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Item 8 (d) of the provisional agenda*
High-level parallel meetings to review in depth and showcase progress made and to facilitate peer-to-peer learning in connection with the sub-themes of the Forum: sustainable cities and communities

Background report on the sub-theme of sustainable cities and communities

I. Introduction

1. Urbanization is a key driver of structural transformation. In many parts of the world, it has enabled low-productivity economies centred around agriculture to become higher-productivity economies centred around manufacturing and modern services, with higher living standards. In Africa, however, urbanization has taken a different path: most of the new jobs are in low-productivity informal services. As a result, urban growth has often occurred without industrialization or agricultural modernization, which has constrained productivity gains and the poverty-reducing potential of cities and had a negative impact on the region's long-term development path.

2. According to data from *World Urbanization Prospects 2025*, Africa is the fastest-urbanizing region in the world.[1] Currently, around 45 per cent of people in Africa live in urban areas; by 2050, this share is projected to reach about 60 per cent,[2] with the urban population doubling in size from 700 million to almost 1.5 billion.[3] Africa is also the world's youngest region, with a median age well below 25 years,[4] and much of the rural-to-urban shift is driven not only by live births, but also by domestic and international migration of young people in search of education, employment and better opportunities.

3. If rapid urbanization is not accompanied by proactive planning and investment, informal settlements could swell, infrastructure and basic services will become insufficient, inequality may increase and air pollution and other environmental conditions may worsen.[5]

4. Cities and urban areas are at the centre of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Sustainable Development Goal 11 (Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable) is directly connected to at least 11other Goals. In particular, action in cities affects

* ECA/RFSD/2026/1/Rev.1.

[1] *World Urbanization Prospects 2025: Summary of Results* (United Nations publication, 2025).

[2] In North Africa, close to 60 per cent of the population already lives in urban areas. West, East and Central Africa are currently experiencing the fastest urban population growth rates.

[3] *World Urbanization Prospects 2025*.

[4] *World Population Prospects 2024: Summary of Results* (United Nations publication, 2024).

[5] Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and Sahel and West Africa Club, *Africa's Urbanisation Dynamics 2020: Africapolis, Mapping a New Urban Geography*, West African Studies (Paris, 2020).

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progress on Goals 1 (End poverty in all its forms everywhere), 3 (Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages), 4 (Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all), 5 (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls), 8 (Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all), 9 (Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation), 12 (Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns), 16 (Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels) and 17 (Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development). Goal 11 is also connected to disaster risk reduction (the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030) and climate change (the Paris Agreement). Around one third of the indicators of the 2030 Agenda can be measured at the local urban level, which makes the city a critical locus for implementing and monitoring progress towards the Goals.[6]

5. Although urbanization cannot generate economic growth by itself, if it is accompanied by good urban planning and linkages it can bring major productive advantages for industry, agriculture and services. Managing the urban transition through deliberate policy responses is therefore essential for structural transformation and for the well-being of people in Africa, including rural populations.[7] Since most African countries are still at the early stages of urbanization, there remains a significant window of opportunity to leverage the transformative potential of cities through targeted policies and investment at the regional, subregional, national and subnational levels.

II. Progress in implementation

6. The present section contains a summary of the progress made towards achieving the targets under Goal 11, as measured against specific indicators [8] using available data.

A. Indicator 11.1.1

7. Housing is a basic human right recognized in many international human rights instruments. [9] More than 100 countries have a constitutional provision on the right to adequate housing.[10] Inadequate housing has a negative impact on urban equity and inclusion, urban safety and livelihood opportunities and leads to negative health conditions. The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), through the New Urban Agenda, promotes improved access to adequate and affordable housing.[11]

8. In Africa, this aim is crucial, given the rapid urbanization of settlements in the region without sufficient housing to meet the growing demand. Progress in that regard varies from one country to another, but in most African countries,

[6] United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and others, *Tracking Progress towards Inclusive, Safe, Resilient and Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements: SDG 11 Synthesis Report – High Level Political Forum 2018* (Nairobi, 2018).

[7] Economic Commission for Africa, "Leveraging urbanization for Africa's structural transformation: ECA's contribution" (Addis Ababa, 2017).

[8] The most up-to-date version of the Sustainable Development Goal targets and indicators is available in the "Global indicator framework for the Sustainable Development Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" (see https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/indicators-list/).

[9] Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, *The Right to Adequate Housing: fact sheet No.21/Rev.1* (Geneva, 2009).

[10] United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, "Housing policies", Habitat III Policy Paper, No.10 (February 2016).

