JOINT PRESS RELEASE

UN-Habitat and ICPAC launch new guide to help Horn of Africa cities prepare for El Niño

Nairobi, 5 November 2026 – The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development's (IGAD) Climate Prediction and Applications Centre (ICPAC) today jointly launched *El Niño Preparedness: An Anticipatory Action Framework for City Leaders* – a practical guide to help city and municipal governments prepare on the ground ahead of the October–December 2026 rainy season.

"Urban preparedness is a governance function. Cities that decide in advance who convenes, who declares and who spends – and that put financing in place before the rains – protect lives, key infrastructure and services and recover faster," said the Director of UN-Habitat's Regional Office for Africa, Oumar Sylla.

"By pairing ICPAC's regional climate forecasting with UN-Habitat's experience in urban emergencies and informal settlements," he added, "we are giving mayors and city managers a practical tool to act now, not after the floods."

"A forecast is only as valuable as the action it enables. ICPAC's climate outlooks give the region months of lead time ahead of El Niño-driven rains. This guide helps cities turn that lead time into decisions on the ground, so that early warnings reach the last mile triggering early action," said ICPAC's Director, Abdi Fidar.

The launch comes as El Niño has developed and is expected to strengthen further throughout the rest of 2026.

According to the ICPAC forecast issued in August, heavy rainfall is expected over southern Ethiopia, central to southern Somalia and north-eastern Kenya, as well as wetter conditions over the Lake Victoria Basin, Burundi, western Rwanda and western Tanzania.

For the region's rapidly growing cities, heavy rainfall can quickly escalate into an urban emergency. Inadequate drainage, limited infrastructure and gaps in urban planning and coordination increase the risk of flooding, displacement, outbreaks of waterborne diseases such as cholera, and disruptions of essential services, including electricity, water and transport. People in informal settlements and slums are particularly vulnerable, with low-income households, women, children and persons with disabilities facing the greatest risks.

The *El Niño Preparedness* guide emphasizes that early preparedness and coordinated action are essential to reduce the impacts of the climate phenomenon in cities. It

connects regional climate forecasts to city-level decision-making through a forecast–trigger–action approach.

Under this framework, forecasts are translated into localized risk information, pre-agreed thresholds trigger the release of funding and activation of preparedness and preventive measures, such as clearing drains, pre-positioning emergency supplies and warning households, are taken before flooding occurs.

Drawing on UN-Habitat's urban emergency experience in more than 40 countries, the guide sets out three scenarios (moderate, severe and worst case), each with a quantified trigger, a set of anticipatory actions and an expected urban impact profile, together with a pre-agreed action checklist that city leaders can use to assess their readiness before the season.

The guide supports cities across the Greater Horn of Africa on six core elements:

- Early warning and forecast uptake, through formal data-sharing with national meteorological services and city forecast desks that translate probabilistic forecasts into ward-level terms;

- Impact-based scenarios that plan against consequences, such as displaced households, flooded informal settlements and disease outbreaks, rather than rainfall anomalies;

- Pre-agreed triggers and anticipatory financing, including contingency funds, forecast-based financing and parametric insurance that release resources before impact;

- Contingency planning with clear institutional roles defining who convenes, who declares and who has authority to spend, tested through simulation exercises;

- Sector-specific preparedness across drainage and solid waste, housing and informal settlements, health and WASH, urban agriculture and livelihoods, education and critical infrastructure; and

- Safe havens and community mobilization, including the identification and retrofitting of safe havens, the engagement of youth and sport associations, and last-mile alerts through community radio and messaging networks.

The joint launch builds on the Memorandum of Understanding signed between UN-Habitat and IGAD in July 2026 and reinforces both organizations' commitment to advancing Sustainable Development Goal 11, the New Urban Agenda, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the

UN Secretary-General's Early Warnings for All initiative and the African Union's Agenda 2063.

The guide is available at the link here

A regional call to action is available here.

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About UN-Habitat
UN-Habitat is the United Nations entity responsible for housing and sustainable urbanization. It has programmes in over 90 countries supporting policymakers and communities to create socially and environmentally sustainable cities and towns. UN-Habitat promotes transformative change in cities through knowledge, policy advice, technical assistance, and collaborative action. To know more, visit unhabitat.org or follow us on social media @UNHABITAT

About ICPAC
The IGAD Climate Prediction and Applications Centre (ICPAC) is a specialized institution of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and a World Meteorological Organization (WMO) Regional Climate Centre for Eastern Africa, based in Nairobi, Kenya. ICPAC provides climate services, seasonal forecasts and early warning information to Burundi, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda, and convenes the Greater Horn of Africa Climate Outlook Forum (GHACOF).

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