



UNITED NATIONS HUMAN SETTLEMENTS PROGRAMME
P.O. Box 30030, Nairobi 00100, Kenya
unhabitat-info@un.org | www.unhabitat.org

FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

International Conference, Paris, 4-5 September 2025

Key Takeaways from the Paris Conference 'Towards Sustainable Urban Proximities'

Co-organised by the City of Paris, UN-Habitat, UCLG and Chaire ETI

1. A Shared Purpose

The participants of the International Conference “Towards Sustainable Urban Proximities,” convened in Paris from 4–5 September 2025, reaffirm our commitment to building cities that are inclusive, resilient, and centred on human dignity. As we mark the 10th anniversary of the Paris Agreement, we recognize the urgent need to address the global housing crisis, climate emergency, and deepening urban inequalities.

Today, 2.8 billion people lack adequate housing, including over 1.1 billion in informal settlements and over 100 million are homeless. Over a third of the world’s population face either displacement, unaffordable rents, or exclusion from basic services. This crisis is not just about shelter - it is about the right to opportunity, health, education, and belonging.

We believe that **urban proximity** offers a transformative and sustainable pathway forward. It is a paradigm shift that reimagines cities as places where people can live, work, learn, and thrive within their own neighbourhoods. It integrates housing, services, mobility, and governance into a cohesive, people-centred urban fabric.

As we prepare for **COP in Belém**, the **World Social Summit in Doha**, and the **World Urban Forum in Baku**, we call for proximity-based planning to be recognized as a strategic lever for climate action, social justice, and sustainable urban development.

It provides a common ground to share knowledge, support implementation, and measure progress:

A New Sustainable Model

Urban proximities offer a sustainable model to address environmental crises, as well as socio-spatial inequalities.

People-Centred Urban Development

Proximity places people at the heart of urban planning and design, ensuring equitable access to essential functions - living, working, caring, learning, and governing.

Accelerating Global Agendas

Proximity localizes the SDGs, especially SDG11, supports and accelerates the implementation of the Paris Agreement and the New Urban Agenda.

2. Principles of Sustainable Urban Proximities

Sustainable urban proximity is centred around seven interlinked principles with global indicators:

1. An Affordable City

Key indicators: Tenure security, sufficient housing, sanitation, drinking water, food security, urban block size, land use mix.

2. A Resilient City

Key indicators: Biodiversity, solid waste management, road safety, access to clean water, green area per capita.

3. A Caring City

Key indicators: Public transport access, pedestrian and cycle pathways, safety perception, commuting time.

4. A Smart City

Key indicators: Land use mix, internet access, local administration access, e-governance tools.

5. An Inclusive City

Key indicators: Public space access, cultural facilities, educational facilities, sport and recreation access.

6. A Thriving City

Key indicators: Employment, food security, healthcare access, broadband connectivity.

7. A Just City

Key indicators: Citizens' participation, e-governance, local administration access, qualitative and quantitative data collection.

3. The Global Observatory of Sustainable Proximities

We recognize the **Global Observatory of Sustainable Proximities** - initially established by UN-Habitat, UCLG, Chaire ETI, and C40 - as a strategic initiative to promote proximity as a driver for sustainable urban development.

The Observatory serves as a global hub for:

- **Conceptual integrity:** Developing frameworks, indicators, and tools
- **Capacity building:** Training urban practitioners and sharing methodologies
- **Progress evaluation:** Supporting cities in tracking their transition

It collects and disseminates best practices, supports implementation, and fosters scientific research. It aligns proximity with the **Sustainable Development Goals**, especially SDG11, and localizes other global goals and global agendas such as the **Paris Agreement**, the **New Urban Agenda**, and the **Pact for the Future**.

We particularly call on the international community to integrate proximity-based planning into the climate negotiations at **COP Belém**, recognizing its potential to reduce emissions, enhance resilience, and promote equitable urban transitions.

4. Key Outcomes of the Paris Conference

During the two full days in Paris, we:

- Gathered local decision-makers to affirm their commitment to proximity
- Showcased global best practices and local innovations
- Explored principles, indicators, and tools for implementation
- Facilitated partnerships and cross-sectoral collaboration
- Explored pathways to scale proximity globally
- Discussed a shared action agenda for urban transformation

The main sessions of the Conference are summarised in a few key takeaways:

High-Level Keynote Addresses

- This conference is a call to action: to turn proximity from concept into policy and practice, bridging research and real solutions, street by street, block by block
- Key partners stressed that urban proximity is a paradigm shift and a key tool to address the global housing crisis affecting nearly 3 billion people.

Mayors Roundtables

Collectively local governments demonstrated how proximity can adapt across scales to advance equity, resilience, and sustainability. Key contributions highlighted that urban proximity is key in:

- Tackling mega-city challenges through decentralized neighbourhood systems;
- Reconnecting a divided city through green mobility and multiply transport options to restore cohesion;
- Embedding a 15-minute city strategy into urban planning aligns proximity with citizen well-being and harmony with nature;

Stakeholder Roundtables

Stakeholder Roundtable 1 - Reducing cities' environmental impact and enhancing their climate resilience: Together, these examples underline that proximity is not only spatial but also social and ecological, demanding integrated planning, policy, and citizen engagement. Key contributions showcased:

- How to roll-out step-by-step pedestrianization and multifunctional, climate-resilient streets;
- Transform underused spaces into green, high-density neighbourhoods to simultaneously address housing and sustainability;
- Link inclusive land-use policies with public transit to foster equitable 15-minute neighbourhoods.

Stakeholder Roundtable 2 - Strengthening local economies and mixed-use to build affordable and thriving cities: Together, these examples show that innovation, collaboration, and context-sensitive approaches are essential for affordable, resilient, and inclusive urban economies. Key contributions included:

- Lessons from leveraging mega-events to support mixed-use planning, innovation, and reducing carbon footprints;
- How living labs can link circular economy and social entrepreneurship with local communities;
- Leveraging structural reforms to modernize urban planning, address sprawl, and integrate accessibility.

Stakeholder Roundtable 3 : Inclusive governance and social cohesion for healthy communities : Collectively, these experiences highlight that inclusive governance is both a political priority and a practical pathway to resilient, socially cohesive urban environments. Key contributions included:

- Showcasing participatory budgets and citizen assemblies to strengthen local democracy and combat mistrust;
- Stressing transparent and inclusive planning in fast-growing cities, enabling equitable access and return of displaced populations;
- Advocating grassroots placemaking as a tool to build social cohesion and citizen agency across diverse contexts.

Scientific Panels:

- Proximity-centred planning shifts focus from transport infrastructure to neighbourhoods designed around people's needs, using innovative and practically applicable proximity tools for participatory, context-specific design.
- In all its diversity, cities are reclaiming streets, expanding green spaces, and linking climate action to more liveable, equitable, and connected communities.

Interactive Sessions - Innovative Solutions for Sustainable Proximities

- *Principles: What is Proximity?* Sessions explored the foundational concepts of proximity, with contributions from Eurocities, Placemaking X, and UNLOCK15.
- *Indicators: How Do We Measure It?* Discussions focused on metrics such as tenure security, access to services, mobility, safety, and quality of life. Tools like UNITAC, QoLI and Map4Better were showcased.
- *Tools: How Do We Implement It?* Workshops demonstrated practical applications, including UN-Habitat tools Our City Plans, My Neighbourhood, Her City, and the City of Paris gender-sensitive planning through mapping, exploratory walks, and participatory design.

These discussions contributed to lay the groundwork for a shared methodology and a global movement toward sustainable urban proximities.

