

## **Adequate Housing for All: Advancing Socio-economic and Environmental Transformation towards the realisation of Agenda 2063.**

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Distinguished Delegates, Partners, and Friends,

We meet at a defining moment where rapid urbanisation, deepening inequality, and the escalating climate crisis are converging, especially across Africa and the broader Global South.

Our cities are not only engines of economic growth; they have become the frontlines of climate vulnerability. Floods, heatwaves, water stress, and displacement are no longer future risks. They are present realities, disproportionately affecting informal settlements and marginalised urban populations. These realities sit at the heart of sustainable urbanisation!

Coming from PACJA and with a climate justice bias, I allow me to assert that there is no sustainable urbanisation without climate resilience. Climate change is not a sector. It is a systemic risk multiplier that deepens urban poverty, strains infrastructure and services, exacerbates spatial inequality and locks cities into unsustainable pathways if not addressed

In this context, sustainable urban development cannot be treated as a conventional development agenda. It must be understood as a climate-resilient, justice-centred urban transformation that requires people-centred and participatory governance. One that addresses both environmental risks and structural inequalities simultaneously.

Amidst these vulnerabilities, across the Global South, CSOs are already playing a critical and evolving role. They are not only delivering services where systems fall short, but are also driving community-led climate adaptation and development of urban sites, supporting informal settlement upgrading, scaling community-centred energy mini-grids, water recycling measures and advancing nature-based solutions. They are bridging the divide between communities and governments, ensuring that urban planning reflects lived realities. In many instances, they are co-producing knowledge, shaping policies, and strengthening accountability around commitments such as SDG 11 and the New Urban Agenda. More importantly, they are advancing South-South knowledge sharing.

The diplomatic force of Southern Civil societies and Southern Governments in increasingly shaping narratives, influencing global processes, and advocating for just, inclusive, equitable and resilient urban development cannot be underrated.

Yet, despite this contribution, voices of CSOs remain insufficiently integrated into formal decision-making and financing structures. This gap underscores the urgent need for stronger, more coordinated platforms for Global South civil society engagement in the sustainable urbanization agenda.

It is within this space that South-South cooperation becomes not just relevant, but foundational.

We see South-South cooperation as providing the means to reclaim agency in shaping our urban futures. The realities faced by cities in Nairobi, Lagos, Dhaka, or São Paulo are often more similar to each other than to those in the Global North. By fostering collaboration across these contexts, we shift from importing solutions to co-creating approaches that are locally grounded and contextually relevant.

Beyond shared learning, South–South cooperation strengthens collective political leverage. In a global landscape marked by shifting geopolitics and increasing competition for resources, countries and cities of the Global South must act collectively to influence global agendas. This is particularly critical in advancing demands for financing resilience, reparations for loss and damage that cities in the global south are suffering, and pushing equitable investments in urban resilience.

We hope the World Urban Forum in Baku, to be held over next month, will provide a humble space for this articulation.

Equally important, South–South cooperation enables the scaling of proven solutions. Across the Global South, there is no shortage of innovation; whether in community resilience, low-cost housing, waste recycling innovations or climate adaptation. The challenge is not innovation, but the fragmentation of the global south voice. What is needed is a deliberate effort to connect, amplify, and replicate what works.

The State Agency of NGOs of the Government of Azerbaijan in COP2 launched the Global South NGO Platform aimed at enhancing South–South cooperation, largely among CSOs. By bringing together civil society actors across regions, the Platform provides an opportunity to move from fragmented engagement to coordinated Global South leadership, strengthening voice, visibility, and influence in global processes.

Probably, the World Urban Forum in Baku will be a test case for the efficacy of such organising in driving a south centric agenda on resilient and sustainable urbanisation.

As we engage in the Africa Urban Forum 2 and look ahead to the World Urban Forum 13, the role of all stakeholders in the global south must evolve from participation to agenda-setting. This requires a more assertive and strategic approach.

First, we must push for the institutionalization of multi-stakeholder urban governance systems—ensuring that CSOs have formal, resourced roles in planning, implementation, and monitoring.

Second, we must advocate for the establishment of a Global South urban cooperation mechanism, with the Global South NGO Platform having a stake, to coordinate positions, facilitate knowledge exchange, and strengthen collective engagement in global forums.

Third, we must demand embedded climate resilience measures in our cities and access to climate finance for cities and communities to facilitate this. Cooperation must ensure climate finance is not for brick-and-mortar resilience type of investment and that reaches and supports informal and most vulnerable urban communities.

Finally, and most importantly, stakeholders from the global South must reframe the global urban discourse around justice, prioritising vulnerable urban populations and linking urban development with climate justice

In closing, the importance of South–South cooperation in sustainable urban development lies not only in solidarity, but in its power to reshape global systems. In an era of climate crisis and evolving geopolitics, it offers a pathway for the Global South to lead—to define its own priorities, to amplify its collective voice, and to drive transformative change.

From AUF2 to WUF13 and beyond, the challenge before us is clear: to organise, to collaborate, and to advocate—together—so that our cities become not just sites of vulnerability, but engines of resilience, justice, and sustainable futures.

**Thank you.**