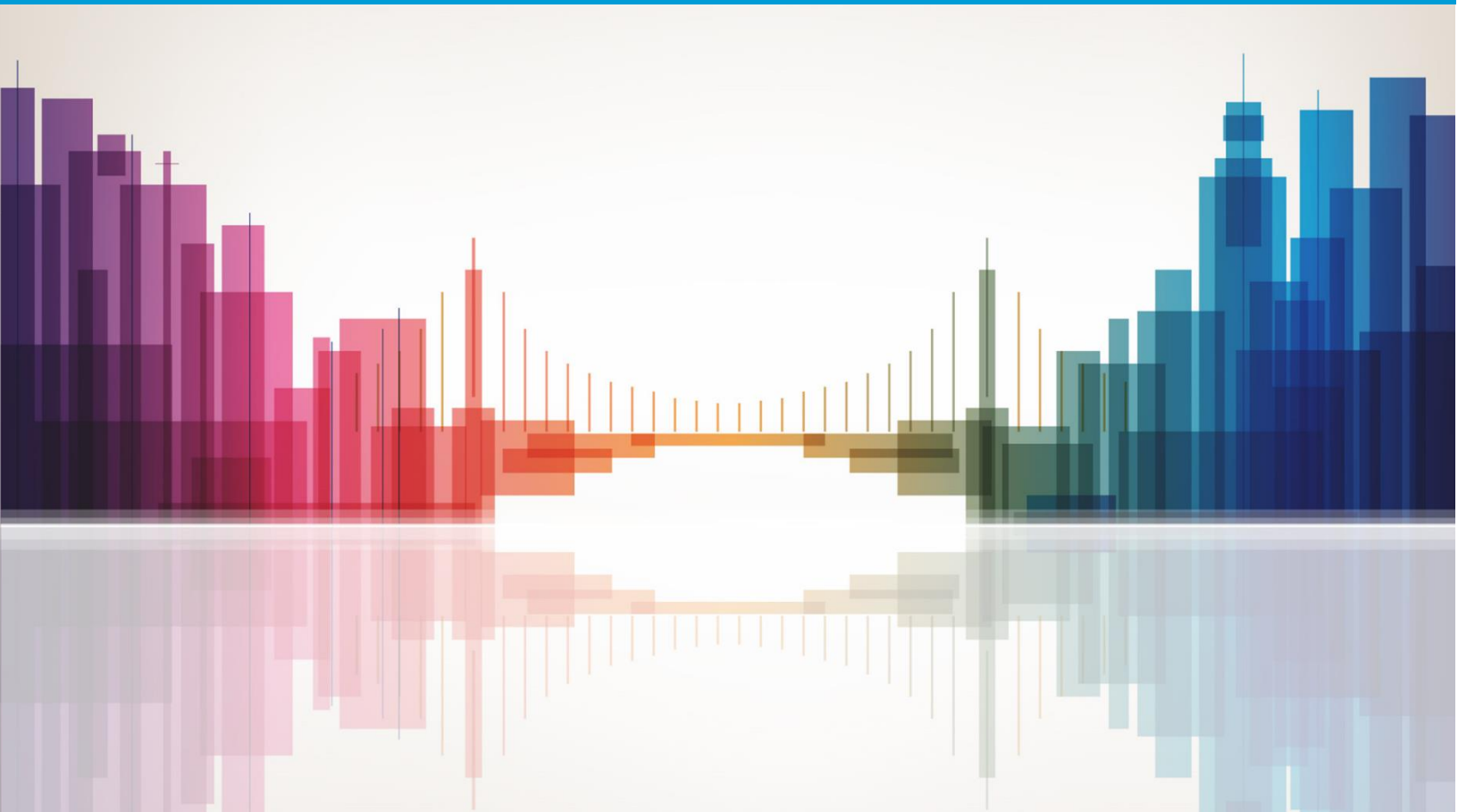


Ninth Meeting of United for Smart Sustainable Cities

31 October 2025
Meeting Report



Organized by:



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The Meeting Report was developed by Cristina Bueti, Chiara Co and Yining Zhao (ITU).

Additional information and material related to this report are available [HERE](#).

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Introduction to the U4SSC

The “[United for Smart Sustainable Cities](#)” (U4SSC) is a United Nations initiative, coordinated by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat). Additionally, U4SSC is supported by the following 17 other UN Agencies and Programmes:



- Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
- Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)
- Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)
- United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA)
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
- United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)
- United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women)
- the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP),
- United Nations Environment Programme Finance Initiative (UNEP-FI)
- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)
- United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)
- United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)
- United Nations Office for Partnerships (UNOP)
- United Nations University Operating Unit on Policy-Driven Electronic Governance (UNU-EGOV)
- World Tourism Organization (UN Tourism)
- World Meteorological Organization (WMO).

