

## **PRESS RELEASE:**

### **Local and regional leaders showcase the value of public services to respond to the COVID-19 crisis**

**#BeyondTheOutbreak**

***Barcelona, Spain and Nairobi Kenya, 26 March 2020***

More than 20 representatives of local and regional governments and partners, gathered online with civil society and the United Nations to exchange experiences on the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Participants included the **Mayor of Al-Hoceima** who is the UCLG President, the **Executive Director of UN-Habitat, Deputy Mayors from Barcelona, Rome and Madrid, representatives from Guangzhou, Bogota, Buenos Aires, Montevideo, Xi'an, Durban, Lampedusa and Tehran,** and the **UN Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing.**

The virtual meeting was the launch of a live learning series co-convened by **UCLG, Metropolis and UN-Habitat** to facilitate the exchange of ideas and experiences between local and regional governments on their critical role in this unprecedented situation.

The online live learning session, which attracted **over 100 participants,** showcased the indispensable, multiple roles played by local and regional governments, public servants and health officials in ensuring equitable service delivery and ensuring the rights of all are respected during the crisis. Speakers emphasized that the global response to the pandemic must be based on local realities, needs, and solutions.

UCLG Secretary General **Emilia Saiz,** who moderated the meeting, stated that with millions of people ordered to stay at home around the world, local governments are ensuring that the public service delivery that underpins health services are resilient. This community, she highlighted, needs to look at ahead and discuss how to *“protect public servants and the most vulnerable to ensure cohesion in the future”*.

The meeting was opened by UCLG President and Mayor of Al-Hoceima (Morocco), **Mohamed Boudra**, and UN-Habitat Executive Director, **Maimunah Mohd Sharif**.

They both commended the work of local and regional governments and underlined the importance of local service provision during the global outbreak.

*"Local governments of cities and regions are closest to communities. Their resilience is our strength and source of inspiration. We need to build on this special relationship and I believe that together we can discover the solutions we need,"* said **UN-Habitat's Executive Director**.

The **UCLG President** added: *"Local and regional authorities are going to change the system of governance, and we are seeing it day by day, as they are on the frontline, responding to the crisis and communicating about it with their citizens"*.

The local and regional leaders agreed to place the needs of citizens and the resilience of communities at the centre of their actions. Participants called for all levels of society to work together to prevent the spread of COVID-19, address its impact and use the lessons learned to create a more resilient world.

The UN Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing, **Leilani Farha**, said the pandemic showed that the global housing crisis could be addressed.

*"Suddenly governments are able to find places and spaces for people living in homelessness, we are able to provide water and sanitation, we are getting rate abatements and can lessen mortgage payments. Suddenly we are saying no evictions."*

The [Cities for Global Health Platform](#) was presented by **Octavi de la Varga**, Secretary General of Metropolis, as an online space for cities to share knowledge and expertise for future crises. The openness and collaborative format of the initiative was highlighted.

The live learning meetings will continue initially with weekly sessions on Wednesdays during the crisis. In the first month, key issues such as housing in crisis, mobility and access to technology in service delivery during the current crisis will be covered as cities around the world are already looking at how to overcome challenges with a new generation of solutions.

**About United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG):**

UCLG is the global organization of local and regional governments and their associations that represents and defends their interests on the world stage. Representing 70 per cent of the world's population, UCLG members are present in all world regions: Africa, Asia Pacific, Europe, Eurasia, Middle East-West Asia, Latin America and North America - organised in seven continental sections, a metropolitan section and a regional forum. This network covers more than 240,000 cities, regions and metropolises and more than 175 local and regional government associations present in 140 countries. UCLG includes among its main areas of political interest local democracy, climate change and environmental protection, the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals, local finance, urban development and city diplomacy for peacebuilding. Visit <http://www.uclg.org> and follow @uclg\_org for more.

**About UN-Habitat:**

UN-Habitat is the UN agency focused on our cities, towns and communities. UN-Habitat works in over 90 countries supporting people in cities and human settlements for a better urban future. Working with governments and local partners, its high impact projects combine world-class expertise and local knowledge to deliver timely and targeted solutions. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development includes a dedicated Goal on cities, SDG 11 – to make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. Visit [www.unhabitat.org](http://www.unhabitat.org) and follow @unhabitat for further information.

**For more details contact:**

Alejandra Salas  
UCLG World Secretariat, Barcelona  
[communication@uclg.org](mailto:communication@uclg.org)

Susannah Price  
Chief of Communication, UN-Habitat  
[susannah.price@un.org](mailto:susannah.price@un.org) Tel 254 722 719867