

United Nations Habitat

Repurposing of Infrastructure



JACKRABBIT MUN VIII

L.B. POLY - MAY 23th, 2026

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CO-HEAD CHAIR LETTERS

Hi Delegates!

My name is Bella Ferrera, and I'm ecstatic to be one of your Co-Chairs (and ½ of the Bellas) for Jackrabbit MUN VIII! I'm a sophomore in PACE here at Poly. This is my 2nd year in Model UN. I love MUN and how it allows me to practice research and debate skills in a safe space as well as gaining a broader perspective of the world. MUN is overall a really great experience and I'm glad you will be able to experience it here at Poly.

Outside of MUN, I do theatre and improv. Also I read a lot, mainly fantasy, but I do read some other genres as well. My favorite book at the moment (it's a very hard decision and usually is what I'm currently reading) is *The Naturals* by Jennifer Lynn Barns. Due to my love of reading I also dabble in creative writing— both poetry and prose.

When I started doing MUN, I was really nervous to speak and overall just unsure of what was happening (I *really* didn't understand Model UN). But just putting my best foot out there and asking for help from the dais and my peers made me improve as a delegate. Feel free to email me or anyone else on the dais with any questions about the room or anything else. I'm so excited to have you guys at Jackrabbit MUN, and good luck and have fun!!

Sincerely,

Bella Ferrera

UN Habitat | Co-Head Chair

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CO-HEAD CHAIR LETTERS

Heyy delegates!

My name is Bella Sim! Yes, you read that right, both of your co-head chairs are named Bella. I am so glad that you are a delegate at Jackrabbit MUN VIII! As a sophomore in PACE at Poly, I am having fun in my second year of Model UN. MUN has really changed my confidence as a person. It taught me to improvise when things don't go as planned, think fast on the spot, and collaborate with others. I've gained new friends, both here at Poly and outside of Poly, with whom I share fond memories. Model UN has also broadened my horizons, exposing me to the happenings around the world.

Besides Model UN, I play tennis for Poly, and I used to run cross country and track (I still occasionally run :P). I am the President of one of our school's environmental clubs, Green Team, and Coordinator of Competitive Events for HOSA (Health Occupations Students of America). I am a big foodie and love trying new things. I would say I am a Jack of all trades, as I've had so many hobbies throughout my life, but I primarily obsess over pencils and cameras.

If you are new to MUN, I totally understand. It's definitely a huge learning curve. But my best advice to all of you who are taking that leap of faith is to just have fun. I hope you have fun at Jackrabbit MUN VIII and make the most out of this conference! Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns you may have.

Cheers,

Bella Sim

UN-Habitat | Co-Head Chair

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POSITION PAPER GUIDELINES

- Position Papers are due at 11:59 PM on **Sunday, May 17th**.
- Delegates **must** submit position papers to be eligible for **research AND committee awards**.
- Position Papers can be submitted through a Google form:
 - <https://forms.gle/H3ruhahP2SQUEPs38>
- At the top of each paper, include your character/country name, first and last name, school name, and appropriate committee.
 - United States
 - First Last
 - School Name
 - UN-Habitat
- Papers should be emailed as a PDF file
 - Paper content should also be copied and pasted into the body of the email so it can still be graded in the event of any technical difficulties
 - Please name the file and subject line of the email [Committee_Country]
 - Ex. **UN-Habitat_United States**
- Papers should be 1-2 pages in length with an additional Works Cited page in MLA format
- Papers should be single-spaced in Times New Roman 12 pt. font and include no pictures or graphics
- Please include the following sections for each committee topic:
 - Background & UN Involvement
 - Position of your Country
 - Possible Solutions

If you have any questions or concerns, please email one of your chairs.