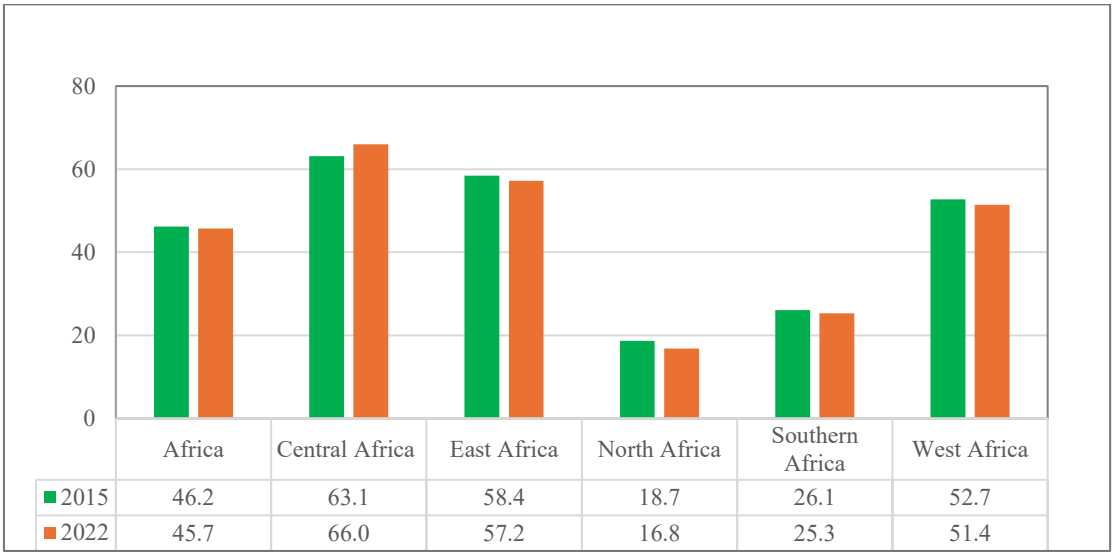
[11] *New Urban Agenda* (United Nations publication, 2017).

the building of adequate, safe and affordable urban housing is outpaced by the rate of urban population growth.

9. Indicator 11.1.1 pertains to the proportion of the urban population that is living in slums, informal settlements or inadequate housing.

10. According to UN-Habitat data, between 2015 and 2022, the proportion of people in Africa living in such conditions declined only slightly, from 46.2 per cent to 45.7 per cent. The largest reduction was in North Africa, from 18.7 per cent to 16.8 per cent; the shares decreased in all other subregions except Central Africa, albeit much more modestly (see figure I). In Central Africa, by contrast, the proportion of the urban population living in slums increased, from 63 per cent to 66 per cent – about 43 million people.[12]

Figure I
Proportion of urban population living in slums, by subregion, 2015 and 2022
(Percentage)



	Africa	Central Africa	East Africa	North Africa	Southern Africa	West Africa
2015	46.2	63.1	58.4	18.7	26.1	52.7
2022	45.7	66.0	57.2	16.8	25.3	51.4

Source: ECA calculations based on United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), "Housing, slums and informal settlements", Urban Indicators Database. Available at https://data.unhabitat.org/pages/housing-slums-and-informal-settlements. Subregional averages are weighted averages based on populated data.[13]

11. Informal settlements and slums continue to house millions of urban residents in African cities, many of whom lack secure tenure and access to such basic services as water and sanitation. This issue, along with homelessness and housing unaffordability, hinders the progress of African countries towards ensuring access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services.

B. Indicator 11.2.1

12. Adequate infrastructure and effective public transport are critical for the expansion of access to opportunities and the fulfilment of the commitment to leave no one and no place behind. Cities that invest in affordable, safe and well-

[12] The Central African countries are Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Sao Tome and Principe. The population data were extracted from Worldometer, "Countries in the world by population". Available at www.worldometers.info/world-population/population-by-country/.

[13] United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "Cities". Available at https://population.un.org/wup/downloads?tab=Cities.Population Division.

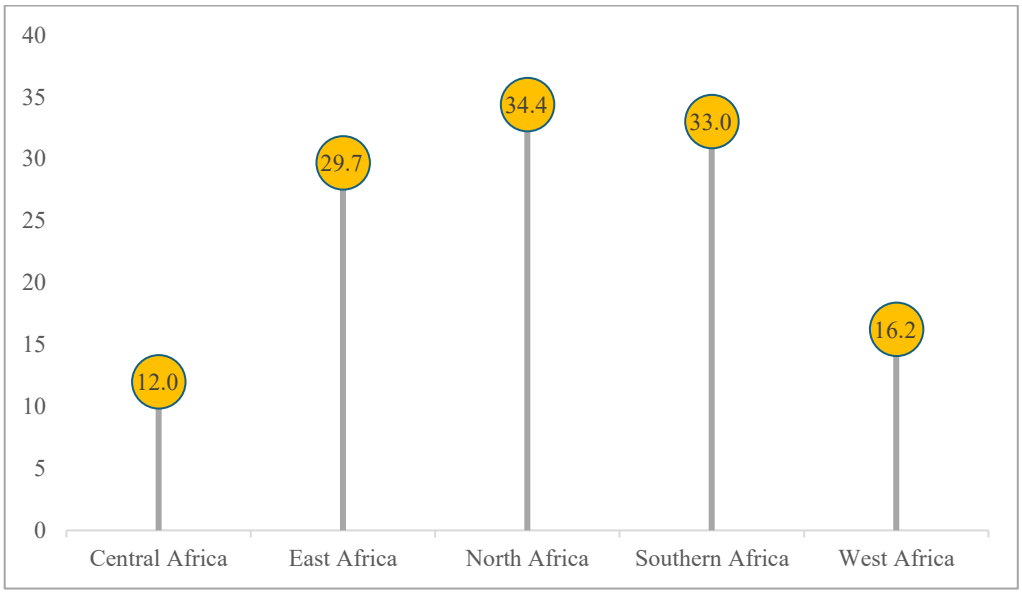
connected multimodal and non-motorized transport systems are more inclusive, economically dynamic and sustainable. Aligning transport and land-use planning promotes compact, public transport-oriented development, reduces congestion, emissions and urban sprawl, strengthens municipal finance and accelerates progress towards Goal 11 and, more broadly, the 2030 Agenda. Public transport systems in African cities are highly diverse, ranging from informal paratransit to rapid transit systems.

