



**SPEECH BY UIA PRESIDENT REGINA GONTHIER  
CLOSING CEREMONY, UIA 2024 INTERNATIONAL FORUM  
KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA**

17 November 2024

Distinguished Convenors and Partners of UIA2024KL,  
Dear President of the Malaysian Institute of Architects, Adrianta Aziz  
Esteemed Guests,  
Dear colleagues and friends,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We arrived here with a purpose: to address questions that have become central to our profession and to our shared future: the importance of cultural identity and diversity in our cities.

As we conclude these three days of work, it is safe to say that the contributions gathered from around the world—delivered through lectures, presentations, and reflections in our roundtables — have enriched our understanding of how to design and shape our cities. These contributions manifest not only the diversity we represent but also the professional values we share.

A Union of Architects, from over 130 countries and territories, gathered to reflect on our common challenges—while recognising the nuances—develop ideas, influence public policies, and advance architecture in service to the needs of society. That is the beauty of the UIA

As I said at the opening: never before have the challenges been so immense. Environmental crises, economic disparities, social transformations, rapidly advancing technology and political upheavals—we are navigating constant crises and challenges, most of them human-made.

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But architects, by nature, are optimists and builders. We imagine what the world can be and we strive for beauty that serves all humanity. Because of this, we must also recognise that never before have the opportunities —and responsibilities — been so great.

It became clear during this significant gathering of architects that we are part of the solution, and that diversity is an imperative for the sustainability of our cities and territories. It is about embracing inclusivity and ensuring quality for everyone.

However, diversity must go beyond representation —it must be about **INCLUSION IN THE URBAN AND TERRITORIAL FABRIC**, to ensure a balanced habitat.

Diversity must also acknowledge the importance of the **BALANCE BETWEEN TRADITION AND INNOVATION**. Traditional knowledge and local practices are key to creating more resilient and sustainable built environments.

Architects must also have **FAIR ACCESS TO THEIR PROFESSION**, regardless of their background, to promote the sustainability and innovation in our built environments.

Together, as architects from around the world, we hold the responsibility and privilege of shaping a future where the built environment upholds the dignity, culture, and identity of every person it serves.

Only by placing people at the core of urban and territorial development will our cities overcome the challenges of rapid and ongoing urbanisation.

With wars, we are certainly not contributing to this goal. Research reveals that the effects of war on climate is an enormous catastrophe. If we are to commit to sustainable strategies and development for tomorrow, we must also commit to advancing peace and upholding human rights.

Only then will our future cities be bright.

Regina Gonthier

President of the UIA