

Hab Post

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A portrait of football star Blaise Matuidi, looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. He is wearing a white zip-up shirt. The background is a stylized, orange-toned map of a city with white lines representing streets and buildings.

Off the pitch

Football star Blaise Matuidi trades jersey for the title of Goodwill Ambassador for housing in Africa

Editor's note

Dear Reader,

Put on your football shoes – we're taking a detour by the pitch to see just how to leverage the convening power of an international football star. Earlier this year, Blaise Matuidi – a member of the team that won the World Cup for France in 2018 – was appointed UN-Habitat Regional Goodwill Ambassador for Africa. He has since then been active in promoting UN-Habitat's work and joining hands to improve the lives of families living in informal settlements. Read our feature story to learn more – and get involved!

And if you've missed reading, this week's News roundup features a number of articles by some of our UN-Habitat colleagues including Raf Tuts, Eduardo Moreno, and our Executive Director – as well as other important stories.

Finally, the Innovation corner this week looks at the new thinking in urban innovation, away from almighty technology.

Happy Reading!

Rachad Nassar
Editor



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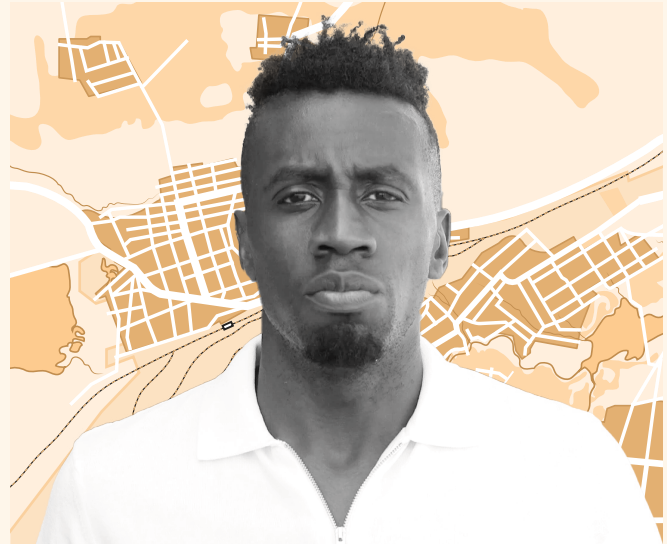
News roundup

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Off the pitch:

Football star Blaise Matuidi trades jersey for the title of Goodwill Ambassador for housing in Africa



Earlier this year during the [International Day of Sport for Development and Peace](#) – which recognizes the role sport and physical activity play in communities and in people’s lives across the world – international footballer and 2018 FIFA World Cup winner Blaise Matuidi was appointed UN-Habitat Regional Goodwill Ambassador for Africa. The French footballer decided to partner with UN-Habitat to ensure decent housing for all, focusing on families living in slums and informal settlements in Central Africa. What does it mean for UN-Habitat, how can we as an organization leverage this achievement in our activities?

Today, Sub-Saharan Africa hosts more than 250 million slum dwellers and people living in precarious neighbourhoods, representing more than 61 per cent of the total population in the region. These populations, mostly women and children, have no access to drinking water, sanitation, energy, education, or even decent housing. They have become even more vulnerable with the COVID-19 pandemic which has been exposing them not only to risks of contamination but also to extreme poverty and economic hardships.

These vulnerabilities will increase further with the rapid growth of the urban population in Sub-Saharan Africa, which is expected to grow to more than 1.5 billion people by 2025.

Against this backdrop, UN-Habitat sealed a partnership with Blaise Matuidi’s foundation *Trempains Blaise Matuidi* to assist the vulnerable in Africa’s slums by improving their living conditions and access to water, sanitation, education, and decent housing. *Trempains Blaise Matuidi* – a French and international association founded in 2015 by Blaise Matuidi – aims to fight the precarious situation many children face by leveraging the power of sport and cultural activities.

UN-Habitat vowed to work with the foundation to promote equal access to decent housing and basic services including schools, recreation, water, sanitation, health, and public spaces for children and families living in informal settlements in Central Africa, and in particular through investments in

social and sports facilities in Angola, Cameroon, Congo Brazzaville, Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and São Tomé and Príncipe. This includes raising awareness and mobilizing partners such as governments, the private sector, and civil society to jointly execute projects and programmes.

With his celebrity status, his widely positive image and considerable following on social media, Matuidi’s appointment as Goodwill Ambassador is an opportunity for UN-Habitat to enhance advocacy for improved living conditions of children and families living in informal settlements. His appointment also creates an avenue for joint development and dissemination of messages for a wider audience on the continent.

Examples of cooperation and support



A video on the launch of the partnership with the Executive Director's and Matuidi's messages was developed and disseminated on Matuidi's social media accounts. The partnership announcement was viewed over **60,000 times** and generated over **10,000 'likes'** on Matuidi's [Instagram account](#).



In support of the **#ClimateAction4Cities** Campaign, a set of messages were designed and shared with Matuidi's team for dissemination on his social media accounts. Messages included **joint advocacy for access to all to the COVID-19 vaccine**.



Blaise Matuidi was one of the keynote speakers during the global observance of **World Habitat Day in Yaoundé** and shared a video message on social media.



Several consultations between UN-Habitat and Matuidi's team have taken place to leverage the experience of the **Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme** and Matuidi's projects in Congo and Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo, with a focus on slum upgrading and on bridging the digital divide for disadvantaged communities.

"I am very honoured to be part of this partnership. I have been a champion on the pitch, but it has always been my hope to be a champion in changing people's lives, especially the children in informal settlements."

Blaise Matuidi
French professional footballer




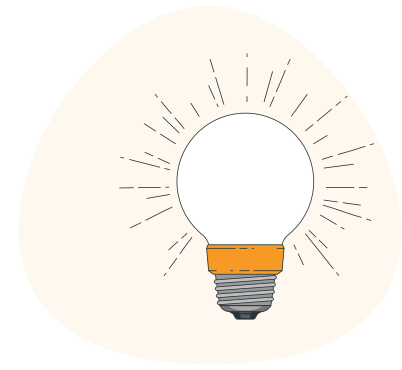
Colleagues in the area covered by the partnership are naturally encouraged to organize events with his association to mobilize stakeholders or develop awareness campaigns. The partnership could further be leveraged to mobilize funding in favour of housing for all through joint programme development.

For more information, contact [Alain Ngono](#), Regional Office for Africa, or [Susannah Price](#), Chief of Communication, or visit the below pages.

 [Tremplins Blaise Matuidi](#)

 [@MATUIDIBlaise](#)

 [YouTube](#)



Innovation does not mean technology: hail the new thinking in urban innovation

In many ways, 2020 was the beginning of a disruptive period for urban living. Entire cities shut down, millions of jobs were lost, some businesses flourished. Innovation is no exception – in fact, innovation takes on a particular force during moments of great change and crises. The COVID-19 pandemic brought digitalization to the forefront of our daily lives and business operations, and rapid technological shifts were observed within cities globally. Yet while cities had been envisioning technologically-driven urban futures before the pandemic, leaders started to realize that digitalization wasn't the only answer to sustainable urban development. Technology had been over-represented in discussions on innovation, and leaders were challenged to rethink what innovation meant for their cities and residents. What does this new thinking look like?

The Bloomberg Philanthropies [2021 Global Mayors Challenge](#) gives a first hint as to how leaders started to rethink the way they innovate. The worldwide challenge encouraged mayors to put forward their most promising ideas towards solving their cities' most pressing challenges, this year under the theme of COVID-19. It became clear that participating mayors chose to go beyond their traditional scope of power and responsibilities to meet the needs of their citizens. Mayors would work with the resources available to them to scale up or create new programmes to assist their residents. This is the case of Cape Town, South Africa, where the existing network of small, community-run soup kitchens was leveraged and provided with new equipment and resources to reach as many residents as possible and improve food security in a city struck by a hunger crisis, a direct consequence of the pandemic.

These special measures contrast with approaches prioritizing advanced models of urban development over engagement of citizens. Some of these approaches have turned out to be highly unsuccessful – for instance, the now [scrapped project to create heated sidewalks and introduce sensors to monitor traffic and street life in the city of Toronto](#).

Interestingly, the Global Mayors Challenge revealed that mayors were taking a “tech-as-needed” approach to innovation. City leaders tended to adopt more non-tech solutions as opposed to previous years where a “tech-first” approach was prioritized. For instance, a majority of US cities introduced a focus on improving racial equity, such as in Akron, Ohio, where Black-owned businesses are underrepresented relative to the population. The city proposed to launch 200 new Black-owned businesses by pairing entrepreneurs with a mentor-navigator to guide them through a suite of financial support and expert resources. In Newark, New Jersey, violence has been treated as a public health issue and data used to engage the less than one per cent of the population that is perpetrating a majority of crime in a comprehensive programme focused on diversion and healing.