13. Indicator 11.2.1 pertains to the proportion of the population that has convenient access to public transport, disaggregated by sex, age and persons with disabilities.

14. In 2020, UN-Habitat compiled data from 279 cities in 53 African countries and found that access to public transport remained a major challenge for urban populations across the continent. Only 29.3 per cent of the urban population in Africa lived within walking distance (no more than 500 metres or 1,000 metres)[14] of public transport, significantly below the global average of 51.6 per cent.[15] There is therefore a critical gap in the development of inclusive and efficient public transport systems in African cities and urban areas.

15. Despite the overall low average, there were notable disparities among countries and cities. Cities in North Africa generally had better access (see figure II), in line with previous trends. Some small countries, such as the Gambia (94.2 per cent), Seychelles (88.8 per cent) and Cabo Verde (78.1 per cent), performed exceptionally well, although the data were collected from only one or two cities in each country. Conversely, many cities in the rest of sub-Saharan Africa reported significantly lower coverage, reflecting the challenges posed by infrastructure gaps, informal settlement sprawl and weak investment in public transport.

Figure II
Proportion of population that has convenient access to public transport
(Percentage)



Source: ECA calculations based on United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), "Urban transport", Urban Indicators Database. Available at https://data.unhabitat.org/pages/urban-transport.

[14] For the purpose of the survey, walking distance was deemed to be 500 metres for low-capacity public transport systems and 1,000 metres for high-capacity systems.

[15] United Nations Environment Programme and UN-Habitat, *Walking and Cycling in Africa: Evidence and Good Practice to Inspire Action* (Nairobi, 2022).

C. Indicator 11.3.1

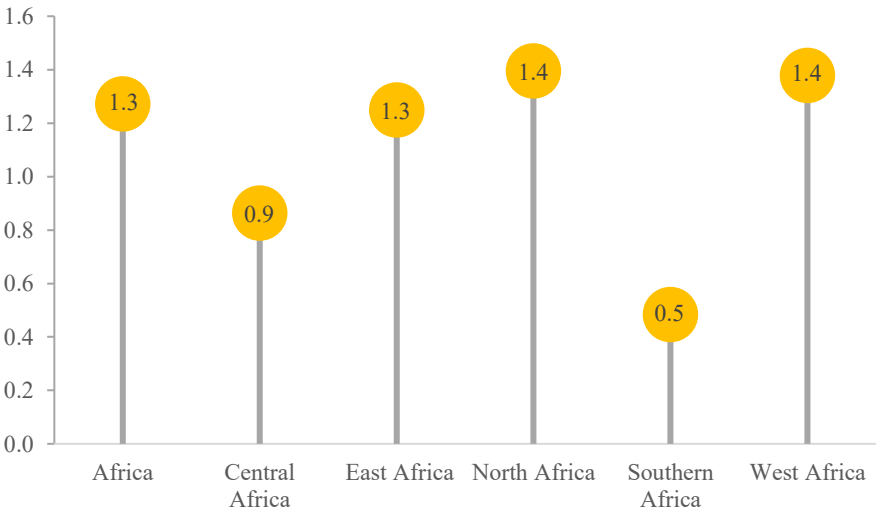
16. Indicator 11.3.1 pertains to the ratio of the land consumption rate to the population growth rate.

17. According to data from the United Nations, between 2010 and 2020, the average land consumption rate to population growth rate ratio across Africa was 1.27, indicating that urbanized land expanded faster than urban population growth.[16] This pattern reflects a trend towards horizontal urban expansion, with major implications for land-use efficiency, infrastructure costs, environmental sustainability and the long-term viability of urban service delivery.

18. The ratio varied greatly among the subregions (see figure III). It was highest in North Africa (1.40), West Africa (1.4) and East Africa (1.3), owing to the significant urban sprawl pressures driven by peri-urban expansion, real estate development and relatively weak alignment between land-use planning and demographic expansion. In East Africa, the average ratio was 1.3, reflecting the outward expansion of cities to accommodate rapid urbanization, often in the context of constrained planning capacity and infrastructure provision.

19. In contrast, Central Africa (0.9) and Southern Africa (0.5) had ratios of less than 1, indicating that population growth exceeded land consumption in most cities and urban areas in those subregions. While this suggests more compact urban growth, it may also signal densification under conditions of limited land supply, infrastructure deficits and informal settlement extension rather than deliberate compact city strategies. This requires improved regulation of land ownership and use to ensure that land fulfils its social function of securing adequate housing for all, in particular for the groups most at risk from weak or denied land rights, including women, peasants, rural workers, Indigenous communities and other communities that face discrimination (A/80/351).