The [United for Smart Sustainable Cities \(U4SSC\) initiative](#), established in 2016, supports cities and communities worldwide in leveraging digital technologies to accelerate their transition toward smart, sustainable, and resilient urban futures. Aligned with the **Sustainable Development Goals**, particularly **SDG 11**, and the **Pact for the Future**, U4SSC serves as a global platform to shape inclusive policies, foster innovation, and advance digital transformation for people and the planet.



Objectives and Programme

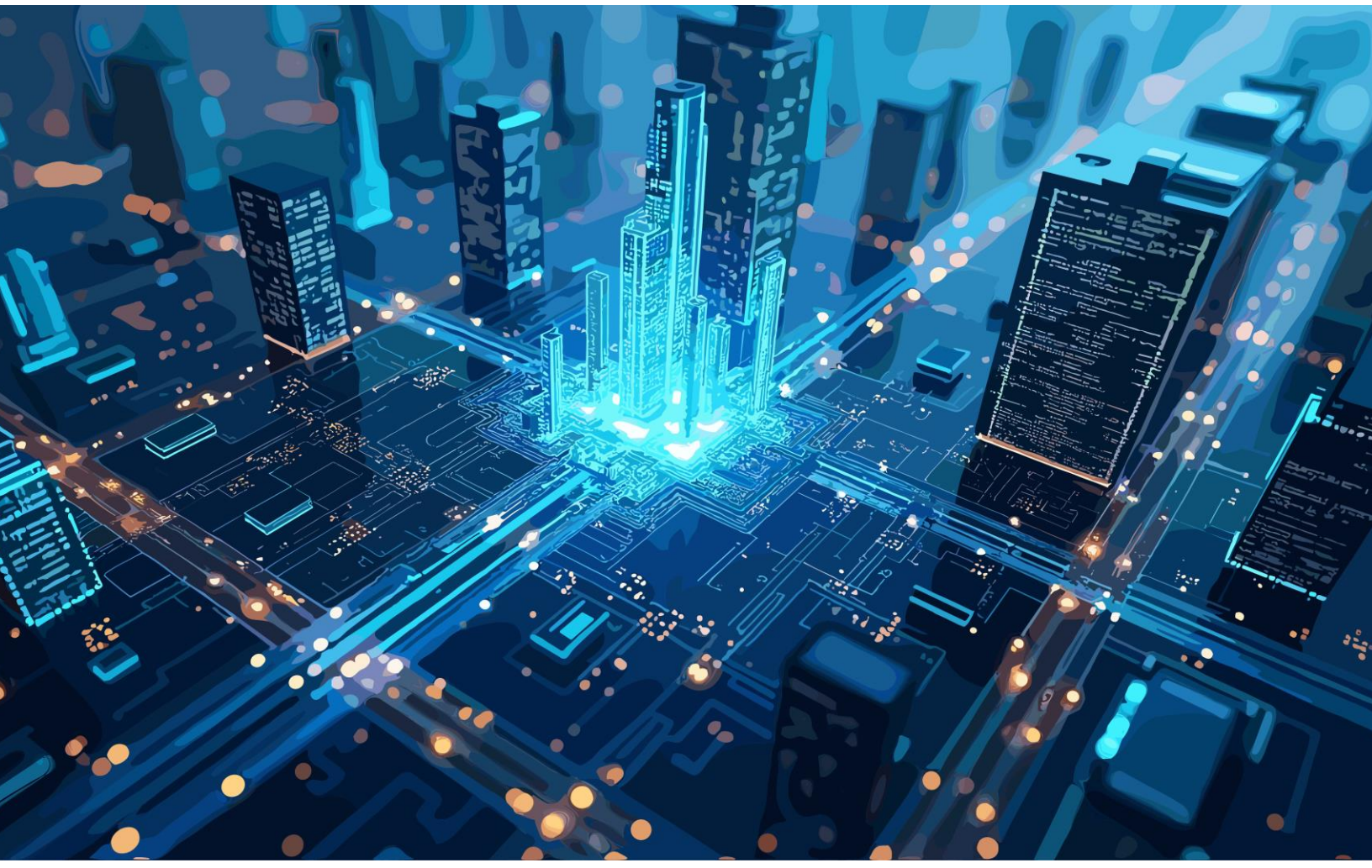
The Ninth Meeting of the United for Smart Sustainable Cities (U4SSC) was convened to review key deliverables and projects, provide updates from thematic groups, and present the U4SSC Annual Work Plan for 2025-2026. The meeting underscored the importance of collaboration, innovation, and strategic foresight in advancing people centred smart cities. It brought together representatives from UN agencies, city leaders, and experts across diverse thematic working groups to exchange insights and chart joint actions for the future.

