

2025 International Mayors Forum **Toyota City, Japan** **14-16 October 2025**

"Actions Today for a Resilient Future - Localizing the SDGs and Advancing the Pact for the Future"

Concept Note

I. Context

As the world continues to urbanize, the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) demands a focus on accelerating progress in cities, towns and peri-urban areas. According to the United Nations, 55% of the world's population resided in urban areas in 2018. By 2050, 68% of the world's population is projected to be urban with nearly 90% of the increase in urbanization occurring in Asia and Africa.¹

SDG localization is the process of transforming the SDGs into reality at the local level, in coherence with national development frameworks and in line with local communities' priorities. With 65% of SDG targets linked to the work and mandates of local and regional governments, localization is a pre-condition for their understanding, uptake, and achievement. The role of local and regional governments has gained prominence and visibility at the international level, recognized by Member States in General Assembly resolutions and High-level Political Forum (HLPF) political declarations², and by the Secretary-General in his report on *Our Common Agenda* and on *Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals: towards a rescue plan for people and planet*.³ Further, the Pact for the Future adopted in September 2024 underscores the importance of a New Urban Agenda to localize sustainable development (Action 6), climate change, and digital cooperation including in the context of cities. By seeking the integration of local and regional governments into the global governance framework, the Pact aims to leverage the unique position of local and regional governments in implementing and achieving the SDGs (Action 55).⁴

Furthermore, in October 2023, the Secretary General launched his Advisory Group on Local and Regional Governments to advise and advance coordination and collaboration, among the constituency of local and regional governments and the United Nations system, towards coherent actions aligned to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the New Urban Agenda.⁵ The work of this Advisory Group informed the Pact for the Future.

In the face of growing global uncertainty, localization of concrete results to achieve the SDGs in the context of vulnerability to ensure resilience has become more important than ever.⁶ Drawing on the 2023 SDG Summit and its Political Declaration, localization was identified as one of the high impact initiatives that can drive SDG progress.

In 2024, the World Urban Forum focused on Cities and Climate Action, the vulnerability of cities and urban citizens was underscored, as well as the capacity and financing gaps that cities and towns face

¹ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2019). World Urbanization Prospects 2018: Highlights (ST/ESA/SER.A/421).

² See, for example, A/RES/75/290B, para. 30 and A/RES/74/4, para. 27 (e).

³ A/78/80-E/2023/64

⁴ Action 55 of the Pact for example notes that engagement towards global challenges must involve multiple stakeholders including local authorities and includes the commitment of Member States to receive recommendations by the UN Secretary General on how engagement with local and regional authorities (83-e).

⁵ Secretary-General's remarks to launch the Advisory Group on Local and Regional Governments, 6 October 2023, available at: [Secretary-General's remarks to launch the Advisory Group on Local and Regional Governments | United Nations Secretary-General](#).

⁶ As we aim for a resilient future the use of the term resilience comprises economic, environmental and broader concepts of human resilience to shocks.

to confront climate change.⁷ Cities and other urban areas require an estimated US\$4.5-5.4 trillion annually up until 2030 to invest in new or retrofitted climate-resilient infrastructure across transport, energy, water and waste, and telecommunication projects. In 2021-2022, cities only secured US\$831 billion per year for climate action and very limited amounts for adaptation. It is imperative that cities become prime recipients of international financing and investments.

As governments submit new Nationally Determined Contributions in 2025 to deliver on the Paris Agreement, the role of cities to ensure multi-level governance and localization of these national climate commitments is essential. Cities are on the frontline of responding to climate change and disaster risk reduction. Increasing urban density, expanding informal settlements, aging infrastructure, and climate-induced hazards such as floods, droughts, heatwaves, and earthquakes are amplifying the exposure and vulnerability of urban populations. Integrating disaster risk reduction, including nature-based solutions (NbS), into urban planning and development, including infrastructure development, is therefore essential to ensure long-term sustainability, protect investments, and minimize human and economic losses.

Approximately 40% of countries reporting to this year's HLPF engaged closely with LRGs and recognized their role as key decision-makers in sustainable development.⁸ Building resilient cities requires coordinated efforts among local governments, national agencies, and communities to embed risk-informed planning and adaptive strategies into infrastructure, land use, and public service delivery.

The SDG localization process must account for local vulnerabilities by mainstreaming Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) into both development and climate policies, and strengthening institutional capacities to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters. As part of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and its linkage to the 2030 Agenda, cities must prioritize resilience-building not only as a response mechanism but as a foundational principle of local governance. The 2025 Ministerial Declaration of the HLPF Member States committed to “promote a disaster risk - informed approach to sustainable development at the local, national, regional and global levels as well as effective local, national and regional multi-hazard early warning mechanisms and accelerate progress on integrating disaster risk reduction into policies, programmes and investments at all levels.”⁹ The 2025 International Mayors Forum offers an important platform to share such best practices, policy instruments, and identify scalable solutions for resilient and inclusive urban futures.