Figure III
Average land consumption rate to population growth rate ratios, by subregion



Source: ECA calculations based on United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), "Spatial growth of cities and urban areas", Urban Indicators Database. Available at https://data.unhabitat.org/pages/spatial-growth-of-cities-and-urban-areas.

[16] ECA calculations based on United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), "Spatial growth of cities and urban areas", Urban Indicators Database. Available at https://data.unhabitat.org/pages/spatial-growth-of-cities-and-urban-areas.

D. Indicator 11.3.2

20. Indicator 11.3.2 pertains to the proportion of cities with a structure for the direct participation of civil society in urban planning and management that operates regularly and democratically.

21. Progress against this indicator remains partial and uneven across Africa, where there is a gap between formal participation frameworks and their effective implementation. Based on the data set for this indicator from the United Nations, 63 per cent of cities in the 16 reporting countries in 2024 had systems in place for the direct participation of civil society in urban planning and management.[17] While this suggests that participatory mechanisms exist in a majority of cities, their presence does not necessarily translate into inclusive, representative or influential participation, especially where there is rapid urban growth and a large informal sector.

22. In the governance analysis in *Africa's Urbanisation Dynamics 2025*,[18] important structural constraints underlying the figures are highlighted. Only 7 African countries have national legislation on citizen participation that is both established and applied, and only 11 implement gender quotas or similar instruments to strengthen women's representation in local governance. Transparency and accountability mechanisms remain weak, with around 70 per cent of countries lacking transparency tools and more than 70 per cent not maintaining performance indicators for local government, which makes it difficult for citizens to engage meaningfully and hold local authorities accountable.

23. Again, the data for this indicator vary greatly among countries. In such countries as the Niger, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Seychelles and Uganda, relatively high shares of cities have participation systems (above 70 per cent); in such countries as Angola, Egypt and Mozambique, the share is below or close to 55 per cent. These disparities reflect differences in institutional maturity, local autonomy and the recognition of informal settlements.[19]

E. Indicator 11.5.1

24. Indicator 11.5.1 pertains to the number of deaths, missing persons and directly affected persons attributed to disasters per 100,000 people.

25. Africa is one of the most vulnerable continents to climate change.[20] In 2024, Africa had 75 reported disasters, well above the 2004–2023 annual average of 66. The human toll was substantial: more than 125,000 disaster-related deaths were reported and more than 144 million people were affected between 2015 and 2024.[21] Droughts were among the most severe events in 2024, affecting some 29.5 million people, which was far fewer than the average of 55 million between 2004 and 2023. The hardest hit countries were Zambia (9.8 million people affected), Zimbabwe (7.6 million) and Malawi (6.1 million).

[17] United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "11.3.2", Sustainable Development Goals Indicators Database. Available at https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal/database.

[18] OECD and others, *Africa's Urbanisation Dynamics 2025: Planning for Urban Expansion*, West African Studies, (Paris, 2025).

[19] United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "11.3.2", Sustainable Development Goals Indicators Database. Available at https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal/database.

[20] Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability*, Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (Cambridge, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Cambridge University Press, 2022).

[21] United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), "A-1: Deaths and missing persons attributed to disasters", Sendai Framework Monitor. Available at https://data360.worldbank.org/en/indicator/UNDRR_SFM_A1 (accessed in March 2025).

Flooding was the type of disaster that directly caused the highest number of recorded deaths, with 576 fatalities in Chad and 396 in the Niger between June and October 2024. Though the total number of people in Africa affected by floods in 2024 (48.8 million) was lower than the yearly average of 67.9 million between 2004 and 2023, the death toll was still high, owing to the intensity and suddenness of the flooding.[22]

26. Globally, the average disaster-related mortality per 100,000 people declined by more than half, from 1.56 in 2005–2014 to 0.75 in 2015–2024, and the average annual figure for disaster-related deaths during this period was 41,730. In Africa, by contrast, the rate increased from 1.72 per 100,000 in 2005–2014 to 2.18 per 100,000 in 2015–2024, and the proportion of people affected by disasters increased from 1,800 per 100,000 to 3,326 per 100,000. More than 140 million people in Africa were affected by disasters in 2015–2024.[23]

27. Various initiatives and programmes have been launched in Africa to ensure that target 11.5 is achieved. The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction has called for "zero climate disasters by 2030" with a campaign "to ramp up global efforts to tackle vulnerability and exposure to climate risks, with a focus on those countries and communities on the frontlines of the climate emergency". At the twenty-seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Office called for early warning and action for all by 2027.[24] The Office had found that countries with substantial to comprehensive early-warning-system coverage had one eighth the disaster mortality rate of countries with limited to moderate coverage.[25] Multi-hazard early warning systems exist in 31 African countries, up from 18 countries when the Early Warnings for All initiative was launched by the Secretary-General in 2022.[26] Since Governments began to report their initial scores on such systems, the continent has improved the comprehensiveness of them by 72 per cent.[27]

F. Indicator 11.5.2

28. Indicator 11.5.2 pertains to the direct economic loss attributed to disasters in relation to global gross domestic product.