The objectives of the Ninth U4SSC meeting were to:

- Provide an update on the work of the U4SSC Thematic Groups and Working Groups;
- Discuss new U4SSC activities and approve the U4SSC Annual Work Plan (2025-2026).

The programme and the presentations of the Ninth U4SSC Meeting can be found at:

<https://u4ssc.itu.int/9th-meeting/>



Highlights of the Discussion

Opening Remarks

The meeting began with opening statements from distinguished speakers:



Seizo Onoe

Director, Telecommunication Standardization Bureau, ITU

During the 9th Meeting of the U4SSC, Seizo Onoe, Director of the Telecommunication Standardization Bureau at the ITU, welcomed participants and reaffirmed the initiative's role as the United Nations platform for cities, supported by over 20 UN entities working together to make cities smarter, more sustainable, and people-centred. He underscored ITU's commitment as the UN agency for digital technologies and highlighted the work of ITU-T Study Group 20 in developing international standards for the Internet of Things, digital twins, and smart cities and communities—standards that build trust, enable data sharing, and ensure that innovation benefits everyone. He emphasized that technology must serve people's needs and aspirations, noting the importance of the U4SSC Key Performance Indicators, based on the ITU and UNECE standard, in translating technology into inclusion, resilience, and sustainability. A powerful example of how standards can drive real transformation and improve citizens' lives. Concluding his remarks, he invited more cities to join the U4SSC initiative, to exchange knowledge and shape a world where every city is smart, sustainable, and people-centred.



Paola Deda

Director, Forests, Land and Housing Division, UNECE

During the opening remarks at the 9th U4SSC Meeting, Paola Deda, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), emphasized the importance of multilateral collaboration in advancing smart sustainable cities through the U4SSC initiative. She highlighted the impact of the Key Performance Indicators for Smart Sustainable Cities, developed jointly by UNECE and ITU 10 years ago and recognized as a UNECE Standard on Smart Sustainable Cities, the KPIs continue to provide a globally consistent framework for assessing urban performance, aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals. She also underlined the critical role of robust data ecosystems and digital transformation in addressing urban challenges, particularly the housing crisis. She urged the community to continue fostering innovation, inclusivity and sustainability, recognizing these as fundamental values of the U4SSC vision. Additionally, she emphasized the need for cities to harness digital solutions responsibly and inclusively to improve residents' quality of life.

Highlights of the Discussion



Okan Geray,
Chair, U4SSC

Okan Geray, reaffirmed the initiative's mission to ensure that digital transformation serves people and cities. He announced UNITAR's joining as the 20th UN partner organization, strengthening collective efforts to advance smart, sustainable, and inclusive urban development. He highlighted the work of U4SSC's nine thematic groups addressing areas such as AI, governance, and digital wellbeing, which develop practical frameworks and benchmarks to translate global goals into local action. Concluding his remarks, he called for strengthened partnerships to empower people, inspire innovation, and ensure that no one is left behind.



Highlights of the Discussion

Session 1: Anticipating Tomorrow: AI, Wellbeing & Foresight in People-Centred Cities



Ebru Canan-Sokullu
Director, Global Water Academy, UNITAR

Moderated by Dr Ebru Canan-Sokullu, Director, Global Water Academy, UNITAR, the first session spotlighted three key thematic areas shaping the cities of the future: Artificial Intelligence in Cities, Future Foresight for Cities, and Digital Wellbeing. Speakers presented ongoing work on AI policy frameworks, scenario planning for urban resilience, and benchmarks for digital quality of life. Discussions emphasized integrating foresight, ethics, and people-centred design into city strategies to foster resilient, inclusive, and thriving urban communities highlighting the need for capacity development for people-centered smart cities and their governance.



Soumaya Ben Dhaou
Co-leader, U4SSC Thematic Group on Artificial intelligence in cities

Soumaya Ben Dhaou provided updates on the Thematic Group on Artificial Intelligence, which develops frameworks and methodologies to harness AI in conjunction with other frontier technologies such as big data, IoT, cloud computing, and robotics to deliver urban services more efficiently and effectively. The group led by Digital Dubai and UNU-EGOV will continue its efforts with Working Group 2 on Autonomous Cities, Working Group 3 on AI-Driven KPIs Measurement, Working Group 4 on FAIR Cities – Fostering AI for Inclusive and Responsible Urban Environments and will also initiate new Working Groups 5 on Agentic AI for Cities.