5. Recommendations and Commitments

Participants have shown that the following parameters are key to advance the proximity agenda together:

- **Political commitment:** Advocating for proximity-based planning at all levels
- **Local capacity:** Strengthening institutions and technical expertise
- **Participatory processes:** Engaging communities in co-creation
- **Measurable indicators:** Aligning proximity metrics with global frameworks
- **Data collection:** Ensuring robust qualitative and quantitative evidence



- **Multi-scale planning:** Integrating proximity into city-wide and regional strategies
- **Innovative design:** Promoting context-sensitive, inclusive urban solutions
- **Monitoring and reporting:** Tracking progress and sharing results

We further call on all stakeholders - governments, civil society, academia, and the private sector - to join us in scaling urban proximity as a tool to fight the housing crisis, address the climate emergency, and build cities that serve all people.

Let us seize this moment. Let us build synergies among global partners. Let us reaffirm our shared commitment to a more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable urban future. Together, we can make **Urban Proximity** a vehicle for sustainable change. Together, we can change the narrative - and the reality - of urban life.

Sorbonne University, Paris 5 September 2025

Annex. List of participating organisations

550 registrations - 300 in person participants - 200 organisations - 60 speakers
 35% from academia, 25% public sector, 15% private sector, 15% civil society, IOs 10%

1	4C
2	ACTED
3	Afalula
4	AFD
5	Affectio Mutandi CIAN
6	African Centre for Cities University of Cape Town
7	AIC
8	AIMF
9	Ajuntament de Barcelona
10	Alcaldía de Montería
11	Alcaldía Santo Domingo Oeste
12	American Academy of Housing and Communities
13	American University in Cairo
14	Architecture Student at Helwan University
15	AT Arkitektur
16	Arquitecto Urbanista
17	ARUP
18	As+P Germany
19	ASF
20	Ateliers Jean Nouvel (AJN)
21	Axa Climate
22	Ayuntamiento Santo Domingo Oeste
23	Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla
24	Birdnesr
25	BRAC University
26	Breda University of Applied Science
27	Busan Ilbo
28	Busan Metropolitan City
29	C40
30	Camara Municipal de Setubal

31	Cardiff Council
32	Casa Curutchet Colegio de Arquitectos Provincia de Buenos Aires
33	Center for the Promotion of Science and Technology (CEPOSAT)
34	Chaire ETI IAE Paris Sorbonne University
35	ChangeNOW
36	Città di Segrate
37	Clean Planet Foundation
38	CLIMATO SFERA
39	CNRS
40	Collectivité
41	Comune di Reggio Emilia
42	Concordia University
43	Congress for Sustainable Development of Nigeria
44	Consiglio Nazionale Architetti Pianificatori Paesaggisti e Conservatori (CNAPPC)
45	D&Z d.o.o.
46	Dagens Nyheter
47	Dai Nippon Printing Co Ltd
48	Danish Think Tank for Traffic Safety
49	Departamento de Children Disability & Equality
50	Depresa SA de CV
51	Derecho X
52	Design for All Campus Stellae European Institute
53	Diplomats Extra Magazine
54	Dubai Municipality
55	Embassy of Colombia
56	EMI
57	Eurocities
58	Fabric+ / AT Arkitektur
59	Facultad de Arquitectura y Urbanismo, Universidad Central del Ecuador
60	FAUP - Faculty Architecture University Porto
61	Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security
62	Filmer la Ville
63	Fondazione E35
64	Fondazione Housing Sociale

65	Fondazione Transform Transport ETS
66	Fontana Arquitectura
67	Foundation Palladio
68	Gehl Architects
69	Gemeente Nieuwegein
70	Gensler
71	Gobierno de Córdoba
72	Gobierno de Santiago
73	Gobierno del Estado de Guanajuato
74	Greater Amman Municipality
75	Grupo Movilidad Segura SAS
76	Halcyon Executive
77	Hammeskrause Architekten
78	Helwan University
79	Hustina Atelier, and Association of Landscape Architects
80	IAE Paris Sorbonne
81	ICLEI Africa
82	IE Madrid
83	IESIG
84	Independent
85	Inetum France
86	International Academy of Architecture
87	International Society for Urban Health (ISUH)
88	Iseg
89	ISGlobal Barcelona Institute for Global Health
90	King Salman International University
91	Kumba 1 Municipal Council
92	Kyoto University Graduate School
93	Lagos State University
94	Landscape Architecture Practice
95	Liverpool City Council
96	Loughborough University
97	Maloca Lab
98	Maroccan government