TOPIC SYNOPSIS

One of the most concerning examples of wasting previous infrastructure is unnecessary demolition. Currently, we tear down old buildings and start from scratch which creates 40% of the world's carbon pollution and fills up our landfills with large amounts of waste. However, with repurposing empty factories and closed down power plants by giving them a second life as housing, parks or clean energy hubs, we can make productive use of infrastructure. As the old saying goes, “one man’s trash is another man’s treasure”.

However, fixing up abandoned places isn't always easy and affordable. Many of these come from brownfields meaning they contain old industrial chemicals that are more expensive to clean up. Secondly, there's technical legal issues that come with the infrastructure, such as outdated building codes which make it more complicated to turn it from a warehouse to an apartment complex. On top of this we have to make sure that as we “fix up” a neighborhood, we aren't uprooting the property value and affecting pre-existing residents. The future of the cities should prioritize better use of existing structures as opposed to new establishments to achieve climate goals and address the infrastructure gap. Repurposing industrial sites can transform urban growth toward environmental sustainability.

Delegates should identify the problem, propose realistic solutions, protect communities, secure funding, and align with climate goals. With that, attempt to find helpful solutions to stop creating new construction and reuse old refurbishments into creating a new environmental place for the public.



COMMITTEE DESCRIPTION

The United Nations Human Settlements (UN-Habitat) is mandated by the UN General Assembly to promote socially and environmentally sustainable development in towns and cities. Established in 1978, with the first UN-Habitat meeting in Vancouver, Canada, its main mission is to promote transformative change in cities and human settlements through policy, knowledge, and technical assistance, but most importantly, collaborations. UN-Habitat is the focus of all urbanization and human settlements within the UN system. UN-Habitat's plan for 2026-2029 adopts a strategic method to address the challenges and the opportunities in the 21st century. Not only that, but the UN-Habitat is committed to having good governance with leading practices to ensure creating an essential environment of accountability and transparency, guaranteeing that UN-Habitat's businesses are proposed effectively and continue to improve.

UN-Habitat's framework fosters a strong culture of accountability across its organization. For over forty years, the UN-Habitat has served as a global leader, promoting adequate environmental and human shelters for all. Secondly, the UN-Habitat collaborations value the role of partnerships as it contributes to the expertise and the resources to improve lives in urban living areas. It has worked with many countries such as Afghanistan, the U.S., the Philippines, Kenya, Nepal, and many more.



BACKGROUND

During the 20th century, industrialization and modernization called for rapid development and economic growth. With advancing technology and agricultural booms, the human population grew exponentially, followed by rapid urbanization and the need to expand infrastructure for factories, homes, and other buildings. After World War II, many countries turned to modernist planning when rebuilding devastated cities and towns. There, they focused on large-scale production and inexpensive projects, relying on the exploitation of new materials and preferring new construction over reuse. Eventually, in the late 20th Century, leaders and researchers became conscious of the need for sustainable development in infrastructure that lasts, leading to concepts like adaptive reuse and circular construction.

Adaptive Reuse

Around 50% of all existing stock buildings were built before 1970, and a third of them were built between 1970 and 1990. Stock buildings were only made to last from 100 to 150 years, and some were only made to last 60 years. As these buildings become outdated, abandoned, or require remodelling, property owners tend to turn to tearing buildings down and building them back up again. Long after their development, many began to realize that traditional demolition and redevelopment are not sustainable and sought better alternatives to the modernization of buildings. This led to the creation and adoption of adaptive reuse. Adaptive reuse is the process of repurposing existing structures for modern use. Choosing adaptive reuse allows buildings to maintain cultural heritage while serving a new purpose. This also reduces construction costs as it cuts down on the expense of thoroughly removing a building, as construction



planners are able to build off what was originally present. Demolition usually costs around \$4 - \$10 per square foot (\$6,000 - \$25,000+ for an average house), so getting rid of that cost, dramatically reduces the cost. While reducing costs, it also optimizes energy consumption and combats urban sprawl that is generated from the expansion of construction. However, there are negative sides that come with adaptive reuse, such as legal and regulatory challenges. When remodelling, the newly constructed buildings must reach environmental standards. In the past building regulations have been more lax than they are now; using materials like asbestos that is now known as a carcinogen and is banned to build with by the EPA. Another material, while not completely banned, is prohibited is RAAC or reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete, which although light and cheap, deteriorates within 30 years making it a safety hazard. Many buildings from the 50's all the way to the 90's were built using RAAC and now at the risk of sudden collapse. Which brings forth the issue of if those materials were considered standard how can the new structures be in regulation for the future.