29. According to an analysis of disasters between 1990 and 2019, droughts reduced the gross domestic product of African countries by 0.7 per cent and floods by 0.4 per cent. During the period, no continent was more greatly affected by climate change-induced disasters than Africa, where 1,107 floods and droughts caused 43,625 deaths and more than $13 billion in damage to crops, livestock and property. This figure comprises both the direct loss, which includes damage to infrastructure and crops, and the indirect loss, such as loss of income and productivity. [28]

[22] Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters, "2024 disasters in numbers: a hot and stormy year" (Brussels, 2025). Note that reported impacts may substantially differ from actual impacts owing to underreporting. Drought-related mortality, for instance, is usually not reported.

[23] UNDRR, "A–1: Deaths and missing persons".

[24] UNDRR, "Zero climate disasters by 2030".

[25] UNDRR and World Meteorological Organization, "Global status of multi-hazard early warning systems: target G" (Geneva, 2022).

[26] UNDRR and World Meteorological Organization, "G-2: Countries that have multi-hazard monitoring and forecasting systems". Available at https://data360.worldbank.org/en/indicator/UNDRR_SFM_G2 (consulted in March 2025).

[27] UNDRR and World Meteorological Organization, "Global status of multi-hazard early warning systems: target G" (Geneva, 2022).

[28] Mounir Bari and Sébastien Dessus, "Adapting to natural disasters in Africa: what's in it for the private sector?", Working Paper (Washington, D.C., International Finance Corporation, November 2022).

30. In 2024, Africa had a higher number of disasters than in previous years, but the economic impact was much lower, at $3.1 billion (1.3 per cent of the global disaster-related economic loss), compared with an annual average of $11 billion for 2004–2023.[29]

31. During the period between 2015 and 2024, the direct economic loss attributed to disasters exceeded $133 billion in current prices, underscoring the growing economic burden of climate and disaster risks.[30]

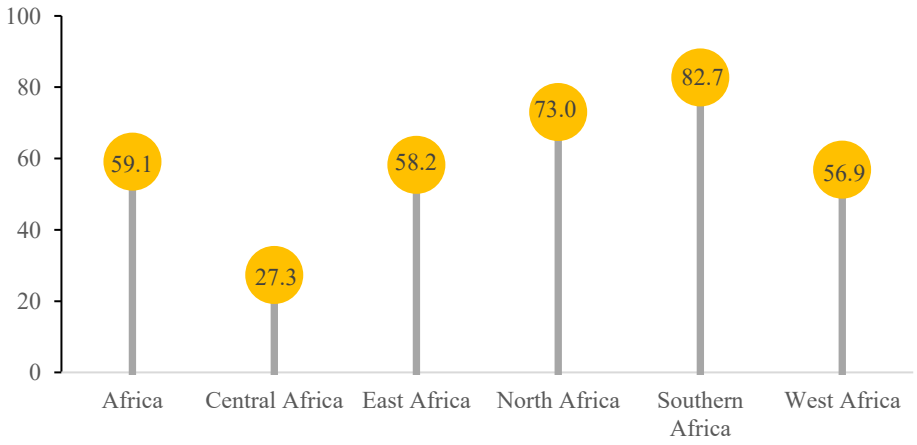
32. Since the adoption of the Sendai Framework in 2015, States Members of the United Nations have monitored disaster-related losses. While aggregate losses are lower in low-income countries, since their asset bases are smaller, the household- and community-level human and financial impacts can be severe, in particular when losses are uninsured.

G. Indicator 11.6.1

33. Indicator 11.6.1 pertains to the proportion of municipal solid waste collected and managed in controlled facilities out of total municipal waste generated by cities.

34. Rapid urban growth requires improved municipal solid waste collection. As African cities grow, managing municipal waste has emerged as a pressing urban challenge. According to data from the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, the average level of waste collection coverage by more than 230 cities in 50 African countries between 2015 and 2024 was only 59.1 per cent. Coverage varies across the continent (see figure IV): Southern Africa and North Africa performed relatively well; Central Africa, very poorly.

Figure IV
Coverage of municipal solid-waste collection
(Percentage)



Source: ECA calculations based on United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "11.6.1", Sustainable Development Goals Indicators Database. Available at https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal/database.

[29] Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters, "2024 Disasters in Numbers".

[30] UNDRR and World Meteorological Organization, "C-3: Direct economic loss to all other damaged or destroyed productive assets attributed to disasters". Available at https://data360.worldbank.org/en/indicator/UNDRR_SFM_C3 (consulted in March 2025).