99	McGill University
100	MEDEF International
101	Middle East Technical University
102	Minami Midosuji Association
103	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Francophonie
104	Ministry of Physical Planning and Urban Development/NEWMAP-EIB
105	Mobility Department City of Munich
106	Molde University College
107	National Assembly
108	National Taiwan University
109	National University of Uzbekistan
110	Nhood
111	Nigeria Navy Microfinance Bank, Abuja
112	N° ONG
113	Novaya Labs & OneCity
114	Observatorio de Ciudades - Tec de Monterrey
115	OCDE
116	Open Institute of Kharkiv
117	Open University, The Netherlands
118	Organisation Communautaire de Base (OCB)
119	Oxford Brookes University
120	París 1 Panthéon Sorbonne
121	Peruanos de a pie
122	Philippe Rahm Architectes
123	Placemaking Europe
124	Placemaking Western Balkans
125	Politecnico di Milano
126	Politecnico di Torino
127	Pope of Peace in Education
128	Prunes and Quince Limited
129	Public Authority for Housing Welfare
130	Public Space Research Group
131	Public Works Bureau Osaka City Government
132	Quality of Life Program Center

133	Région Normandie
134	Rohi Foundation
135	Royal Commission for AIUIa
136	Sapienza University
137	Sciences Po IEP de Paris
138	Sciences Po Rennes
139	Sego-Chosa-Sekkei Co., Ltd
140	Seven Sisters Lab
141	SFIDP Secrétariat des Fondations Immobilières de Droit Public
142	Shared City Foundation
143	Sharqia Development Authority
144	SIRCHAL© International
145	Sogo-Chosa-Sekkei Co Ltd
146	South-Midosuji Business Association
147	Strate
148	SUEZ Consulting
149	Sweco Belgium
150	Technical University of Cartagena
151	Technical University of Munich
152	Technische Hochschule Köln
153	Technische Universität Darmstadt
154	Technologiezentrum Energie (TZE)
155	Tel Aviv Municipality
156	The Bioplanning Institute
157	Tottori University
158	Town of Senigallia
159	Transportation for Massachusetts
160	Trinity College Dublin
161	Tropical Building Physics
162	Tyre Municipality
163	UC San Diego, AGIROO
164	UIC Barcelona
165	UMo Urban Mobility
166	UN House Scotland

167	UNDP
168	UNESCO World Heritage Site, Roskilde Cathedral
169	United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)
170	United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
171	United Nations Human Settlements Programme, UN-Habitat
172	Universidad autónoma de Yucatán
173	Universidad de Burgos
174	Universidad de la Costa
175	Universidad Nacional de La Plata
176	Universidad Politécnica de Cartagena
177	Universidad politécnica de Madrid
178	Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, MIT Visiting Scholar
179	Università degli Studi di Milano Bicocca
180	Università di Pavia
181	Università di Torino
182	Université Côte d'Azur
183	Université Gustave Eiffel
184	University of Aveiro
185	University of Belgrade
186	University of Cambridge
187	University of Chicago
188	University of Cincinnati
189	University of Johannesburg
190	University of Milan-Bicocca
191	University of New Orleans
192	University of Niš
193	University of Technology Sydney
194	University of Toronto
195	University of West Attica
196	UOS
197	UPC Barcelona
198	UPC Universidad Politécnica de Cataluña
199	Ville de Paris
200	Vision Zero Taiwan

201	VU University Amsterdam
202	VUB
203	Walk Space
204	Will Architecture
205	Women's Forum
206	Young Climate Activism Zimbabwe