Circular Infrastructure

Circular infrastructure emerges from applying the ideas of a circular economy to infrastructure. A circular economy is an approach driven by eliminating waste and pollution, keeping materials cycling in the economy, and regenerating nature. The 6R's principles are also a key idea driving circular economies (Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Repair, Refurbish, Recycle, and Recover). Currently the world runs on a linear economy, where producing and then discarding are the normal, this is also true for infrastructure. Applying this to infrastructure means a multitude of things like reusing materials, introducing new technology, designing for deconstruction, as well as utilizing adaptive reuse. Reusing materials is a key concept in both circular infrastructure and economy.



Adapting to use non-virgin materials within construction, does require some preplanning or designing for deconstruction. Having mechanical fasteners like screws over adhesives, keeps the materials usable for longer prolonging the life span. Going along with fasteners, just the overall use of more quality materials will allow for more durability and less waste. Many of these concepts, while not providing immediate economic prosperity, will in the long term grow the economy, by not only saving cost through repurposing and reuse, but also reducing dependence on raw materials. By reducing the dependence of one nation's raw material on others it will mitigate supply chain disruptions that could have been detrimental to their economy. Outside of the economy, switching towards circular infrastructure will affect the people. Many people want to become more sustainable and greener because of the effects of climate change, in turn making circular infrastructure more preferable. However, the average consumer doesn't have the proper information to correctly make decisions about circular infrastructure—as well as hyper consumerism being at an all time high, doesn't create the proper environment for circular infrastructure to flourish. Circular infrastructure also affects the people currently working in construction. The US alone has around 9 million people working in construction. In Europe 4 to 7 percent of the GDP is attributed to construction.



UNITED NATIONS INVOLVEMENT

UN Habitat's efforts on repurposing, upgrading and managing the urban infrastructure to promote sustainable and inclusive cities. When operating infrastructures in 90+ countries it mainly focuses on managing waste, rehabilitating areas in post conflict zones, and upgrading settlements to meet the healthy climates and SDGs.

Key Aspects of the Infrastructure Repurposing:

- **Post Conflict/ Recovery:** In areas (ex: Lebanon) the UN-Habitat assesses debris for recycling and dangerous content supporting the cause of reusing of reconstruction to avoid waste and reduce and new consumption resources.
- **Sustainable Infrastructure & Waste:** Partnerships with UNEP helped promote less intensive construction, waste production to benefit the use of reusing materials to combat the effects of urban expansion.
- **Informal Settlement Upgrading:** Part of the UN-Habitats 2026-2029 strategy plan focuses on the transformation of informal settlements by improving basic services yet, upgrading infrastructure.



- **Policy and Technical Support:** The UN-Habitat has utilized its tools such as the “Infrastructure Improvement Enhancer” to provide help for local governments evaluating also improving the current infrastructure that is happening in their country.

Partnerships and Frameworks:

UNITAR: UNITAR collaborates on training for sustainable urban development and capacity building.

GWOPA: “The Global Water Operators” partnership helps the improvement of water and sanitation utilizing the performance by shared expertise.

With that, the UN- Habitat ensures that the infrastructure development aligns with the SDG’s mainly SDG goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) to foster urban economy principles in urban areas internationally.