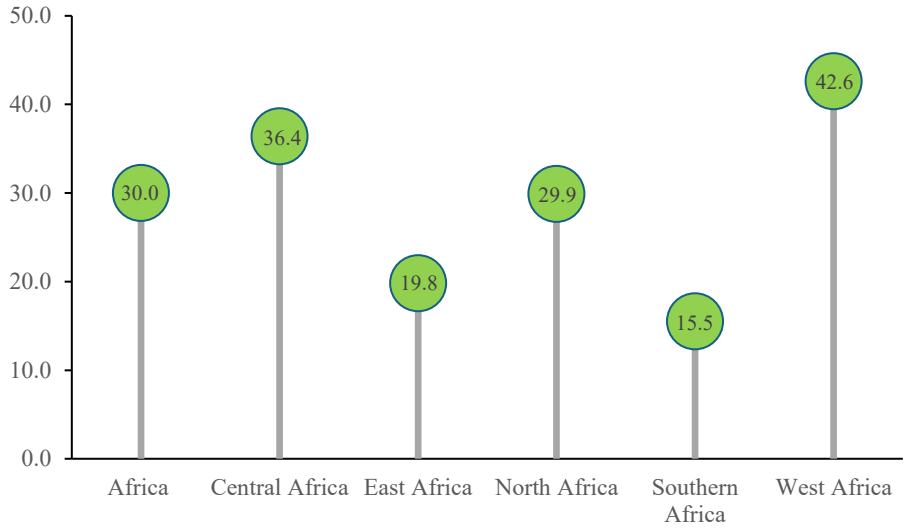
H. Indicator 11.6.2

35. Indicator 11.6.2 pertains to the population weighted, annual mean levels of PM2.5 and PM10 in cities.

36. Air pollution continues to pose a serious threat to health and quality of life in urban areas, in some subregions more than in others. According to the latest country-level data from the United Nations for indicator 11.6.2, the annual mean concentration of fine particulate matter in Africa between 2015 and 2020 was well above the World Health Organization's recommended safe level of 5 µg/m³ (see figure V).[31] These values reflect long-term exposure to air pollution from vehicles, industry, waste incineration and household energy use.

37. In the same period, West Africa was the subregion of Africa with the highest average reported levels of fine particulate matter (PM2.5), followed by Central Africa. In contrast, Southern Africa and East Africa reported comparatively lower levels, although still above safety thresholds. These disparities underscore differences in pollution sources, urban planning and environmental regulation.

Figure V
Mean levels of fine particulate matter
(Micrograms per cubic metre)



I. Indicator 11.7.1

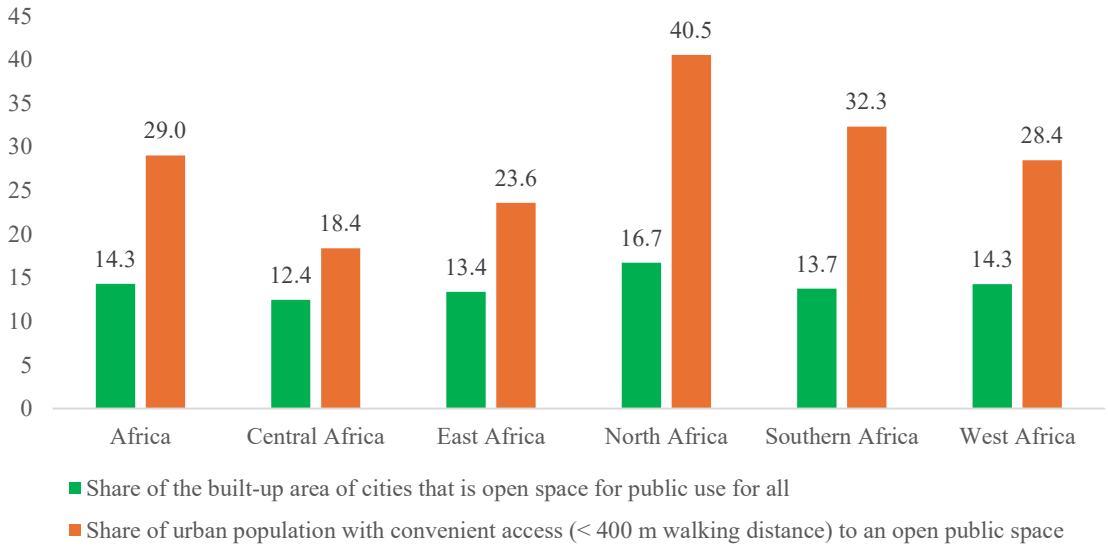
38. Indicator 11.7.1 pertains to the average share of the built-up area of cities that is open space for public use for all, disaggregated by sex, age and persons with disabilities.

39. There remains a spatial dimension to inequality. City-level data indicate that African cities, which have weaker planning regulations than cities elsewhere, continue to lag behind global averages in the provision and reservation of public open spaces and in the accessibility of such spaces. In the African cities covered by the survey, less than a third of the urban population

[31] United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "11.6.2", Sustainable Development Goals Indicators Database. Available at https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal/database.

had convenient access to such spaces (see figure VI), compared with a global average of 44.2 per cent.[32]

Figure VI
Availability and accessibility of public open space in cities, by subregion, 2020
(Percentage)



Source: UN-Habitat, "Open spaces and green areas", Urban Indicators Database. Available at https://data.unhabitat.org/pages/open-spaces-and-green-areas.

40. Subregional disparities in Africa are significant. In 2020, North Africa had the highest share of public open space and access to public space, albeit still below the global average. Public space, and especially access to public space, is also comparatively higher in Southern Africa, with such cities as Cape Town, South Africa nearing or exceeding global benchmarks.[33]

41. East, West and Central Africa remained well below the global average in terms of public space in cities. Such rapidly growing cities as Addis Ababa, Accra, Kinshasa, Lagos (Nigeria) and Nairobi have not increased the provision of public space at the same rate at which urban areas have expanded, resulting in fragmented access and strong intra-urban disparities. Although flagship parks and regeneration projects have improved conditions in some central areas, large peripheral and informal settlements remain underserved.[34]

J. Indicator 11.a.1

42. Indicator 11.a.1 pertains to the number of countries that have national urban policies or regional development plans that: (*a*) respond to population dynamics; (*b*) ensure balanced territorial development; and (*c*) increase local fiscal space.

