UNITED NATIONS
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION
Progress by innovation

60 YEARS

BRIDGE
FOR CITIES

ANNUAL EVENT 2026

BRIDGE FOR CITIES 2026

AI & GREEN INNOVATION: POWERING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

28-30 October 2026
Vienna International Centre | Vienna, Austria

CONCEPT NOTE

Partners:

UCLG
United Cities and Local Governments

UNIVERSITY of STRATHCLYDE
INSTITUTE FOR FUTURE CITIES

City of Vienna

BACKGROUND

For over a decade, Bridge for Cities, supported by the Government of China, has served as UNIDO's flagship platform for dialogue and cooperation on sustainable urban-industrial development. Bringing together city leaders, policymakers, industry, academia, and civil society, the initiative has fostered knowledge exchange, partnerships, and practical solutions to urban challenges. Through its global editions and side events, Bridge for Cities has become a recognized forum connecting local experiences with international development priorities and advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The 2026 edition holds special significance as it coincides with UNIDO's 60th anniversary. This milestone offers an opportunity to reflect on six decades of promoting Inclusive and Sustainable Industrial Development (ISID) while looking ahead to the role of cities, technological innovation, and international cooperation in addressing emerging global challenges.

Cities are at the forefront of the green transition, concentrating both the impacts of climate change and the opportunities for sustainable growth. As centres of industry, innovation, and energy consumption, they play a pivotal role in achieving climate and development objectives. At the same time, rapid advances in artificial intelligence (AI) and digital technologies are creating new opportunities to improve resource efficiency, accelerate industrial decarbonization, strengthen public services, and support evidence-based urban planning.

Under the theme "AI & Green Innovation: Powering a Sustainable Future," Bridge for Cities 2026 will explore how digital transformation and climate action can be mutually reinforcing. Particular emphasis will be placed on responsible and human-centred AI, transparent governance, and inclusive innovation ecosystems that ensure technological progress translates into tangible benefits for people and communities, especially women, youth, and vulnerable groups.

Recognizing the close interdependence between industry and cities, the event will also address the environmental, economic, and capacity challenges associated with urban industrial development. Discussions will highlight practical approaches to enhancing competitiveness and sustainability through decarbonization, innovative financing, support for MSMEs, and the development of green and digital skills.

Against this backdrop, Bridge for Cities 2026 will convene stakeholders from government, industry, academia, finance, and civil society from cities along the Belt and Road and beyond to exchange experiences, showcase innovative solutions, and identify actionable pathways towards more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable urban futures.

FOCUS

The event's focus is structured around two mutually reinforcing pillars: AI and digitalization, and green innovation. Cities serve as practical environments where AI solutions can be piloted, refined, and scaled to local needs, and where digital tools deliver concrete decarbonization outcomes.

The event will highlight how AI and digital technologies enhance urban and industrial efficiency, connectivity, and sustainability, supporting evidence-based decision-making and innovation across energy, mobility, buildings, water, and waste systems. Particular attention will be given to AI-enabled industrial transformation, smart infrastructure, and data-driven public services that translate technological progress into measurable development outcomes. Discussions will also explore digital governance, innovation ecosystems, and the skills and capacities needed to ensure that technological advancement delivers inclusive and sustainable benefits for communities and industries alike.

The event will emphasize the transition towards low-carbon, resource-efficient, and climate-resilient urban-industrial systems, recognizing cities as primary arenas where climate action, industrial policy, and local development converge. Particular attention will be given to urban and industrial decarbonization, circular economy approaches, sustainable infrastructure, and the integration of clean energy solutions across key sectors. The event will also explore innovative financing mechanisms, policy instruments, and partnerships that can accelerate emissions reductions, strengthen resilience, and support inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

