



From left: An international coffee festival attracts a throng of visitors in Shanghai. WANG CHU / FOR CHINA DAILY Shanghai residents relax on riverside benches. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY Residents learn about the growth of rice at an agricultural park in Shanghai. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

World Cities Day celebrated in Shanghai

Metropolis set to champion best examples of sustainable urban development and give out awards



An aerial view of the Huangpu River flowing through Shanghai, which is to host the 2023 China Observance of World Cities Day from Saturday to Tuesday. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Shanghai will play host to the 2023 China Observance of World Cities Day from Saturday to Tuesday, with the opening ceremony scheduled for Saturday afternoon.

World Cities Day, which falls on Oct 31 and is celebrated each year across the world, has close ties with Shanghai, as it was first proposed in the Shanghai Declaration released at the closing ceremony of the World Expo 2010 on Oct 31.

The proposal was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2013. It is the first international day initiated by the Chinese government and set by the UN with a focus on supporting urban development.

Since its inception, the World Cities Day has seen a rich variety of celebrations take place, providing a crucial platform for the international community to explore a sustainable urban development path.

Shanghai hosted the first global observance of World Cities Day in

2014 and the 2022 edition, as well as being the main venue for national celebrations of the event in 2015 and 2021.

Diverse events

As World Cities Day returns to Shanghai this year, its focus is on "Financing Sustainable Urban Future for All", organizers said.

"The attainment of sustainable development goals requires efforts by all stakeholders to achieve efficient utilization and optimized allocation of various capital, while paying attention to the protection and development of natural capital and cultural capital," said Li Zhe, an official from the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development, at a news conference on Thursday.

"Governments, financial institutions, relevant businesses, urban residents and other stakeholders around the world should also collaborate and contribute to financing sustainable development, enabling a transition from allocation to financing via innovation," Li said.

"Urban development is also a process that involves all residents in sharing the fruits of a city's growth. It requires the systemic integration of various resources such as funds, personnel and technology, and needs continuous efforts in the dimensions of economy, society, environment, culture and governance in a bid to achieve the goals and share a better future for the city," he noted.

By improving urban planning, construction and governance, accelerating the transition of megacities' growth model, advancing urban renewal campaigns and enhancing infrastructure, China has been attaching significance to integrating resources and boosting cities' sustainable development in pursuit of people-centric urban development, with an aim to create livable, resilient and smart cities, Li said, citing the report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2022. "That is an urban development path with Chinese characteristics."

The 2023 China Observance of World Cities Day will place emphasis on showcasing and sharing policies and practices that promote sustainable urban development and improve people's living environment in response to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Global Development Initiative.

The event will include an opening ceremony and more than 20 forums and sideline events, as well as exhibitions, attracting an estimated 1,500 participants from home and abroad. Those in attendance will include officials of housing and urban development from various countries, and representatives from international organizations such as the United Nations Human Settlements Program, or UN-Habitat, and C40, a global network of nearly 100 mayors of leading cities worldwide who are united in confronting the climate crisis.

They will deliver speeches at forums, exchanging insights into sustainable urban development. The number of forums and the exhibition scale will both surpass those of previous sessions of World Cities Day, according to Jin Chen, deputy director of the Shanghai Commission of Housing, Urban-Rural Development and Management.

Global awards
On top of that, a series of heavyweight commendations and reports will be released during the World Cities Day celebrations.

Among them is the inaugural Global Award for Sustainable Development in Cities (Shanghai Award), which will be presented to five cities at the opening ceremony, slated to take place in the North Bund area of Shanghai and concurrent with the kickoff of a global conference on sustainable development, Jin said.

The award is a global initiative led by UN-Habitat and Shanghai municipality, dedicated to recognizing the outstanding progress and achievements of cities and municipalities around the world in their implementation of the 2030 Agenda as well as the New Urban Agenda. It also provides a platform for cities to share their experiences and learn from each other, and help cities to better achieve their development goals.

The Shanghai Award was open for sign-up for nearly four months until July 21. During the period, 54 cities from 16 countries, ranging from developed to developing and least-developed countries, completed their applications.

The International Jury of Shanghai Award began to assess the

applicant cities from the perspectives of economic vitality and urban prosperity; green urban development; capacity building for sustainable development; and urban safety and resilience during the first half of September. It has drawn up a shortlist of 15 cities for the inaugural Shanghai Award. Five of them will be awarded on Monday afternoon.

The awardees' experiences and achievements will be included in the Urban Best Practices Database of the New Urban Agenda and promoted on international exchange platforms, said Yang Rong, a UN-Habitat official.

The release of the Shanghai Manual, an annual publication that incorporates outstanding case studies of sustainable urban development, will be another highlight of the World Cities Day celebrations.

The 2023 edition of the report aims to explore urban synergy from an international cooperation perspective and provide a financial

guide for sustainable urban development. It features 24 cases from 14 countries, covering diverse sectors such as technology startup funds, the circular economy, green finance, cultural funds, incubation of charity groups, charity foundations, transregional governance cooperation, and Belt and Road cooperation projects. Of the 24 selected cases, six are from China, including two from Shanghai.

One Shanghai case focuses on a park that is home to scores of charity groups, introducing their innovative public services. The operation of the park, called Gongyi Xintiandi or New Charity World, demonstrates optimized allocation and efficient utilization of charity resources.

The other Shanghai case is from Wanli residential community in the city's Putuo district, which showcases innovations in the city's efforts to boost community governance.



A subway exit is surrounded by cherry blossoms in Shanghai. WANG CHU / CHINA DAILY



Teams compete in a rowing race on the Suzhou River in Shanghai in September. WANG CHU / FOR CHINA DAILY



From left: An offshore wind farm in Shanghai. A bustling port adjacent to a large container yard. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY