Unitar Online Catalogue

World Urban Forum 13 Water-Smart Cities: Building Urban Resilience through Capacity Development

People

Deadline: 20 May 2026

Type:	Side Event
Location:	Baku, Azerbaijan
Date:	20 May 2026
Duration:	1 Days
Thematic Area:	Other
Website:	https://wuf.unhabitat.org/event/wuf13/water-smart-cities-building-urban-resilie...
Price:	$0.00
Event Focal Point Email:	dize.dogan@unitar.org
Partnership:	Water and Amelioration Scientific Research Institute

BACKGROUND

As the world confronts the dual challenges of rapid urbanization and climate change, water management has emerged as a defining factor in building safe, resilient, and inclusive cities. By 2050, nearly 70% of the global population will

reside in urban areas, placing unprecedented pressure on water resources, infrastructure, and services (World Resources Institute, 2023). The WUF13 theme, '*Housing the world: Safe and resilient cities and communities*', provides a critical platform to explore how integrated water management underpins housing security, climate adaptation, and sustainable urban development.

This side event, co-hosted by UNITAR's Global Water Academy (UGWA) and Azerbaijan's Water and Amelioration Scientific Research Institute (WASRI), brings together international experts to examine the nexus between urban water systems and resilient housing. The event builds on the new collaboration between UGWA and WASRI, which is focused on capacity development, knowledge exchange, and innovative approaches to water governance in rapidly urbanizing contexts.

EVENT OBJECTIVES

- Explore the critical linkages between water infrastructure, housing resilience, and climate adaptation in urban settings
- Showcase innovative solutions and best practices in integrated urban water management, including water-sensitive urban design, nature-based solutions, and smart water technologies
- Highlight successful models from Azerbaijan and other regions demonstrating the transformation of water challenges into opportunities for sustainable urban development
- Foster multi-stakeholder dialogue among governments, international organizations, urban planners, water utilities, and communities on advancing water-resilient cities
- Contribute actionable recommendations to the Baku Call to Action on housing and urban resilience, emphasizing the foundational role of water systems

CONTENT AND STRUCTURE

Water-Secure Housing for Climate Resilience: Examining how reliable access to water and sanitation services is fundamental to adequate housing; exploring climate-responsive housing designs that integrate rainwater harvesting, greywater recycling, and flood-resilient infrastructure; addressing water equity in informal settlements and vulnerable communities.

Integrated Urban Water Management (IUWM): Holistic approaches coordinating water supply, wastewater treatment, and stormwater management; case studies of cities successfully implementing IUWM principles; the role of cross-sectoral coordination between housing, water, and urban planning authorities.

Nature-Based Solutions and Water-Sensitive Urban Design: Sponge cities and green infrastructure for flood management; permeable surfaces, bioswales, and constructed wetlands in residential areas; enhancing urban biodiversity while managing water resources; showcasing Azerbaijan's experience with ecological restoration and green urban spaces.

Digital Innovation and Smart Water Management: AI-powered systems for leak detection, demand forecasting, and network optimization; real-time monitoring and early warning systems for floods and droughts; blockchain for transparent water allocation and governance; integrating IoT sensors in housing developments for efficient water use.

Water Governance and Institutional Coordination: Multi-level governance frameworks bridging national, regional, and local authorities; public-private partnerships for water infrastructure development; community engagement and co-creation in water management decisions; policy coherence between housing, water, and climate adaptation strategies. Financing Water-Resilient Urban Development: Innovative financing mechanisms for water infrastructure in housing projects; leveraging climate finance for integrated water-housing solutions; cost-benefit analysis of investing in water resilience; exploring the economic returns of preventing water-related disasters.

METHODOLOGY

12.00-12.05 - Scene-Setting

Dr Ebru Canan-Sokullu, *Director, UNITAR Global Water Academy*

12.05-12.20 - Opening Session

Mr Ilgar Gulmammadov, *Deputy Chairman, Azerbaijan State Water Resources Agency*

Mr Alex Mejia, *Director Division for People and Social Development, Managing Director, CIFAL Global Network, UNITAR*

12.20-12.40 - Keynote Remarks

Ms Zeynep Bodur-Okyay, *G100 Smart and Sustainable Cities Wing Global Chair; President and CEO of Kale Group of Companies*

H.E. Ambassador Luis Gallegos, *Chairperson, UNITAR Advisory Board & Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Ecuador*

12.40-13.15 - Expert Panel

MODERATOR: Dr Ebru Canan-Sokullu, *Director, UNITAR Global Water Academy*

Mr Rashail Ismayilov, *Deputy Chairman of the Board, WASRI - Water challenges and opportunities in achieving WUF13 housing and resilience goals*

Prof Rufat Azizov, *Rector, Azerbaijan State Oil and Industry University (ASOIU) - Capacity Development for Sustainable Urban Water Systems*

Mr Mahammadali Khudaverdiyev*, Director General for International Affairs, Azerbaijan State Agency for Public Service and Social Innovations - Azerbaijan's Approach to Water Management and Public Service Delivery*

Ms Asa Johnson, *UN-Habitat, Head of Global Water Operators' Partnerships Alliance - The Role of International Partnerships in Urban Water Governance*

Ms Polina Liubomirova, *Business Development Director at ACWA - Desalination as Urban Strategy: Public-Private Partnerships for Climate-Resilient Water Supply*

13.15-13.25 - Q&A

13.25-13.30 - Closing Remarks

Ms Shalala Hasanova, *Head of Strategic Development Department, Water and Amelioration Scientific Research Institute*

TARGETED AUDIENCE

- National and local government officials responsible for water, housing, and urban development
- Urban planners, architects, and infrastructure developers
- Water utility managers and service providers
- UN agencies, international organizations, and development partners

- Academia, research institutions, and think tanks
- Civil society organizations and community representatives
- Private sector actors in water technology, green infrastructure, and sustainable housing

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

This side event supports WUF13's overarching theme by demonstrating that housing the world sustainably is impossible without resilient water systems. The event contributes to:

- SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities)
- The New Urban Agenda's commitment to equitable access to basic services and climate-resilient urban development
- The UN Water Action Decade by promoting integrated approaches to urban water challenges

Expected Outcomes

- Enhanced understanding among stakeholders of the critical role water plays in achieving safe and resilient housing
- Identification of practical, scalable solutions for integrating water management into housing and urban development policies
- Strengthened networks and partnerships between water, housing, and urban planning communities
- Concrete recommendations to inform the Baku Call to Action and the UN Secretary-General's mid-term review of the New Urban Agenda
- Showcase of Azerbaijan's achievements in urban water management as a model for other emerging and developing countries