



CONCEPT NOTE

- Observance of “World Cities Day 2025”-

**The 20th Annual Session of Global Forum on Human
Settlements & New Sustainable Cities and Human
Settlements Awards Ceremony (GFHS 2025)**

Theme:

**Advance Local Innovation and Collaboration
for a Resilient and Sustainable Urban Future**

4-5 November 2025

World Meteorological Organization Headquarters

Geneva, Switzerland

CONTEXT

We are collectively confronted with a world fraught with multiple challenges and enormous uncertainties: climate crisis, environmental degradation, economic downturn, rising unilateralism, geopolitical conflicts, and weakening social cohesion. Among them, the climate crisis is the greatest threat faced by human society in the 21st century.

According to WMO's State of the Global Climate report, 2024 was likely the first calendar year to be more than 1.5°C above the pre-industrial era, and it is the warmest year in the 175-year observational record. "While a single year above 1.5 °C of warming does not indicate that the long-term temperature goals of the Paris Agreement are out of reach, it is a wake-up call that we are increasing the risks to our lives, economies and to the planet," said WMO Secretary-General Celeste Saulo.

On this urban planet, cities and urban areas are the places where the greatest progress can be made to resolve these issues, and rescue the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Paris Agreement, while serving as the pivotal arena for enhancing human well-being, safeguarding planetary health, and fostering lasting prosperity.

The new scientific and technological revolution represented by new energy sources, AI, and robots is in the ascendant, which will be rapidly reshaping our economy, society, life style and cities. The innovations are arriving faster, more comprehensively and more vigorously than ever before. It drives productivity and efficiency across all sectors, and empowers us to discover new and improved ways and strategies to grapple with the challenges we are facing. As indicated in *the Pact for the Future* adopted at the UN Summit of the Future, "Advances in knowledge, science, technology and innovation could deliver a breakthrough to a better and more sustainable future for all".

Innovation starts generally locally and can fuel greater efficiency, lower costs, and better quality of life for all, through replication, acceleration, and scaling. Forward-looking local governments and city leaders are uniquely positioned to harness the power of innovation, deepen and expand collaboration with all relevant stakeholders, thereby advancing livability, resilience, prosperity and sustainability in cities and communities.

However, the rise of unilateralism is undermining the existing international order, and poses a huge threat to the achievement of the SDGs and carbon neutrality. This calls for a greater urgency to strengthen international cooperation including at the local level, to bridge local ingenuity with global knowledge, establish sustained and effective multi-stakeholder partnerships, and catalyze large-scale local innovation and proactive actions, thus empowering cities to thrive amid uncertainty and ensuring they are not only sustainable but also adaptable, inclusive, and future-ready.

As a 501(c)(3) tax-exemption public charity based in New York and granted the Special Consultative Status with ECOSOC since 2015, Global Forum on Human Settlements (GFHS) is committed to advancing sustainable cities and human settlements for all, while serving as a world platform for high-level dialogue and cooperation. With the stronger support from UN agencies and strategic partners at the local and global level, GFHS has been successfully convening its annual forums at the United Nations headquarters and on five continents for 19 consecutive years, contributing to the promotion of the UN Habitat Agenda, MDGs, SDGs, Paris Agreement and the New Urban Agenda.

Against this critical backdrop, the **20th Annual Session of Global Forum on Human Settlements and New Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements Awards Ceremony (GFHS 2025)**, recognized as one of the world's most important conferences dedicated to sustainable cities and human settlements, will be taking place at the headquarters of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) in Geneva, Switzerland, on November 4-5, 2025. The theme is “**Advance Local Innovation and Collaboration for a Resilient and Sustainable Urban Future**”, and a series of events will be held to celebrate GFHS's 20th Anniversary.

Building on the longstanding partnerships with WMO and other authoritative international institutions, GFHS 2025 will serve as another significant opportunity to strengthen cooperation with WMO and relevant important partners, so as to build consensus for achieving climate goals, enhance partnerships, and jointly drive innovation and cooperation for a resilient and sustainable urban future.

The Forum will engage 300+ delegates representing 40+ countries through collaborative and productive dialogue and deliberation on pressing issues of urban

transformation and development, technology, environment, and financing, notably through the lenses of and needs for innovation and collaboration. GFHS 2025 is expected to put forward a series of recommendations and consensus, deliver a declaration, and further contribute to the upcoming 30th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP30) in Brazil.

