



Cairo Faith Pavilion Call to Action

Twelfth Session of the World Urban Forum · WUF12 · November 4-8, 2024
It all Starts at Home: Local Actions for Sustainable Cities and Communities

Preamble

The Faith Pavilion, a multi-faith initiative by Faith for Cities and its partners, made its historic debut at UN-Habitat's 12th World Urban Forum (WUF12) in Cairo, Egypt, November 4-8, 2024. Built on a decade of collaboration and trust-building with diverse faith communities and UN-Habitat, the Faith Pavilion draws on participatory experience at Habitat III and WUF 9, 10, and 11, along with active participation in UN-Habitat's World Urban Campaign.

With approximately 84% of the global population identifying with a faith or spiritual belief, there is growing recognition that UN-Habitat's urgent call for a "whole-of-society" approach to achieve the sustainable development goals (SDGs) must include religious communities and faith-based organizations. This practical call for robust "whole of society" collaboration mirrors the 2017 Singapore Declaration¹ that stated, "the inclusion of germane faith-based perspectives, and working relationships with faith-based organizations co-committed to the common good, are necessary to the success of the New Urban Agenda."

Most of the world's faiths strongly resonate with WUF12's theme "It All Starts at Home: Local Actions for Sustainable Cities and Communities," making 2024 the perfect time for faith-based organizations to host a Faith Pavilion at a World Urban Forum. The purpose of the Faith Pavilion is to be a space where religious and non-religious communities and practitioners can meet, share, learn, and build partnerships, united in the shared mission of localizing the SDGs for the common good.

The Faith Pavilion's approach to multi-faith collaboration is founded on covenantal pluralism,² which means supporting diverse faith communities in maintaining their unique identities while working together to build sustainable, inclusive cities. We summarize this perspective as "**rooted and linked**," firmly rooted in one's own faith tradition yet deeply respectful of other traditions, and open and eager to connect with others for collective action.

The Faith Pavilion at WUF12 introduces the first dedicated space for people of faith and faith communities at a World Urban Forum, though faith-based organizations and religious influence have long been integral to urban development efforts. Faith-driven organizations - groups inspired by religious values and perspectives - have consistently participated in these forums and worked alongside UN-Habitat. Likewise, many individuals guided by personal faith have engaged in World Urban Forums through their roles in government, the private sector, NGOs, and civil society. The Faith Pavilion highlights the rich diversity, reach, and impact of faith-based engagement in urban development, supporting these organizations and individuals while sharing their stories. By creating this Faith Pavilion, WUF12 fosters a

¹ *The Singapore Declaration* was made by the participants of a *UN-Habitat World Urban Campaign "Faith-Based Urban Thinkers Campus"* (UTC) convened in Singapore. It was the first faith-based UTC.

² As explored in *The Routledge Handbook of Religious Literacy, Pluralism and Global Engagement*, covenantal pluralism is a framework for fostering mutual respect, and collaboration among diverse groups, encouraging open engagement while allowing individuals to live by their own beliefs within a shared commitment to the common good. To learn more go to the Templeton Religion Trust's Covenantal Pluralism Initiative at, <https://templetonreligiontrust.org/areas-of-focus/covenantal-pluralism>.

growing, diverse coalition of faith-based partners collaborating with UN-Habitat to advance sustainable urban development.

The Faith Pavilion has sparked great enthusiasm and momentum among faith leaders and faith-based organizations dedicated to advancing the SDGs and fostering inclusive, thriving cities. Building on this energy, a faith-based Urban Thinkers Campus³ is being planned for 2025. A key part of the agenda will focus on organizing another Faith Pavilion at WUF13 in Baku, Azerbaijan.