Investment Pathways and Multiplier effects through SDG localization

In 2023, the United Nations Sustainable Development Group identified [Six Key Transitions: Investment Pathways to Achieve the SDGs](#) that have catalytic and multiplier effects across the SDGs to ensure accelerated progress. They include i) food systems; ii) energy access and affordability; iii) digital connectivity; iv) education; v) jobs and social protection; and vi) climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. A new SDG localization benchmark has also been proposed for inclusion into UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks to measure impact through the use of the SDG Fund.

Accelerating SDG localization through the six key transitions is already happening, but greater alignment is needed between national strategies and local realities. Improved planning from national to local level is essential to accelerate global to local progress on sustainable development. The 2025 report on SDG progress calls for action on six key transitions where intensified efforts could deliver transformative impact: food systems, energy access, digital transformation, education, jobs and social protection, and climate and biodiversity action. The report notes that only 35 per cent of targets are on track or making moderate progress, while nearly half are advancing too slowly and 18 per cent have regressed.¹⁰ More than 800 million people continue to live in extreme poverty, while billions lack access to safe drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene services. Temperatures reached 1.55°C above pre-industrial levels in 2024, making it the hottest year on record. Conflicts led to nearly 50,000 deaths that same year, and

⁷ World Cities Report, UN HABITAT, 2024

⁸ 9th Local and Regional Governments report to the 2025 HLPF “Towards the Localization of the SDGs”. Retrieved from: <https://sdglocalaction.org/hlpf2025-sdg-localization/>

⁹ Ministerial declaration of the high-level segment of the 2025 session of the ECOSOC and the 2025 HLPF. E/2025/L.16-E/HLPF/2025/L.1 <https://docs.un.org/en/E/HLPF/2025/L.1>

¹⁰ The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2025 <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2025/>

forced displacement affected over 120 million people worldwide. Exchange on the success stories occurring at local level is paramount for their scaleup.

Furthermore, the SDGs cannot be achieved without scaled-up and sustained investments in urban infrastructure and services, such as quality and affordable housing, access to quality education, sustainable public transport systems, health care services and sanitation, decent work and a safe environment, with a particular focus on the needs of the most vulnerable amid rising inequality. Investing into urban infrastructure has large multiplier effects across SDGs with infrastructure either directly or indirectly influencing the attainment of 92% of the 169 individual SDG targets.

Cities also play a leading role in the economic development of countries and global prosperity, contributing as much as 80% to the global Gross Domestic Product (GDP).¹¹ As powerhouses of economic production, cities consequently account for 60-80% of global energy consumption, 70% of all resource consumption, and generate as much as 75% of the energy-related greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Unsustainable patterns of consumption and production are concentrated in cities, driving climate change, environmental degradation and loss of nature and biodiversity.

An estimated 95% of urban expansion will take place in developing countries over the next decades. As urbanization increases, it is also often accompanied by significant social and environmental challenges, such as the lack of access to adequate, affordable urban housing options, urban infrastructure and basic services for a growing number of citizens, who have to contend with rising inequality and exclusion, unemployment, food insecurity and extreme poverty.

Despite the closeness of local governments to the needs and realities of sustainable development, local authorities have too often limited financial and human resources at their disposal to fully achieve the DGs. With an estimated gap of some US\$ 4 trillion per year, the SDGs require a quantum leap in finance flows – from billions to trillions – ensuring that financing delivers results locally.¹² The 2025 SDG progress report notes that low- and middle-income countries face record-high annual debt servicing costs of \$1.4 trillion.¹³ The 2025 Outcome of the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development “Compromiso de Sevilla” highlights that urgent steps are needed to mobilise financing at scale to close the development financing gap.¹⁴ Some countries are making progress, aligning national budgets with SDG targets, translating them to city-level, and issuing SDG debt vehicles such as SDG Bonds to close financing gaps even at sub-national level.

Greater financial resources, capacity and innovation are required through strengthened national to local coordination and multi-level governance for the 2030 Agenda. The SDGs can only be achieved through the substantial involvement of local actors, hence the need for localizing the SDGs, where local governments and stakeholders take action to achieve SDG targets in the context of climate vulnerability, climate adaptation and building resilience.

We gather at a time of converging crises — climate change, loss of nature and biodiversity, growing pollution, inequality, conflict, and economic uncertainty — yet also at a time of profound opportunity. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) remain our shared blueprint, but the world needs more than promises. It needs progress — and it needs it locally.