DRAFT STRUCTURE

28 OCTOBER

From 08:00 onwards
BADGE COLLECTION

09:30 – 10:30
OPENING CEREMONY

10:30 – 10:45
SIGNING CEREMONIES AND LAUNCHES

10:45 – 11:00
BREAK

11:00 – 12:00
KEYNOTE CONVERSATION

12:00 – 14:00
LUNCH BREAK /EXHIBITION

14:00 – 15:30
HIGH-LEVEL PLENARY 1:
DIGITAL INNOVATION AND AI

15:30 – 15:45
BREAK

15:45 – 17:15
HIGH-LEVEL PLENARY 2:
GREEN TRANSITION AND URBAN INDUSTRIAL DECARBONIZATION

FROM 18:30 ONWARDS
OFFICIAL RECEPTION
**By invitation only*

29 OCTOBER

From 08:00 onwards
BADGE COLLECTION

09:15 – 12:15
TRACK 1
-
DIGITAL INNOVATION AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

12:15 – 14:15
LUNCH BREAK / EXHIBITION

14:15 – 17:15
TRACK 2
-
GREEN TRANSITION AND URBAN INDUSTRIAL DECARBONIZATION

17:15 – 17:20
CLOSING REMARKS

FROM 17:30 ONWARDS
CLOSING RECEPTION

30 OCTOBER

STUDY TOUR

THEME:
DIGITAL & GREEN INNOVATION IN PRACTICE

An interactive exploration of Vienna's history, innovation and urban development, bringing the SDGs to life through real-world city examples, followed by a networking coffee and lunch

**By registration only*

EXHIBITION

- Logistics
- Exhibition
- Interactive / Special Sessions
- Core / Plenary Sessions
- Breaks & Networking
- Study Tour

DRAFT AGENDA

WEDNESDAY 28 OCTOBER

DAY 1: POLICY & LEADERSHIP

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES, STRATEGIC DIALOGUE, AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

09:30 – 10:30

OPENING CEREMONY

The Opening Ceremony will officially launch Bridge for Cities 2026 under the theme "AI & Green Innovation: Powering a Sustainable Future." Through an engaging opening show and interventions from high-level representatives, the opening will explore how artificial intelligence and green innovation can drive sustainable, resilient, and inclusive urban-industrial development. Speakers will highlight the critical role of cities in advancing digital transformation, climate action, and international cooperation, setting an ambitious and collaborative tone for the discussions, partnerships, and outcomes of the event.

10:30 – 10:45

SIGNING CEREMONIES AND LAUNCHES

As one of the key outcomes of the event, a series of strategic signing ceremonies and launches will be arranged to formalize partnerships, strengthen collaboration across the urban development ecosystem, and accelerate the implementation of innovative solutions for sustainable city development.

MoU between UNIDO and UCLG
Building on their cooperation through the Bridge for Cities platform and the Xi'an Joint Statement (October 2025), UNIDO and United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) will strengthen collaboration on industrial innovation, local economic development, and city-industry partnerships. The MoU will also support the joint development of the ScaleX Alliance for Cities, leveraging Bridge for Cities as a platform for cooperation and engagement.

Launch of the ScaleX Alliance of Cities and Compendium
Introducing a global platform and knowledge resource to accelerate the replication and scaling of innovative city solutions.

10:45 – 11:00

BREAK

11:00 – 12:00

KEYNOTE CONVERSATION

12:00 - 14:00	**LUNCH BREAK /EXHIBITION**
14:00 – 15:30	**HIGH-LEVEL PLENARY 1: DIGITAL INNOVATION AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE** *This plenary session will bring together ministers, city leaders, international organizations, and private-sector representatives to examine how digital transformation and artificial intelligence are reshaping urban and industrial development. Discussions will focus on enabling policy frameworks, investment priorities, and successful implementation models that leverage digital technologies to improve productivity, strengthen public services, optimize resource management, and enhance urban sustainability. The session will also explore opportunities for international cooperation and knowledge exchange to ensure that digital innovation contributes to inclusive and sustainable growth.*
15:30 – 15:45	**BREAK**
15:45 – 17:15	**HIGH-LEVEL PLENARY 2: GREEN TRANSITION AND URBAN INDUSTRIAL DECARBONIZATION** *This plenary will explore pathways for accelerating the transition towards low-carbon, resource-efficient, and climate-resilient urban-industrial systems. Leaders from government, industry, and international organizations will share policies, experiences, and innovative solutions that support decarbonization while fostering competitiveness, job creation, and social inclusion. Particular attention will be given to financing mechanisms, industrial innovation, circular economy approaches, and cross-sector partnerships that can help cities and industries achieve their sustainability objectives and contribute to global climate goals.*
From 18:30 onwards	**OFFICIAL RECEPTION** (**By invitation only)*