Call to Action for Expanding Faith-Based Engagement to Advance Local Actions For Sustainable Cities and Communities

1. **Widen the Tent:** Actively invite and include faith communities and faith-based organizations in future World Urban Forums, Urban Thinkers Campuses, and other UN-Habitat initiatives. This participation strengthens collaboration and brings diverse spiritual perspectives to urban development discussions.
2. **Build Partnerships:** Foster collaboration between faith-based, governmental, and civil society entities through mutual trust and understanding, paving the way for effective urban partnerships.
3. **Build on the capacity of Faith Leaders and Faith-Based Organizations around the New Urban Agenda and SDGs:** Equip faith leaders and faith-based organizations with the knowledge to interpret the New Urban Agenda and SDGs through the lens of faith, inspiring action within their communities. In turn, build the awareness of civil society leaders and organizations on ways faith communities are already engaging the New Urban Agenda and the SDGs.
4. **Consult on Best Practices for Building Trust:** Facilitate dialogue among faith-based, governmental, and civil society organizations to share effective strategies for trust-building and collaboration, fostering partnerships grounded in mutual understanding and shared goals.
5. **Develop Faith-Based Action Plans:** Encourage faith communities to design actionable, locally focused plans that align with urban sustainability efforts, fostering both individual and collaborative action.
6. **Support Faith-Based Statements on Sustainability:** Encourage faith communities to engage with and develop statements endorsing the New Urban Agenda and SDGs linking spiritual values with sustainability.
7. **Multi-Faith Collaboration on Short- and Long-Term Projects:** Engage local faith communities in specific, short and long-term projects to achieve New Urban Agenda goals, demonstrating the power of focused multi-faith action.

Conclusion: Faith-Based Contributions to a Sustainable Urban Future

The Faith Pavilion at WUF12 underscored the essential role of spiritual values and faith community engagement in advancing the New Urban Agenda and SDGs. Grounding their actions in spiritual values and collaborating across traditions, religious communities bring invaluable contributions to building a sustainable and inclusive urban future for all.

³ “Urban Thinkers Campuses” are an initiative of the UN-Habitat’s World Urban Campaign, <https://www.worldurbancampaign.org/urban-thinkers-campus>.

Addendum: Affirmation of The WUF12 Cairo Call to Action by UN-Habitat⁴

Following the conclusion of WUF12 on Monday, November 11th, UN-Habitat issued the “*Cairo Call to Action: It All Starts at Home—Local Actions for Sustainable Cities and Communities*.”⁵

The Faith Pavilion recognizes the importance of the [WUF12 Cairo Call to Action](#), fully supports the statement, and endorses and commends it to faith leaders, institutions, and communities worldwide.

In particular, we highlight the Cairo Call to Action’s alignment with the United Nations’ recent [Pact for the Future](#) (September 2024), which states in Action 55:

We recognize the importance of the United Nations’ engagement with national parliaments and relevant stakeholders, while preserving the intergovernmental character of the Organization. The challenges we face require cooperation not only across borders but across all sectors of society. Our efforts must involve Governments as well as parliaments, the United Nations system and other international institutions, local authorities, Indigenous Peoples, civil society, business and the private sector, ***faith-based organizations***, the scientific and academic communities, and all people to ensure an effective response to our common challenges.⁶

This call for inclusive collaboration resonates deeply with UN-Habitat’s acknowledgment that achieving the objectives of the Cairo Call to Action demands, “effective participation and collaboration of all relevant stakeholders.”

In this spirit, the Faith Pavilion reiterates its dedication to advancing the New Urban Agenda, the WUF12 Cairo Call to Action, and our own Cairo Faith Pavilion Call to Action. With a collaborative mindset, we extend a hand of partnership to UN-Habitat and all organizations committed to these shared goals. Together, we look forward to a future defined by effective, cooperative actions between faith-based organizations, UN-Habitat, and other organizations and agencies co-committed to the pursuit of sustainable cities and thriving communities for all.

⁴ Addendum to the *Cairo Faith Pavilion Call to Action* added November 19, 2024.

⁵ Read the WUF12 “Cairo Call to Action” at this link, https://www.faithforcities.org/files/ugd/910fbb_c60c27feb0af4d2c8527ce0b9996b159.pdf.

⁶ Read the *Pact For the Future* at this link; emphasis added, https://www.faithforcities.org/files/ugd/910fbb_43e8a50d0847428db0e52f130296736a.pdf.