II. Organizers

The 2025 International Mayors Forum will be organized by the United Nation Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) and UN-Habitat. The Forum will be hosted by Toyota City, Japan, in

¹¹ World Bank, 2025. Retrieved from: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/urbandevelopment/overview>

¹² UN Sustainable Development Group. Six Transitions: Investment Pathways to Deliver the SDGs September 2023. [https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/Six%20Transitions%20English.pdf#:~:text=These%20include%3A%20\(1\)%20food,are%20not%20a%20new%20agenda](https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/Six%20Transitions%20English.pdf#:~:text=These%20include%3A%20(1)%20food,are%20not%20a%20new%20agenda)

¹³ <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2025/>

¹⁴ <https://financing.desa.un.org/sites/default/files/ffd4-documents/2025/Compromiso%20de%20Sevilla%20for%20action%2016%20June.pdf>

cooperation with the Government of Japan. and will be held at the Meitetsu Toyota Hotel in Toyota City, Japan, from 14-16 October 2025.

Rooted in the United Nations Charter and guided by the transformative 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, UN DESA upholds the development pillar of the United Nations. UN DESA brings the global community together to work towards common solutions to the world's most pressing problems. The Department also helps countries translate global commitments into national action in the economic, social and environmental spheres. Over the course of the past several years, DESA has supported the engagement of local government representatives at the HLPF. DESA also provides technical cooperation and support, including capacity development, to Member States at their invitation, working at national and regional levels with governments, civil society organizations, UN Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams (UNCTs) and other key stakeholders to advance sustainable development and ensure that no one is left behind.

Established in 2011, UNOSD is part of the Division for Sustainable Development Goals (DSDG) of UN DESA providing technical and advisory services in support of the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs, especially on climate action, and environmental targets. Since 2017, UNOSD has been organizing the annual International Mayors Forum to strengthen SDG localization and increase knowledge and commitments towards advancing the SDGs through national to local leadership. Established in 1971, UNCRD is part of the DSDG of UN DESA, providing policy and technical support to advance sustainable development at the regional and local levels. UNCRD actively contributes to the International Mayors Forum and supports the development of Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) to enhance local SDG implementation. It also promotes integrated approaches through its work on Smart Cities, DRR and water, and quality infrastructure, drawing on lessons from flagship initiatives such as the Regional 3R and Circular Economy Forum and the EST Forum in Asia-Pacific. UN DESA is further supporting the annual International Mayors Forum through its United Nations Project Office on Governance (UNPOG), which aims to strengthen the public governance capacities of developing countries.

The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) is mandated by the UN General Assembly to promote socially and environmentally sustainable cities. UN-Habitat supports urban development projects in over 90 countries while actively advocating sustainable urban development regularly and in global events including the World Urban Forum.

As the host and organizer of the International Mayors Forum 2025, Toyota City reaffirms its commitment to sustainable urban development by providing a platform for mayors worldwide to exchange best practices and collaborate on advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Toyota City will offer logistical support, including venue arrangements, transportation, and support staff, to ensure the smooth preparation and organization of the Forum. Additionally, Toyota City will host a welcome reception, fostering an environment for networking and collaboration among participants.

United Cities and Local Governments Asia Pacific (UCLG ASPAC) is the largest regional section of the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), headquartered in Jakarta, Indonesia, and hosted by the Special Region of Jakarta. UCLG is a global association representing local governments, officially recognised as the voice of local governments by the United Nations. UCLG ASPAC has connections to over 7,000 local governments, encompassing a population of more than 4.3 billion people, which is over half of the world's population. UCLG ASPAC actively engages local governments in localising the SDGs. Since 2019, UCLG ASPAC has supported the development of Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) and Voluntary Subnational Reviews (VSRs) for several members. These efforts aim to strengthen local governments' capacity for SDGs reporting, enhancing the monitoring and reporting mechanisms for local governments and their associations.

III. Goal and Objectives

The objective of the International Mayors' Forum is to provide an annual platform to local and regional governments for policy dialogue and knowledge sharing on key aspects related to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. The Forum will profile success cases of local solutions that are accelerating progress across the six transformative SDG transitions. The Forum will also serve as a strategic opportunity for local, regional, and national governments to explore ways that can further the implementation of the outcomes of the Summit of the Future's Pact for the Future, the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development in 2025, and the Paris Agreement, thereby accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs.

Building on the outcomes of the 2024 International Mayors Forum held in Jakarta, the 2025 Forum will also promote dialogue and share practical experiences on how to accelerate SDG implementation through localization in the remaining five years of the Decade of Action, particularly in the face of increasing climate vulnerability and disaster risks in cities and towns. The Forum will highlight the importance of enhancing urban resilience and strengthening local-level DRR policies and systems to protect people, infrastructure, and essential services.