43. Most of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa have national urban policies or regional development plans that are aligned with those measured under

[32] ECA calculations based on United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "11.7.1", Sustainable Development Goals Indicators Database. Available at https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/ dataportal/database.

[33] OECD and others, *Africa's Urbanisation Dynamics 2025*.

[34] UN-Habitat, "Open spaces and green areas", Urban Indicators Database. Available at https://data.unhabitat.org/pages/open-spaces-and-green-areas; OECD and others, *Africa's Urbanisation Dynamics 2025*.

indicator 11.a.1.[35] Governments can use urban policies to make urbanization more balanced and polycentric by aligning policies across sectors, facilitating multilevel dialogue, fostering rural-urban linkages and addressing socio-spatial inequality in cities. Significant progress has been made in the adoption of national urban policies across Africa, with 49 African countries having reported that they had such a policy in place as of 2023.[36] Consistent with the findings of UN-Habitat, ECA found that 45 countries prioritized housing in their national development plans, with particular emphasis on social, affordable and low-income housing.[37]

44. According to the *Global State of National Urban Policy 2024*, most of the 21 African countries surveyed now have an explicit national urban policy that is aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 11.a, on addressing population dynamics (83 per cent) and ensuring balanced territorial development (83 per cent). Measures to increase local fiscal space, however, remained less consistently integrated in African national urban policies (67 per cent of the countries surveyed).

45. The evidence suggests that the policies and strategic intent of African countries are carrying the region towards target 11.a. Further efforts are needed to translate national urban policies into effective implementation, sustainable financing and measurable territorial outcomes.[38]

K. Indicator 11.b.1

46. Indicator 11.b.1 pertains to the number of countries that adopt and implement national disaster risk reduction strategies in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030.

47. According to the Sendai Framework Monitor, the number of African countries to have adopted and implemented national disaster risk reduction strategies in line with the Sendai Framework increased from 12 in 2015 to 31 in 2024.[39]

L. Indicator 11.b.2

48. Indicator 11.b.2 pertains to the proportion of local governments that adopt and implement local disaster risk reduction strategies in line with national disaster risk reduction strategies.

49. By 2024, 28 countries had adopted and implemented local disaster risk reduction strategies in line with national disaster risk reduction strategies.[40]

[35] OECD, UN-Habitat and United Nations Office for Project Services, *Global State of National Urban Policy 2021: Achieving Sustainable Development Goals and Delivering Climate Action* (Paris, OECD Publishing, 2021).

[36] United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "11.a.1", Sustainable Development Goals Indicators Database. Available at https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal/database.

[37] Economic Commission for Africa, "National urban policies: integrating urbanization into national development planning", Policy Brief (Addis Ababa, 2024).

[38] UN-HABITAT and OECD, *Global State of National Urban Policy 2024: Building Resilience and Promoting Adequate, Inclusive and Sustainable Housing* (Nairobi, UNON Publishing, 2024).

[39] United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), "E1: National average score for the adoption and implementation of national disaster risk reduction strategies in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030", Sendai Framework Monitor. Available at https://data360.worldbank.org/en/indicator/UNDRR_SFM_E2 (accessed in March 2025).

[40] United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), "E2: Local governments that have adopted and implemented local disaster risk reduction strategies in line with national strategies", Sendai Framework Monitor. Available at https://data360.worldbank.org/en/indicator/UNDRR_SFM_E2 (accessed in March 2025).

III. Challenges, constraints and emerging issues

50. Urbanization in Africa reflects a complex mix of challenges and emerging risks that significantly affect sustainable development in the short and long term. Rapid urban growth, driven by in-migration and high fertility, is reshaping the urban landscape and placing severe pressure on infrastructure and services. Since more than half of the urban population of Africa lives in deprived areas, the need for effective urban planning and governance is all the more urgent.

51. A lack of urban governance remains a central constraint. Weak institutions, inconsistent planning frameworks and inadequate legal and regulatory environments limit effective urban management.[41] In many cities, the absence of reliable, community-generated data excludes residents of informal settlements from planning processes and worsens inequality of access to services.[42] Ambiguities in the governance and legal recognition of informal settlements, in particular in peri-urban areas, and the disconnect between formal policies and informal practices further complicate policy design and investment decisions.[43]

52. Emerging issues intensify these challenges. Climate change is increasing the frequency and severity of extreme weather events, and vulnerable urban populations in informal settlements are disproportionately affected. Since urban expansion is strengthening the link between urban morphology and energy systems, climate-resilient infrastructure planning is required.[44] Although smart-city approaches and digital transformation offer opportunities to improve services and economic efficiency, they come with constraints related to cost, data access, institutional capacity and public engagement.

53. As urbanization accelerates, poverty is becoming an increasingly urban phenomenon, making cities central to poverty reduction efforts. Although Africa has recorded sustained economic growth over the past two decades, jobs have not been created at the same pace, because growth has been concentrated in commodity sectors, whereas much of the population remains in informal employment and small-scale agriculture. Creating jobs is therefore critical to reduce poverty and inequality.