This shift in thinking on the application of tech is echoed in Deloitte's recent global report [Urban Future with a Purpose](#) which highlights 12 innovative trends that are shaping the future of cities. Those range from green planning of public spaces to cybersecurity and private awareness. While the connecting theme in the report is the importance of equity and correcting the injustices

brought to light by COVID-19, the report also calls for a balanced use of tech for urban solutions. For instance, as policing became a trending topic in the US in the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement, technologists have brought forward solutions in the form of artificial intelligence (AI)-enabled surveillance and predictive policing tools. Alongside recommendations to integrate innovations such as AI, the report suggests creating mechanisms for algorithms to be reviewed and held accountable to avoid the potential biases built into them.

Even as it continues to gain importance in our lives, tech is not inevitable or an unchanging force, but something we can shape. It need not be the one and only answer to a post-pandemic future.

Take a look at deeper case studies and examples of how leaders continue to shape technology and innovate by browsing the [50 Champion Cities](#) of the 2021 Global Mayors Challenge and flipping through the pages of [Deloitte's report](#). And don't forget that UN-Habitat's Innovation Section has prepared a [guidance note](#) that attempts to define innovation and outlines key approaches that can inspire innovation.

New colleagues



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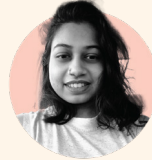
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Departing colleagues



As I exit, just to remember that I have been at UN-Habitat for three decades! UN-Habitat has been my home away from home as this is where I have spent most of my youthful years and active life. UN-Habitat has always encouraged me to learn new skills and grow in my professional field, both for my own benefit and for the benefit of the organization, to which I am grateful.

Before my departure, I want to thank you all and especially colleagues at the Secretariat of the Governing Bodies and the Office of the Executive Director in general for the great support you have always extended to me throughout the years. I depart from the organization with warm memories of my time spent here and the work we have done together. Thank you to everyone who provided guidance, companionship, assistance, and of course, laughter, and for helping to create the good memories that I am taking with me into my retirement.

Good wishes to all as I spread my wings and fly off into new and exciting adventures of retirement!

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Retiring in November

VACANCIES

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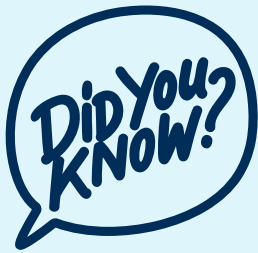
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Brazil hosted the most Urban October events this year with a total of 179 events – the vast majority as part of their Urban Circuit programme

The second place went to Mexico, and Spain came in third.

Urban October was inaugurated in 2018 as a month dedicated to sustainable urbanization, starting with World Habitat Day and closing with World Cities Day. Did you know that this year marked the 36th celebration of **World Habitat Day**?

Here are another few facts about World Habitat Day and World Cities Day you might not be aware of:

- 1 World Habitat Day has been attended in person by two Secretary-Generals – Javier Pérez de Cuéllar and Boutros Boutros-Ghali, who came twice – one Archbishop (of Canterbury, UK), one Prince (later King Philippe of Belgium) and six Presidents (two from Indonesia, two from Kenya, one from Angola, and one from Senegal).
- 2 The World Habitat Day Global Observance has been held 10 times in the Americas, 8 times in Asia, 6 times in Africa and Europe, and once in the Arab world. It has been held as many times in Nairobi than in New York – three times. There was no Global Observance event from 2013 to 2017.
- 3 This year's Global Observance host Cameroon is the fourth country in Africa to hold the Global Observance.
- 4 The **UN-Habitat Scroll of Honour**, which has been awarded on World Habitat Day since 1989, is widely recognized as the most prestigious human settlements award.

- 5 **World Cities Day** is a legacy of the 2010 Expo which was held in Shanghai, China, and the first Global Observance was held there in 2014. It is celebrated on 31 October each year and marks the end of Urban October.
- 6 The Global Observance of World Cities Day was held for the first time in the Arab world this year in the historic city of Luxor, Egypt. The celebrations were attended in person by the Egyptian Prime Minister Moustafa Madbouly – who used to work for UN-Habitat.
- 7 The first Global Observance of World Cities Day in Africa was hosted last year by Nakuru, Kenya.
- 8 This year's World Cities Day, which focused on climate adaptation, coincided with the opening of the UN Climate Conference COP 26 in Glasgow, Scotland.

Let the world know

Partners are encouraged to post their Urban October events and updates on the Urban October website. It is not too late to submit a short report about an Urban October activity for inclusion in this year's Urban October Report.



Report your Event



Participate!

Want your story featured? Submit your ideas or reach out to us at unhabitat-habpost@un.org.

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