



“The Heartbeat of the City”

A Call for Action to Shape Healthier Urban Futures

As our cities expand and transform, so does their profound impact on the health and well-being of every resident. Today, we stand at a crossroads. It’s time to bring forth a new era that integrates the physical and subjective well-being of every citizen into the lifeblood of our cities.

1. Secure Adequate Housing and Essential Services for All

Housing is not just shelter; it’s a human right and a cornerstone of health and dignity. We urge cities to make the right to healthy, safe, accessible, and affordable housing—and access to essential services like water, sanitation, waste management, clean energy — a foundation of national health policy and urban planning. Let’s prioritize public health and well-being in every corner of our cities, especially in informal settlements.

2. Embed Nature and Biodiversity into Urban Health Policies

Green spaces are lifelines that connect us to nature, improve mental health, and boost physical well-being. We advocate for a “One Health” approach, calling on cities to weave nature and biodiversity into urban policies. By doing so, we foster environments that nurture both people and ecosystems.

3. Design and regenerate urban spaces around care and quality of life

Cities bring people together. Social cohesion, connectedness, belonging and mental well-being are not luxuries; they are essential to thriving and resilient communities. Local investment in people-centred solutions can transform neighbourhoods into true hubs of health and resilience. We need urban planning and design processes that place people’s well-being at the centre, creating caring environments and recognizing the importance of place-making for all. We must reimagine urban spaces to prioritize inclusive, people-centred infrastructure that fosters connection and improve quality of life for all.

4. Champion Data-driven Health Policies Centred on Quality of Life

To shape healthier cities, we need accurate, locally relevant and people-centred data to identify health disparities and craft tailored interventions. Let’s view quality of life as an evolving measure and assessment of a city’s success, bringing physical, mental, and social well-being to the forefront of urban sustainability and policymaking.



5. Anticipate Future Health Challenges

Our cities must be prepared for what's ahead. We advocate for strategic foresight and resilient urban planning that addresses pandemic preparedness, climate change adaptation, and emerging health threats, from drug use to other human security issues. We must address both non-communicable diseases and infectious diseases, especially those resulting from poverty and inequity. By prioritizing public health readiness, cities can shield residents from future crises.

6. Develop New Health and Quality of Life Guidelines for Cities

The time is now for updated frameworks on urban health and quality of life that speak to all cities in all contexts. We urge WHO, UN-Habitat and other global and local organizations to unite to create guidelines that address today's complex challenges and provide a path toward healthier, more liveable cities.

Act Now—Make Cities the True Heartbeat of Health

It's a pivotal moment for humanity and cities are at the centre of the solution. By adopting these transformative actions, we can create environments that elevate health, foster belonging, and ensure every resident experiences a thriving quality of life. We have to address both existing urban space and, most importantly influence the planning processes of the urban space yet to be built.

Together, let's make our cities the true heartbeat of our collective well-being.



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