54. In Africa, a high proportion of poor people walk or use non-motorized transport,[45] and a substantial proportion of poor people live in informal settlements on the outskirts of cities, and must therefore make long and expensive commutes.[46]

55. The poor coverage and quality of reporting on the Sendai Framework Monitor in Africa and weak information systems result in data gaps and undermine decision-making and disaster risk governance, limiting the ability of countries to systematically assess losses, plan effectively and build urban resilience.

[41] Alanda A. Kamana, Hassan Radoine and Chimango Nyasulu, "Urban challenges and strategies in African cities: a systematic literature review", *City and Environment Interactions*, vol. 21 (2024).

[42] Fortune Mangara and Nirmala Dorasamy, "Voices unveiled: enhancing urban upgrading through participatory data collection in South African informal settlements, *Science of Law*, No. 3 (2025).

[43] Fentaw Baye, "Exploring urban infrastructure challenges in informal peri-urban Woldia: barriers, implications, and informal strategies", *Frontiers in Sustainable Resource Management*, vol. 4 (2025).

[44] Kavan Javanroodi and others, "Designing climate resilient energy systems in complex urban areas considering urban morphology: a technical review", *Advances in Applied Energy*, vol. 12 (2023).

[45] Sustainable Mobility for All, *Global Mobility Report 2017: Tracking Sector Performance* (Washington, D.C., 2017).

[46] Marianne Vanderschuren, Alexandra Newlands and Andrew Wheeldon, "Improving non-motorized transportation provision in a socially inclusive way: the case of Cape Town" *Frontiers in Sustainable Cities*, vol. 4 (June 2022).

IV. Transformative action and partnerships

56. Accelerating progress on Sustainable Development Goal 11 requires coordinated, people-centred action that strengthens urban productivity, inclusion, resilience and governance across Africa. Urbanization should be leveraged to create decent jobs, diversify the economy and drive structural transformation through aligned economic and spatial planning, with cities playing a central role in advancing poverty eradication (Goal 1) and inclusive growth (Goal 8).

57. Governments should invest strategically in cities as hubs for regional integration under the African Continental Free Trade Area. Cities should be production and consumption nodes situated along transport, energy and trade corridors. Information and communications technology and smart infrastructure further position cities as backbones of regional connectivity, supporting manufacturing, logistics and regional value chains. At the same time, through inclusive housing policies, Governments should prioritize the residents of slums and informal settlements by improving the affordability and quality of decent housing, enacting legal protections and adopting resilient, energy-efficient construction methods.

58. Smarter urban planning is essential to promote compact, sustainable growth. Integrated land-use planning, transit-oriented development, better public transport systems and the protection of peri-urban and green ecosystems can curb urban sprawl, reduce congestion and pollution, and enhance liveability and climate resilience. Green infrastructure, including parks, urban forests and green roofs, should be embedded in urban design to improve public health, biodiversity and climate adaptation.

59. Urban resilience requires stronger multisectoral coordination and platforms for managing transboundary risks, in alignment with the Paris Agreement; the 2030 Agenda; Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union; and the Sendai Framework. Governments should support data-sharing and mutual learning on disaster preparedness and resilience, including through such initiatives as the “Making Cities Resilient 2030” initiative.

60. Digital transformation is a key enabler. By developing people-centred smart-city solutions that are enhanced by data analytics, the Internet of things and artificial intelligence, Governments can improve traffic, energy and waste management and the delivery of services while reducing costs and environmental impact. In keeping with version 2.0 of the Universal Digital Public Infrastructure Safeguards Framework,[47] digital public infrastructure, including interoperable digital identity, payment and data systems, provides a foundation for inclusive, scalable urban solutions.[48]

61. Risk-informed, inclusive and climate-resilient urban development and participatory governance should be strengthened through evidence-based planning, participatory budgeting and community engagement, in which migrants and marginalized populations are included. A human rights-based approach enhances accountability, trust and social cohesion.

62. Financing risk-informed, inclusive and climate-resilient urban development remains critical. Cities should strengthen own-source revenue through improved land governance, land value capture, digitalization and subnational financial management, complemented by public-private

[47] For information on the Framework, see www.dpi-safeguards.org/.

[48] Ramy Adhmed Fathy and Jinxiao Luo, *Building Digital Public Infrastructure for Cities and Communities: A Strategic Framework for City Leaders, Officials, Ministers, and Policymakers* (Geneva, International Telecommunication Union, 2025).

partnerships to mobilize investment and innovation in housing, infrastructure and urban technology.

63. Such partnership programmes as the “Making Cities Resilient 2030” initiative should be leveraged to translate global commitments into measurable, systemic and people-centred resilience outcomes, ensuring that cities and human settlements become drivers of sustainable development rather than amplifiers of risk.

64. Through its opportunity and issue-based coalitions, the Africa Regional Collaborative Platform supports these efforts through leadership in innovation, digitalization, youth engagement and transformative education under the smart and sustainable cities flagship initiative. Through such initiatives, along with Sustainable Development Goal 11, the New Urban Agenda and such platforms as the United for Smart Sustainable Cities initiative, people-centred, technology-enabled urban development is promoted. Investment in education, vocational training, digital skills and entrepreneurship is essential to ensure that urban populations, in particular young people, can participate in emerging sectors and reduce structural inequality.