THURSDAY 29 OCTOBER

DAY 2: CITIES IN ACTION

MAYOR-LED SOLUTIONS, INNOVATION, AND URBAN TRANSFORMATION

09:15 - 12:15

TRACK 1 - DIGITAL INNOVATION AND AI

This interactive track will explore how digital innovation and artificial intelligence are transforming cities and industries, enabling smarter governance, improved public services, enhanced sustainability, and more inclusive economic growth. Bringing together mayors, city representatives, industry leaders, and international experts, the session will showcase practical experiences and innovative approaches to harnessing digital technologies for urban development.

Track 1 will begin with opening remarks setting the scene for the discussion, followed by a thematic Dialogue highlighting UNIDO actions, key trends, challenges, and opportunities related to AI and digital transformation in cities. Building on these insights, the Mayors Dialogue will provide a platform for city leaders to exchange experiences, present successful initiatives, and discuss how digital solutions can improve urban resilience, competitiveness, and quality of life. The session will inconclude an interactive discussion, enabling participants to engage with speakers, share perspectives, and identify opportunities for collaboration and peer learning.

09:15 - 9:25	**OPENING REMARKS**
09:25 - 09:45	**THEMATIC DIALOGUE - FIRESIDE CHAT**
09:45 - 10:00	**INTERACTION WITH THE AUDIENCE**
10:00 - 12:15	**MAYORS DIALOGUE - TRACK 1**

12:15 – 14:15 **LUNCH BREAK / EXHIBITION**

14:15 - 17:15

TRACK 2 - GREEN TRANSITION AND URBAN DECARBONIZATION

This interactive track will explore how cities are advancing the green transition through innovative approaches to decarbonization, resource efficiency, sustainable infrastructure, and climate resilience. Bringing together mayors, city representatives, industry leaders, and international experts, the session will highlight practical experiences and solutions that support the shift towards low-carbon, inclusive, and sustainable urban development.

Track 2 will begin with opening remarks that frame the key challenges and opportunities of the green transition, followed by a thematic session exploring emerging trends, policy approaches, and innovative practices in urban decarbonization. Building on these insights, the Mayors' Dialogue will provide a platform for city leaders to share experiences, showcase successful initiatives, and discuss how climate action can drive economic development, improve quality of life, and strengthen urban resilience. The session will inconclude an interactive discussion, encouraging knowledge exchange, peer learning, and collaboration among participants.

14:15 - 14:25	**OPENING REMARKS**
14:25 - 14:45	**THEMATIC DIALOGUE - FIRESIDE CHAT**
14:45 - 15:00	**INTERACTION WITH THE AUDIENCE**
15:00 - 17:15	**MAYORS DIALOGUE - TRACK 2**

17:15 - 17:20 **CLOSING REMARKS**

From 17:30 onwards **CLOSING RECEPTION**

FRIDAY 30 OCTOBER >>> STUDY TOUR

09:15 - 13:00 **STUDY TOUR** *(*By registration only)*

Theme: Digital Green Innovation in Practice

The study tour will take participants on an interactive journey through the heart of Vienna, demonstrating how the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are reflected in the city's history, urban development, and future vision. Through a guided exploration of iconic locations, participants will discover how themes such as biodiversity, education, equality, sustainable mobility, climate action, innovation, and quality of life are interconnected within the urban environment. Rather than a traditional sightseeing experience, the tour will encourage dialogue, reflection, and active participation, inviting attendees to explore practical solutions and consider their own role in advancing sustainable development.

For more information, please contact us as bri@unido.org

UNITED NATIONS
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION
Progress by innovation

60 YEARS

BRIDGE
FOR CITIES

Vienna International Centre
Wagramerstr. 5, P.O. Box 300,
A-1400 Vienna, Austria

+43 1 26026-3436

www.bridgeforcities.org

bri@unido.org

UNITED NATIONS
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION