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In Brief

IDURL 2025

International Dialogue on Urban-Rural Linkages 2025



中国外文局西欧与非洲传播中心
CIG Center for Europe and Africa



UN-HABITAT

Bridging worlds: UN-Habitat and CIGG convene the International Dialogue on Urban-Rural Linkages 2025

In the serene landscapes of Songyang County, China, the 2025 International Dialogue on Urban-Rural Linkages (IDURL) unfolded as a dynamic platform for global exchange and local inspiration. Co-organized by UN-Habitat and the Center for Europe and Africa of the China International Communications Group (CICG), the Dialogue gathered policymakers, scholars, practitioners, and community leaders to explore how culture, housing, and basic services can bridge urban and rural realities and promote inclusive, sustainable development.

IDURL 2025 in Numbers



100+

Attendees



15

Countries



12

Media Outlets

(TV; websites, social media & magazines)

Social media (UN-Habitat and CICG)



views

1M+



Engagements and interactions

50K+



The opening ceremony set the tone for the three-day event, with Songyang's leadership showcasing transformative initiatives that have revitalized rural communities through integrated water systems, adaptive reuse of public spaces, and cultural preservation and innovation. UN-Habitat's Rafael Tuts emphasized the urgency of strengthening urban-rural linkages in light of global urbanization trends, aligning the Dialogue with the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda.

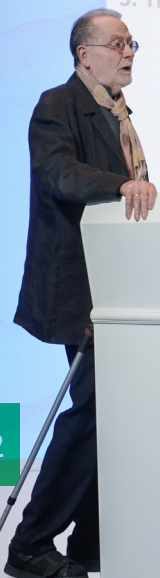
Keynote presentations offered rich insights to unpack the theme. Klaus Kunzmann (TU Dortmund) highlighted the role of **cultural and creative industries in rural revitalization**, while Marie-Noel Tournoux (World Heritage Institute of Training and Research for the Asia and the Pacific Region) advocated for **heritage-led development strategies** that integrate cultural assets into planning and governance. Lian Yirui (Tsinghua University), Zhao Zhongshu (China Academy of Urban Planning & Design) presented **frameworks for spatial renewal and conservation of historic urban areas**, while Yang Guiqing (Tongji University) explored the **evolution of traditional village forms** in response to changing socio-economic dynamics.

1 What is the role of cultural and creative industries in rural revitalization?
2. Which Rural Development Strategies are most effective in the economic dimension?
3. The Role of Cultural Industries in the Socio-Economic Dimension

Socio-Economic Dimension

4. Socio-Economic Dimension

5. Socio-Economic Dimension



During **Day 1** of the Dialogue, the well-curated theme-based field visits provided immersive experiences into Songyang's living heritage and innovation. Participants explored revitalized spaces such as the Hetianling Block and Ancient Songyang Street, witnessing how adaptive reuse and micro-renovation strategies preserve cultural memory while enhancing public services.

The Songyang Public Fitness Facility, once a bus station, now serves as a vibrant community

hub, exemplifying inclusive urban-rural transformation. Parallel sessions deepened the dialogue, focusing on housing, heritage, and resilience. Experts from Central Asia, China and Morocco shared case studies on community participation, legislative adaptation, and traditional knowledge integration. Discussions emphasized the need for territorial and people-centered approaches that link housing, livelihoods, and identity.



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The **second day** expanded the conversation to **innovation and sustainability** in traditional villages and green transportation. Visits to Songzhuang Village showcased creative entrepreneurship and community-driven art rooted in heritage. Smart mobility demonstrations, including autonomous buses and solar-powered streetlighting and surveillance systems for distribution networks illustrated Songyang's leadership in digitalizing rural development.



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Following the site visits, discussions emphasized **heritage-led revitalization** and inclusive planning. Examples from China's Yangjiatang village and Nigeria's (Niger State) sacred landscapes showcased how cultural memory and community participation can drive sustainable

transformation. Austria's Alpine challenges and Mali's metropolitan governance highlighted the need for context-sensitive policies, while digital and mobility innovations from Africa and China reinforced the role of smart systems in bridging urban-rural divides.



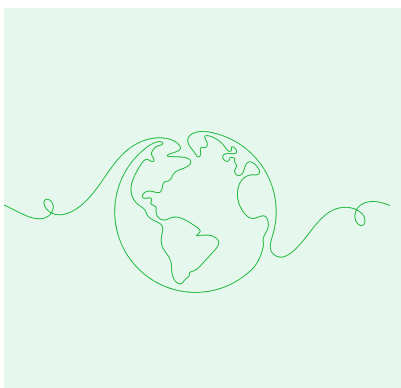
Co-creation Activity
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Towards conclusion of the dialogue, the **co-creation activity** at the Hetianling Block brought participants together in a symbolic gesture of partnership, installing windmills to represent shared aspirations for resilient and connected communities. The closing ceremony echoed these sentiments, with leaders reaffirming commitments to territorial development and continued collaboration.

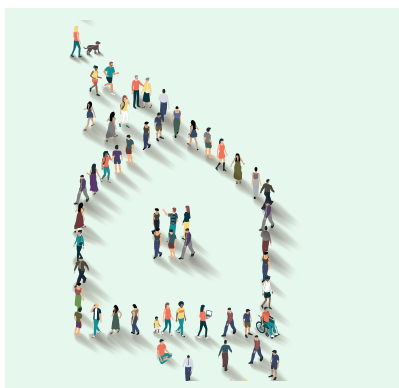
IDURL 2025 demonstrated that **urban-rural linkages are not merely technical constructs but lived realities shaped by culture, community, and cooperation.** Once again, Songyang's story offers a compelling blueprint for inclusive, resilient, and culturally grounded development. As the world moves toward and beyond the 2030 Agenda, the Dialogue sets the stage for deeper collaboration, knowledge exchange, and policy innovation to ensure no one and no place is left behind.

Strategic outcomes and UN-Habitat's commitment

IDURL 2025 reaffirmed the strategic importance of urban-rural linkages in UN-Habitat's global work. The Dialogue contributed to:



Strengthening the evidence base for territorial development through case studies and field demonstrations.



Advancing UN-Habitat's **2026–2029 Strategic Plan**, which prioritizes inclusive urbanization and balanced territorial development.



Building momentum toward the **World Urban Forum in Baku**, where urban-rural integration will be a key theme.



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