authorities in sustainable development.

In the first panel, Drani Stephen Izakare, Paramount Chief of the Madi people, Uganda, emphasized the value of listening to women and children, and shared his experience using traditional custodianship of land to support peacebuilding and shelter refugees. Katepu Laoi, Minister of Local Government and Agriculture, Tuvalu, noted that rural people migrating to cities do not abandon their culture but bring it with them and use it to solve issues in the city.

Ana Lucy Bengochea Martinez, Wagucha Community Practitioner Platform, shared her organization’s work in Honduras to support community resilience, and highlighted the value of linkages between traditional and national authorities. El Boukhari Ben Essayouti, Timbuktu Cultural Mission, described cultural practices designed to preserve heritage buildings in Timbuktu and the importance of traditional craftspeople in restoring them.

In discussion, panelists addressed: how millennia-old, culturally embedded traditional institutions cannot be destroyed by modern legal decisions; the need to support local-level action; and how traditional authorities and governments can have mutually beneficial relationships.
In the second panel, James Favel, Bear Clan Patrol Inc., described his work drawing on traditional clan roles to support safety and cultural restoration for indigenous communities in Winnipeg, Canada.

Fatima Mohamed El Fadol Adam, Mayor of Nyala, explained that local governments in Sudan play important social, political, and judicial roles alongside the state, including in conflict resolution.

Daniel Adumah, Mayor of Adentan, said a constitutional arrangement in Ghana where traditional leaders account for 30% of local government assembly members, has facilitated collaboration between local and traditional authorities. Abdoulaye Makhtar Diop, Chief of the Lebu people, underscoring the role of traditional leaders as guardians of values and advisers to local governments, called on UN-Habitat to interface with them directly.

Ibtissam El Hammoumi, Ministry of Urban Planning and Housing, Morocco, noted that traditional leaders play an important role in land and water management.

In discussion, the panelists and audience addressed ways to institutionalize traditional authority and underscored the important role of female traditional leaders.

Special Sessions

Affordable Housing Innovation to Foster Cities’ Culture and Diversity: Opening the session, Victor Kisob, UN-Habitat, characterized housing as a fundamental human right at the heart of UN-Habitat’s mandate. Patricia Peiró Aso, El País, moderated.

On country experiences, Hassan Shawqi Alhazmi, Ministry for Lands and Technical Affairs, Saudi Arabia, described how taking an ecosystem approach to de-risking private sector participation enabled the delivery of 120,000 affordable housing units in one year. Amina Abdi Aden, Minister of Housing, Djibouti, reported on an income-based housing support programme. Javier Jileta, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mexico, described efforts to reduce the cost of housing through digitalization and data centralization. Doris Andoni, National Housing Agency, Albania, shared experiences in accelerating housing provision through e-governance and reduced bureaucracy.

In private sector perspectives, Zachary Jones, AECOM, described how public-private collaboration helped the Bahraini government in affordable housing through creating “places where people want to live.” Mourad Limam, McKinsey & Company, identified as ways to reduce cost of housing: micro-units; co-living; and projects dedicated to artists.

Sharing views from international institutions, Sameh Wahba, World Bank, stressed the need to fix supply and demand-related market distortions, such as land development regulations and access to land and finance, before focusing on pro-poor subsidies. Joaquim Oliveira Martins, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, observed that land-use reforms and zoning regulations can raise prices. Karine de Frémont, French Development Agency, explained her agency emphasizes, inter alia, sustainable funding, rehabilitation, connectivity, and energy efficiency. Gerry Muscat, European Investment Bank, said the bank prioritizes clear access criteria for affordable housing and diverse neighborhoods, among others.

Yves-Laurent Sapoval, Ministry of Housing and Territorial Equality, France, presented a new global multi-stakeholder compact on housing for SDG 11.1 (ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services, and upgrade slums), which will start with a knowledge hub and workshops for localized solutions.