CONTENT

I. Time: 4-5 November 2025

II. Venue: WMO Headquarters

III. Theme: Advance Local Innovation and Collaboration for a Resilient and Sustainable Urban Future

IV. Modality: Opening ceremony, keynote speech, high-level dialogue, mayors panel, parallel sessions, conclusion and recommendation, reception, New SCAHSA grand ceremony, closed-door consultation, etc.

V. Institutional Framework (tbc)

Co-organizers

Global Forum on Human Settlements (GFHS)

World Meteorological Organization (WMO)

United Nations Centre for Regional Development (UNCRD)

International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

International Society of City and Regional Planners (ISOCARP)

In Collaboration With

United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR)

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Global Human Settlements Foundation (GHSF)

European Committee of the Regions (CoR), European Union

World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI)

International Ocean Institute (IOI) World Ocean Council (WOC)

International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD)

Global Infrastructure Basel Foundation (GIB) Urban Land Institute (ULI)

German Sustainable Building Council (DGNB)

Global Buildings Performance Network (GBPN)

Global Cities Hub (GCH) The Nature Conservancy (TNC)

Climate Policy Initiative (CPI) ENERGIES 2050

World Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (WANGO)

Sub-Committee on Science and Technology Collaborative Innovation, Science and Technology Committee, Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development (SCSTCI, STC, MoHURD) Federation of Chinese Professional Associations in Europe (FCPAE)

(This list of organizations is in no particular order)

VI. Objectives

1. To provide a valuable global platform for high-level dialogues with major multi-stakeholders, facilitating productive conversation, producing synergies, fostering innovation and collaboration, building consensus and maximizing partnership value.
2. To share policy recommendations and practical solutions to enhance safety, resilience, inclusiveness, smartness and sustainability in diverse urban systems.
3. To invigorate local innovation and leadership by recognizing and rewarding outstanding examples, and to share successful experience, promote advanced technologies, and drive breakthrough progress.
4. To promote funding and financing for climate actions, stepping up sustainable development efforts at the local level and supporting the delivery of the SDGs and the Paris Agreement.

VII. Key topics to be addressed (included but not limited to)

1. Enhance international collaboration at local level for SDGs acceleration
2. Invigorate innovation and leadership towards greener and smarter cities
3. Increase climate resilience through integrated urban heat and water resource management
4. Integrated urban planning for net-zero and thriving neighborhoods
5. Future-proof carbon-neutral cities and human settlements
6. Towards circular and zero-waste cities
7. Urban transformation and competition in AI era
8. Financing for resilient and carbon-neutral cities
9. Coastal cities as source and solution: shifting the plastics pollution paradigm

10. Nature-based solutions for livability and climate adaptation

VIII. Invited Delegates

GFHS 2025 is expected to bring together 300+ participants representing 40+ countries, including national government officials, ambassadors, United Nations officers, international organization heads and senior representatives, mayors, business leaders, well-known experts and scholars, practitioners in relevant industries, NGO and youth leaders.

IX. Draft Schedule

Day 1, November 4, Tuesday

Time	Main Activity	Venue/Language
08:30-09:30	Registration	Obasi Entrance
09:30-10:15	Opening Session	Obasi Simultaneous translation between E/C
10:15-10:30	GFHS's 20th Anniversary Celebration Ceremony & Group Photo	
10:30-10:50	Coffee Break	
10:50-11:50	Keynote Statement	
11:50-12:50	High-Level Dialogue	Obasi Simultaneous translation between E/C
12:50-14:20	Lunch Break	
14:20-15:40	Parallel Session 1A Increase climate resilience through integrated urban heat and water resource management	Obasi Simultaneous translation between E/C
	Parallel Session 1B Coastal cities as source and solution: shifting the plastics pollution paradigm	C1 Simultaneous translation between E/C
15:40-16:00	Coffee Break	

16:00-17:30	Parallel Session 2A Future-proof carbon-neutral cities and human settlements	Obasi Simultaneous translation between E/C
	Parallel Session 2B Nature-based solutions for livability and climate adaptation	C1 Simultaneous translation between E/C
18:00-20:00	Welcome Reception	Top Floor

Day 2, November 5, Wednesday

Time	Main Activity	Venue/Language
09:30-10:30	Summary and Recommendation	Obasi Simultaneous translation between E/C
10:30-11:00	Coffee Break	
11:00-12:30	New Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements Awards Ceremony 2025	Obasi Simultaneous translation between E/C
12:30-13:45	Lunch Break	

X. Contact

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