Highlights of the Discussion



Okan Geray,
Chair, U4SSC

Okan Geray provided updates on the following Thematic Groups:

- Thematic Group on Digital transformation for people-centred cities, which aims to guide cities in leveraging emerging technologies and fostering inclusive digital economies to build smarter, more sustainable, and equitable urban and rural environments. It will initiate a new Working Group on Digital Development Goals. Working Group 1 has concluded its work and developed “[A framework for enabling people-centred cities through digital transformation.](#)”
- Thematic Group on Future Foresight for Cities, which adopts a forward-looking approach to explore potential futures, enabling cities to proactively shape their development.
- Thematic Group on Digital Wellbeing, aimed to research and benchmark existing digital wellbeing frameworks, approaches, and interventions. Preliminary analysis indicates fragmented approaches to digital wellbeing. This group has concluded its work and launch the deliverable on “A guide to digital wellbeing and its 7 case studies”, as follows:
 - Dubai’s Pursuit of Digital Wellbeing
 - End Now Foundation
 - The Cybersmile Foundation
 - Spotify
 - Columbus, Ohio, United States of America
 - Shanghai, China
 - Jeddah, Saudi Arabia



Highlights of the Discussion

Session 2: Transforming Together: Digital Innovation and Sustainability for People-Centred Cities



Tania Marcos
Vice-Chair, U4SSC

Moderated by Tania Marcos, Vice-Chair, U4SSC, the second session provided an overview of the ongoing work of key U4SSC Thematic Groups, covering Digital Transformation for people-centred cities, Digital Public Infrastructure, Sustainable Digital Transformation in Buildings and Urban Energy, and Social-Cultural Sustainability in People-Centred City Governance. Speakers shared insights on how cities can leverage digital innovation to advance sustainability, resilience, and inclusion. The discussion highlighted how integrated approaches—combining technology, governance, and culture—are shaping the next generation of smart, sustainable, and people-centred urban development.



Arne Ingebrigtsen,
Leader, U4SSC Thematic Group on Social-cultural sustainability in people-centred city governance

Arne Ingebrigtsen presented updates on the Thematic Group on Social-cultural sustainability in people-centred city governance. The Thematic Group will continue its work in identifying social quantifiable sustainability indicators or measurement methodology for implementation of quantifiable measures of social sustainability in urban governance.



Bettina Tratz-Ryan
Co-Leader of Working Group 2 of the Thematic Group on Digital transformation for people-centred cities

Bettina Tratz-Ryan presented updates on Working Group 2 of the Thematic Group on Digital transformation for people-centred cities. This Working Group has developed a [publication on Dynamic Policy benchmarks for digital transformation of people-centred cities](#). The publication introduces the Dynamic Policy Maturity Benchmark Model, which helps cities update their policy frameworks to keep pace with rapid technological changes while ensuring sustainability. The model uses a dynamic benchmarking approach to assess the impact of digital technology on thresholds, promoting ongoing

policy evolution and stakeholder engagement for effective, inclusive urban development aligned with SDG11. The Working Group is currently developing case studies building on the Policy Benchmarks for the Digital Transformation of People-Centred Cities.



Gamze Geray

WG3 Co-leader, U4SSC Thematic group on Digital transformation for people-centred cities

Gamze Geray presented updates on Working Group 3 of the Thematic Group on Digital transformation for people-centred cities. The Working Group will provide cities with an integrated framework to assess and guide people-centric digital transformation through tiered key performance indicators (KPIs), performance and impact assessment, and a maturity model.



Warren Smith,

WG5 Co-leader, U4SSC Thematic group on Digital transformation for people-centred cities

Warren Smith presented updates on Working Group 6 of the Thematic Group on Digital transformation for people-centred cities. This Working Group will produce a Model Policy on Intergenerational Procurement to support city administrations to meet the needs of people and the planet, today and for future generations, through digital transformation.



Bas Boorsma

WG6 Co-leader, U4SSC Thematic group on Digital transformation for people-centred cities

Bas Boorsma shared information on a new Working Group on "Digital Development Goals" under the Thematic Group on Digital transformation for people-centred cities. This new Working Group will develop a global framework of Digital Development Goals for Cities. This framework will support achieving the SDGs by means of digitalization, while also containing unique new goals that will address inclusive and sustainable digitalization itself. This framework will help cities to report progress on – and enable progress through - digitalization using clear metrics.

