



CITY OF JOHANNESBURG

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Speaking Notes for the Executive Mayor - Media Briefing: Urban 20 – 9 June 2025

Ladies and gentlemen, members of the media, fellow South Africans,

Today marks an important milestone on our journey as co-hosts—alongside our sister city Tshwane—of Urban 20 (U20) 2025, a moment of both strategic and symbolic significance for Johannesburg and our country.

When Johannesburg and Tshwane assumed the mantle of leadership from Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo in November 2024, we made a deliberate choice to bring the priorities of South African cities—and indeed of the African continent—firmly into the global urban conversation. We did so not as hosts alone, but as advocates for inclusive, just, and sustainable cities.

At the inaugural Sherpa gathering in March, we tabled four priorities that would anchor our U20 agenda—each deeply reflective of South Africa’s developmental trajectory but also resonant with global urban realities:

1. Economic Opportunities and Urban Financing – focused on unlocking investment pipelines for cities and closing the growing infrastructure gap.
2. Climate Action and Urban Resilience – recognizing that cities must be both frontline responders and proactive planners in an age of climate disruption.
3. Social Inclusion and Equity – asserting that urban transformation must dismantle historical inequalities and build a future that leaves no one behind.
4. Digital Transformation and Innovation – embracing the digital shift not as a luxury but as a public good that enhances how cities function and serve.

These priorities were endorsed by participating cities from across the G20 network, and subsequently became the foundation of the 2025 U20 Communique—a key policy output that will be formally submitted to the President of South Africa in September, in line with the G20 host country tradition.

Throughout the past few months, we have deepened this agenda through a series of high-impact webinars. These platforms drew in a broad spectrum of voices—from the Global North and Global South, from academia, civil society, and the private sector—reflecting the power of shared urban dialogue in shaping solutions that are not only ambitious but grounded in real experience.

Next, we turn to Tshwane. The upcoming Sherpa Summit, taking place in our capital, will be the critical moment when the U20 Communique is finalized—consolidating the inputs of G20 member cities,

observers, and convenors. Importantly, Tshwane will also host a gathering of African Mayors, ensuring that the U20 is not only globally aligned but unapologetically African in voice, vision, and values.

Then, in September, Johannesburg will host the culminating event: the U20 Mayoral Summit, from 12–14 September 2025. This will be a landmark occasion—not only for our city, but for our nation.

Here, Mayors, Sherpas, and city networks from across the G20 will convene to deliberate, to endorse the final U20 Communique, and to reaffirm the role of cities in solving the grand challenges of our time. In parallel, we will host a diverse programme of sessions curated by global and regional partners—such as the South African Cities Network, the Gauteng City-Region Observatory, the City of Copenhagen, FAO, UN Habitat, and SALGA—expanding the conversation beyond the four priorities and laying the groundwork for Urban 20 in 2026.

These sessions will spotlight new urban frontiers, deepen inter-city solidarity, and bring forward the lived experiences of local leaders who are confronting inequality, climate pressures, and digital disruption in real time.

And finally, the U20 Communique—the outcome of months of dialogue, consensus-building, and shared reflection—will serve as a formal input into the G20 Social Summit and its Engagement and Working Groups. But more than that, it will be a testament to how cities, including Johannesburg, are not just implementing global policy—they are shaping it.

In submitting this Communique to the President of South Africa, we do so with pride, confidence, and a clear message:

Urban transformation is not a side issue—it is central to national development, to economic renewal, and to global progress.

Let this be Johannesburg’s call to the world: Cities matter. Africa matters. And the time for inclusive, resilient, and future-ready urban futures is now.

Thank you.