2026 UN FORUM OF MAYORS

Inclusive and Resilient Cities: A Dialogue with Mayors

Official Side Event on 12 October 2026, 08:30-09:45, Room B, WIPO Geneva

SUMMARY

More than 100 city leaders and partners from across regions joined this side event, in person in Geneva and virtually, co-hosted by the UN Global Disability Fund (GDF), the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the Office of the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Road Safety, and the Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI). The dialogue explored the priorities and barriers cities face in advancing disability inclusion, with a particular focus on safe and inclusive urban mobility, and what cities need in terms of support, financing and partnership to turn commitments into action.

1. Where Inclusion Is Won or Lost: City Priorities and Barriers

The first part of the discussion revealed both the diversity of challenges cities face and important areas of convergence.

Beyond physical accessibility. Cities shared experiences across a broad range of inclusion priorities: employment and economic participation, inclusive education, accessible public spaces and transport, independent living, access to essential services, and preparedness for emergencies and crises.

City examples included:

- **Buenos Aires:** Paid employment opportunities for young persons with disabilities created through existing municipal tools, without new legislation.
- **Nairobi:** Public procurement as a practical tool for economic inclusion, expanding business opportunities for persons with disabilities, women and youth.
- **Nashik:** Inclusive education, sensory development and pathways towards economic independence.
- **Ramallah:** The impact of disruptions to movement on access to treatment, rehabilitation and essential care, underscoring the importance of service continuity.

Meaningful participation is essential. A strong message from the discussion was that persons with disabilities and their representative organisations need to be involved from the beginning, in identifying barriers, designing solutions and assessing whether they actually work. This becomes even more critical during conflicts, disasters and other emergencies, when inaccessible systems can interrupt access to essential services.

2. Safe and Inclusive Urban Mobility

The spotlight on urban mobility brought the broader inclusion discussion into a practical context.

Design determines independence: The design of streets, public transport, pedestrian infrastructure and public spaces directly affects independence and participation. Safe and inclusive mobility is closely linked to employment, education and access to essential services, as well as to road safety and the ability to move safely during emergencies.

From the perspective of UCI and the Office of the Special Envoy for Road Safety, the discussion highlighted how street design and road-user behaviour determine whether persons with disabilities can move independently and safely, and the importance of including persons with disabilities and road safety experts in planning decisions from the outset.

Inclusion from the beginning: A clear message emerged: designing streets and infrastructure for all users from the start is more effective than retrofitting barriers once they have already been built.

The Global Alliance for Behavioral Health and Social Justice reminded participants that inclusion is not limited to the physical environment: mental health and well-being cut across mobility, housing, public space and service decisions, and should be integrated into how cities understand resident well-being and participation.

3. What Cities Need: Support, Financing and Partnership

The final part of the dialogue focused on what cities need to move from commitments to implementation.

Cities articulated a combination of needs: technical expertise, stronger municipal capacity, access to financing, and deeper partnerships across levels of government and with organisations of persons with disabilities.

- **Locarno:** Systematic collaboration with organisations of persons with disabilities to inform practical decisions on public infrastructure, from the design of public spaces to the choice of building materials and the role of national and regional financing in turning inclusive planning into concrete improvements.
- **Türkiye:** The importance of institutionalising accessibility through urban planning, building standards and public procurement, rather than relying on individual projects or initiatives.

Peer learning and exchange. Across the discussion, there was strong interest in learning from what other cities are already doing. The examples shared demonstrated the value of exchanging practical solutions and adapting proven approaches, rather than each city developing solutions in isolation.

4.Taking the Conversation Forward

These messages strongly reinforce the approach being pursued through GDF's Resilient and Inclusive Cities initiative.

The Resilient and Inclusive Cities Hub (RICH) is working to bring together catalytic financing, technical assistance, innovation and partnerships to help cities integrate disability inclusion into urban planning, services and investments , rather than create parallel systems.

The Network of Disability-Inclusive Cities (ID-Cities) was launched at this dialogue to connect cities committed to advancing disability inclusion and make it easier for experience and practical solutions to travel between them. Beyond peer exchange, the network offers:

- Technical assistance tailored to each city's starting point
- Support for evidence generation and inclusive planning
- City-to-city exchanges and field visits
- Global convenings bringing together city leaders, OPDs and partners

- Catalytic support to help cities develop and advance disability-inclusive approaches
- Connections to funding opportunities and partnership pathways

The network is free and open globally, with a shared commitment and support matched to each city's context.