



Summit of the Future Action Days Side Event

Housing our Future:

Architecture towards a Greener, Better, Safer and Affordable Habitat

21st Sep., 11:30-2:30, Center for Architecture, 536 LaGuardia Place, NY

Organized by: UIA, UN-Habitat and the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Background on the event

The UIA, UN-HABITAT and the Brazilian MFA, organised a high-level roundtable with the collective goal of ensuring that no one is left behind while creating greener, safer, better and more affordable habitats for all. Architecture and urban planning professionals, together with representatives from relevant ministries, discussed proposals to overcome the global housing crisis, mitigate climate change and build resilience in human habitats. Speakers included representatives from UIA, UN Habitat, MRE/Brazil, MTE/France, Architects' Council of Europe – ACE and the American Institute of Architects.

Key Issues Discussed

- **Cities and territories** - Cities are now recognised as crucial drivers of sustainability, with affordable housing as a key target within regional initiatives. Housing is a basic human right, but habitat includes more than physical shelter. It involves the broader environment where our lives unfold and sustainable urbanisation depends on a balanced relationship between cities and their surrounding territories, considering ecological, social, economic, and cultural factors.
- **Adequate Housing** - The global housing crisis is a multidimensional complex issue that is drawing significant political attention worldwide, with affordable housing at its center. The right to adequate housing goes beyond affordability. It encompasses adequacy in its seven dimensions: Security of tenure; Availability of Services, Materials, Facilities and Infrastructure; Affordability; Habitability; Accessibility; Location; and Cultural Adequacy.
- **Built environment as an asset** - The existing built environment, namely in developed countries, is a valuable asset that needs transformation for climate neutrality, particularly through renovation and adaptation.

- **The persisting challenges of developing regions** - Informal settlements remain persistent challenges, particularly in developing regions which also face severe social and environmental issues. Housing and urban development are heavily linked to environmental concerns and ongoing inequalities.
- **The pivotal role of Architects** - Within the building chain, architects are uniquely positioned experts with an holistic approach, trained to coordinate the expertise of various disciplines, use local materials and technology intelligently, respect traditional wisdom and find solutions within existing economic and legal frameworks. Their role is pivotal in ensuring the development of sustainable habitats.
- **Architecture as a key contributor** - Architecture and urban planning possess the unique ability to generate passive, low-tech, and cost-effective designs, that are also social responsive, particularly crucial in non-OECD countries. By interpreting human needs in relation to culture, heritage, and local identity, architecture aims to improve the quality of life and contribute to the well-being of people and communities.
- **COP 30, Belém, Brazil** – Collaboration in preparation for COP 30 is crucial, as it will be an opportunity to advance on agendas often overlooked, with a special focus, on Architecture, Housing, and Territory.

Key Recommendations for Action

- **Architecture for a Greener, Better, Safer Habitat and Sustainable Urbanisation is an overarching goal for our sustainable development. We must invest more resources on SDG 11, and prioritise adequate housing within the global agenda.**
- **Encourage cross-sector collaboration**, between architects, urban planners, governments, and international organisations, and **foster knowledge exchange across regions, drawing on successful examples and integrating them into global strategies** to address the complex challenges of the multidimensional housing crisis, continuing urbanisation, and environmental degradation.
- **Implement binding frameworks and legislation, at national and regional levels, to drive the transformation of the built environment**, focusing on adequacy and quality.
- **Advance participatory urban planning**, that incorporates the needs and input of local communities, ensuring that housing solutions are both inclusive and culturally adequate.
- **Support the development of passive, climate-responsive architecture**, particularly in regions where resources are limited, **focusing on cost-effective and scalable solutions to urban and housing challenges.**
- **Encourage new financial models for housing**, especially in regions where property ownership is unsustainable and alternative solutions, like rental, are underexplored.

Webpage to find more information:

<https://www.uia-architectes.org/en/news/side-event-at-the-action-days-of-the-un-summit-of-the-future/>