BLOC POSITIONS

African Bloc: As founded in 1964, the African Development Bank (AfDb) has been a substantial contributor to Africa, strengthening positive collaboration and partnerships with all levels of governments, for the eradication of urban poverty, and transforming Africa’s urban development agenda. UN-Habitat is committed to Africa with the support from such partners, and has been involved in implementing projects and programs to 49 countries and 22 active countries across Africa. Specifically Somalia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, with projects focusing on post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation. Other countries to consider with sizable portfolios consist of Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, and Ghana. Throughout these countries, programs are commonly being implemented, covering urban resilience, climate change adaptation, housing, poverty reduction, finance and regional development.

Asia-Pacific Bloc: Considerable progress has commonly been reported around numerous Asian countries, particularly India, China, Philippines, and Lao PDR, regarding the implementation of accessibility to shelter, and resilient infrastructure, which are already supporting and providing for over 8 million people across 30 countries. Innovative technologies in these countries are currently being enacted as developments towards climate action plans, critical services, and climate tech, supporting the civilians of the above mentioned countries. Achieving SDG 11 “Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable” is vital to the fostering of equitable development and viable urban futures, yet, is not on track with the innovative technologies in Asia, which are being implemented presently. To get on



course with this idea, collaborating with governments, local governments, specialists, and communities, will help with the overall innovation of building better places for all to live.

Western European and Developed Bloc: WEOG nations and European Union institutions greatly support and contribute to UN-Habitat, providing over 60% of the total funding for projects. While a majority of WEOG countries have further advanced urban systems, they collaborate on policies such as the Geneva UN Charter on Sustainable Housing, to address affordability, resilience, and safety. Additionally, there are some drawbacks when considering issues in the European region, mainly centering on attaining sustainable and resilient cities while dealing with high urbanization. Major challenges include the severe affordable housing crisis, and upgrading aging infrastructure to cope with climate change impacts such as heatwaves and flooding. The affordable housing crisis consists of rising house costs, homelessness specifically among younger demographics, and lack of supply. While the urban sustainability and climate change crisis contains several European cities being highly vulnerable to climate-related hazards, varying from increased flooding, to heatwaves, and pollution.

Middle Eastern Bloc: Due to the urgent needs of housing and sustainable urbanisation in the Arab Region, several Arab member states advocated for an Arab Regional office, and in September 2010, the Government of Egypt signed a cooperation agreement with UN-Habitat which focused on the establishment of a ROAS, accredited in April 2011. ROAS supports 18 countries, consisting of Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, and many more across the Middle East and Northern Africa, focusing on sustainable urbanization, urban



recovery, and affordable housing, which have been notable when addressing the needs of 81 million people who are currently living in informal settlements, or inadequate housing in the region. To overcome these adversities as of late, key projects focus on urban planning, recovery, and providing basic services to countries such as Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Palestine, while collaborating with LAS, on the strategy for Housing and Sustainable Urban Development 2030, which represents a methodology for localizing and implementing SDG 11.

Latin American and Caribbean Bloc: Rapid urbanization across Latin America and the Caribbean has created significant challenges related to housing, infrastructure, inequity, and environmental sustainability, making inclusive and resilient urban development a regional priority. In collaboration with UN-Habitat, countries in the region support the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the advancement of SDG 11, which promote sustainable cities and communities. Addressing these challenges requires strong cooperation between both national and local governments, academia, civil society, and the private sector to improve urban planning and ensure equitable access to services. Emphasis is placed on strengthening institutional capacity and encouraging knowledge exchange among regional partners through initiatives such as National Urban Policies, the City Prosperity Initiative, and integrated urban solutions that combine sustainable housing, infrastructure development, and environmental planning.



QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Are there any NGOs that exist regarding revitalization of the infrastructure industry? Potential additions to present NGOs?
2. Has your country addressed infrastructure issues within themselves? If so, how?
3. How can future infrastructure be regulated to prevent similar issues from arising?
4. Consider the changes to historical or traditional landmarks. How would this affect the cultures of different societies?
5. How can changes in infrastructure redevelopment processes alter the job market for essential workers (ie. Construction workers)?



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