The Forum will focus on accelerating local-level action through transformative entry points—referred to as [the Six Key Transitions: Investment Pathways to Achieve the SDGs](#)—identified during the 2023 SDG Summit for their catalytic and multiplier effects across the SDGs. These include: (1) food systems; (2) energy access and affordability; (3) digital connectivity; (4) education; (5) jobs and social protection; and (6) climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. This year's Forum will prioritize discussions on these investment pathways, with explicit attention to integrating DRR and resilience-building into each thematic area to ensure cities are better equipped to cope with shocks and long-term stresses.

This will include presentations of local progress through Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs), including from Japanese cities and other subnational governments presenting their 2025 VLRs, with emphasis on how cities are mainstreaming DRR and resilience into their SDG localization strategies.

IV. Target Audience

Mayors and officials from subnational government entities, as well as key ministerial representatives from developed and developing countries, including least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing States and middle-income countries. Representatives of UN entities, Local 2030 Coalition and regional hubs, international experts and other stakeholders will also be invited to attend the Forum.

V. Outcome documents

The outcomes of the Forum 2025 will be summarized in a document titled “Key Messages”, highlighting the key discussions and insights from the event. Additionally, the commitments made by participating mayors and governors will be compiled into an outcome document, the “Toyota Action Plan for Partnerships”, outlining concrete actions and collaborative efforts to advance sustainable urban development and the SDGs.

2025 International Mayors Forum
Toyota City, Japan
14-16 October 2025

**"Actions Today for a Resilient Future - Localizing the SDGs and
Advancing the Pact for the Future"**

Agenda

Day 1 – 14 October 2025	
Time	Session
8:00 – 8:55	Registration
9:00 – 9:45	Opening of the Forum Opening remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Li Junhua, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations • Hon. Mr. Toshihiko Ota, Mayor of Toyota City, Japan • Ministerial level representative(s) of the Japanese Government • High-level representative(s) of the partner organizations Group photo session
9:45 – 10:45	Introductory session and high-level representatives
10:45 – 11:00	Coffee/Tea Break (Press conference)
11:00 – 12:15	Session 1: Digital Connectivity for Preparedness and Resilience – Data and Infrastructure
12:15 – 13:30	Lunch
13:30 – 14:45	Session 2: Climate Change (NAPs) and Nature-based solutions
14:45 – 16:00	Session 3: Circular solutions, resource efficiency, and sustainable waste management towards cleaner cities
16:00 – 16:15	Coffee/Tea Break
16:15 – 17:30	Session 4: Water, Energy, Food, Climate Nexus
17:30 – 17:45	Wrap up – Rapporteur
19:00 – 21:00	Welcome Dinner
Day 2 – 15 October 2025	
Time	Session
09:00 – 10:15	Session 5: Financing for low-carbon and climate-resilient planning and bankable projects / Breaking the Local Government Finance Gridlock – investment pathways
10:15 – 10:30	Coffee/Tea Break
10:30 – 11:45	Session 6: Foresight and Institutional Capacities for Preparedness, Risk Reduction and Resilience
11:45 – 12:30	Session 7: Intergenerational Cooperation and Inclusive Governance
12:30 – 14:00	Lunch
14:00 – 15:15	Session 8: Country experiences implementing multi-level governance to achieve the SDGs
15:15 – 15:30	Coffee/Tea Break

15:30 – 16:45	Session 9: Groups in vulnerable situations - Leveraging the Six Key Transitions: Investment Pathways to Achieve the SDGs locally - Digital Government, Smart Cities and Inclusion
16:45 – 17:30	Launch of Voluntary Local Reviews
17:30 – 18:00	Award Ceremony for the best actions to be followed by short presentations
Day 3 – 16 October 2025	
Time	Session
09:00 – 10:15	Session 10: SDG Localization Champions and Voluntary Local Reviews Dialogue
10:15 – 11:30	Session 11: Measuring, Monitoring and Evaluating SDG Localization
11:30 – 12:00	Closing of the 2025 International Mayors Forum Official Handover for International Mayors Forum 2026 From Hon. Mr. Toshihiko Ota, Mayor of Toyota City, Japan to the Mayor of the next host city
12:00 - 13:00	Lunch
14:00 – 17:00	Site visit to be organized by Toyota City

Contacts

- Ms. Sara Castro de Hallgren, Sustainable Development Officer, UNOSD, DSDG, UN DESA, Sara.castrohallgren@un.org, Tel: +821099453141
- Mr. Jürgen Gafke, Senior Programme Management Officer, UN DESA, Gafke@un.org, Tel: +12129639839
- Ms. Nana Inaguma-Urakami, Programme Analysis Assistant, UNCRD, DSDG, UN DESA, nurakami@uncrd.or.jp, Tel: +81-(52)-561-9415
- Mr. Huiyong Kim, Administrative Assistant, UNOSD, DSDG, UN DESA, hui.kim@un.org, Tel: +82 (32) 822 9083