Highlights of the Discussion



Ramy Ahmed Fathy

U4SSC Vice Chair and Leader, U4SSC Thematic Group on Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) for cities

Ramy Ahmed Fathy provided updates on the U4SSC Thematic Group on Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) for cities, which establishes policies, frameworks, and requirements of digital public infrastructure and services for smart sustainable cities to enable human-centered digital transformation at scale. The Thematic Group launched the deliverable on [Building digital public infrastructure for cities and communities](#). This framework document provides a strategic roadmap for city leaders, ministers and policymakers to understand, design, and implement DPI that delivers real impact for people and communities. The Thematic Groups will continue its work through several dedicated Working Groups:

- **Working Group 1** on Governance and regulatory framework led by Ronaldo Moura (ANATEL);
- **Working Group 2** on Technological infrastructure and technical specifications led by Jan Redlich (Bonn Consulting Group);
- **Working Group 3** on Security and privacy aspects led by Leyi Zhang (ZTE China);
- **Working Group 4** on DPI Toolkits led by James Amattey (Norenson IT) and Houssam AlMasri (Khatib & Alami); and
- **Working Group 5** on Socio economic impacts and inclusivity led by Katharine Willis (University of Plymouth, UK).



Lorena Villar

Senior Project Specialist, UN Tourism

Lorena Villar presented updates on Working Group 7 of the Thematic Group on City Platforms and Data Spaces. The Working Group is developing the Smart platforms: Guide for tourism destinations, which will provide a global and adaptable framework so that any destination can design and implement its own smart platform.



Maïke Salize

WG8 Leader, U4SSC Thematic Group on City Platforms and Data Spaces

Maïke Salize shared information on a new Working Group on "Integrated Urban, Land and Housing Data Framework" under the Thematic Group City Platforms and Data Spaces. This Working Group will focus

Highlights of the Discussion

on developing guidelines for setting up an integrated data framework that systematically brings together housing, land, and urban development data and makes it available across all levels of governance to monitor housing needs and affordability trends and strengthen policy transparency and accountability.



Victoria Papp

Co-leader, U4SSC Thematic Group on Sustainable Digital Transformation in Buildings and Urban Energy

Victoria Papp provided updates on the Thematic Group on Sustainable Digital Transformation in Buildings and Urban Energy. The Thematic Group will continue its efforts with Working Group 1 on Emerging Solutions for Buildings, which is the first core working group within this thematic effort because buildings are the most immediate and scalable opportunity for impact. Working Group 2 on Guiding Principles for Buildings will build off of the findings from Working Group 1 and provide concrete guiding principles for buildings looking to drive sustainable digital transformation.



Highlights of the Discussion

Session 3: Update of the annual work plan and future activities



Giampiero Bambagioni
Vice-Chair, U4SSC

Moderated by Giampiero Bambagioni, Vice-Chair, U4SSC, this session focused on planning U4SSC's future work. The session presented an overview of the U4SSC annual work plan, summarizing progress achieved and outlining key priorities and activities for the next implementation cycle. It also highlighted how the initiative's future work will align with the Pact for the Future and the Global Digital Compact, reinforcing U4SSC's commitment to advancing smart, sustainable, and people-centred urban development in support of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



Cristina Bueti,
U4SSC Secretariat; Counsellor, ITU

Cristina Bueti, U4SSC Secretariat, presented the Annual Work Plan for 2025-2026, outlining strategic objectives and upcoming projects. The focus of the next year's work will include further advancing digital transformation for people-centred cities, digital public infrastructure (DPI) for cities, sustainable digital transformation in buildings and urban energy, future foresight for cities and AI in cities. New areas of focus will include Agentic AI, city platforms and data spaces, and the development of Digital Development Goals, all aimed at fostering inclusive, resilient, and sustainable urban innovation. The [U4SSC workplan](#) was approved.

Highlights of the Discussion

Closing Remarks



Wendy Teresa Goico Campagna
Vice-Chair, U4SSC

The meeting concluded with a closing speech by Wendy Teresa Goico Campagna, Vice-Chair of U4SSC, who thanked city leaders, UN partners, and experts for their commitment to people-centred digital transformation. She highlighted the launch of the U4SSC Deliverable on A framework for enabling people-centred cities through digital transformation, offering cities a practical framework for inclusive, resilient, and sustainable digitalization. She reaffirmed U4SSC's mission to ensure technology serves people and advances the Pact for the Future, the Global Digital Compact, and the SDGs, noting the platform's growing collaboration among 20 UN entities, including UNITAR.

