

Brief on World Cities Day 2018

The World Cities Day celebration was proposed in the Shanghai Declaration by the organising committee of the World Expo, the United Nations and the International Exhibition Bureau at the World Expo 2010 Shanghai China.

The United Nations General Assembly designated the 31st of October as World Cities Day, in resolution 68/239 on 27 December 2013. The 2014 World Cities Day Global Observation was held in Shanghai, China in 2014, followed by Milan, Quito and Guangzhou. China has always generously supported WCD.

The overall theme of World Cities Day is
Better City, Better Life.

The 2018 theme is
Building Sustainable and Resilient Cities.

World Cities Day (WCD) aims to

- Increase awareness on sustainable urban development and urban transformations;
- Promote knowledge sharing on urban solutions implemented at the local level;
- Contribute to the implementation of the New Urban Agenda to achieve the SDGs.

World Cities Day 2018

World Cities Day 2018 is hosted by the city of Liverpool, UK and the event is being jointly organised with UN-Habitat and the Shanghai People's Government.

The event is being attended by mayors, national and local government experts, representatives from global partnerships and coalitions and academics from Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, and the USA. Panel sessions and seminars will give cities opportunities to exchange knowledge and best practices and focus international attention on sustainable urbanization.

Why the world needs to focus on resilience

Over half the world's population live in cities (55 per cent) and the world is urbanizing fast – by 2050 over two thirds (68 per cent) of the world's population is projected to be urban – with 1.4 million people arriving in cities each week.

As more people are concentrated in cities, dependent on local services and networks, the risks from natural and human made disasters grow.

In the past 20 years climate-related and geophysical (ie earthquakes and tsunamis) disasters killed 1.3 million people and left a further 4.4 billion injured, homeless, displaced or in need of emergency assistance.

Flooding is the most frequent and widespread natural disaster in the world with river flooding posing a threat to over 379 million urban residents. Earthquakes, which along with tsunamis are responsible for the highest number of deaths in disasters, could affect 283 million people.

The World Bank calculate the real cost to the global economy of disasters is USD 520 billion a year. Climate change alone could force 77 million people back into poverty

The poor and vulnerable, living in substandard, hazardous places are most at risk with around 1 billion people living in slums. People exposed to natural hazards in poorest nations are more than seven times likely to die than those in the richest.

Challenges to resilience can also be economic, cultural, civic and social and develop over time such as economic downturns or crises, high unemployment, lack of inclusion, social cohesion or discrimination, disease outbreaks and terrorism.

How to build resilience

- ✚ Cities can protect against economic shocks by diversifying their economy, creating opportunities for business and employment, and engaging the private sector.
- ✚ They can build socially cohesive societies becoming democratic, sustainable and inclusive by ensuring residents from all backgrounds take part in decision making.
- ✚ To build climate and environment resilience, authorities need to plan cities properly to minimize the overall effect on the environment as well as ensuring resilience through strengthened infrastructure, good planning and public education.
- ✚ Responses to disasters in urban areas can promote greater resilience to future crises and support long term development goals.



Resilience in the global agenda

The United Nation's Agenda for Sustainable Development, and its dedicated Sustainable Development Goal 11 "to make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable" puts sustainable urbanization as one of the key priorities of the global agendas for development. This was further recognised with the adoption of the new Urban Agenda by the United Nations in 2016 and in The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

Liverpool is an example of economic resilience

Liverpool's economy was driven by its docks and flourishing manufacturing sector but as both declined and unemployment soared. In the 1990s, the city focused on diversifying its economy and bolstering tourism (including The Beatles and maritime history), developing small-businesses and ensuring targeted investments in infrastructure, jobs training, housing and business development.

UN-Habitat is working on resilience in several countries & in several areas

UN-Habitat's Urban Resilience Hub in Barcelona developed the City Resilience Profiling Programme which provides national and local governments with tools for measuring and increasing resilience and is currently being used in Maputo, Asuncion, Dakar, Vanuatu, Yakutsk, Teresina (Brazil) and Arendal (Norway). The City Resilience Action Planning Tool (CityRAP) has been introduced in 25 African cities enabling municipal technicians in low capacity cities to conduct a quick and effective assessment of the city's vulnerabilities to help prepare an action plan. In Somalia work included large-scale re-settling of 8,000 IDP households with integrated area planning and urban land management, in Myanmar UN-Habitat supported disaster risk reduction and management after Cyclone Nargis, while in Sri Lanka after the Tsunami, communities were helped to rebuild 35,000 houses and basic infrastructure. In Iraq we are addressing housing, land and property rights of minorities. In Lao, Solomon Islands, Fiji and Mongolia the focus is on helping poor and marginalized communities adapt to climate change.

