



**Live Learning Series hosted by UCLG, Metropolis and UN-Habitat
Local Government Associations**

**Speech by the UN-Habitat Executive Director Maimunah Mohd Sharif
Thursday 9 April 2020**

Ladies and Gentlemen, City Leaders and representatives of Associations of local governments,

I am very glad to meet you today in this live learning meeting hosted by UCLG, Metropolis and UN-Habitat. *I am grateful that we have this opportunity to exchange views and share lessons learned from those at the front lines of this – the greatest challenge of our times.*

As time goes by, the impact on the lives and livelihoods of so many, especially those in the informal settlements of our cities, is becoming more apparent. I am also deeply saddened about the increasing loss of life and the suffering in families affected by the pandemics and its effects.

To help communities and citizens, we need to continue to be flexible and adaptable. These are qualities that city managers know best as we have always had to adapt and innovate facing crisis with limited resources.

Speaking as a former mayor, I know you appreciate that policy needs to be translated into practice. Our citizens expect leadership by example and actions that will result in improved living standards.

While we learn from each other, co-creating solutions to immediate challenges, we must also focus on future-proofing our cities. UN-Habitat is ready to double our efforts and work with you to increase the capacity in our cities to deal future pandemics.

Colleagues,

We need to double our efforts and collaborate on a global scale because the challenge we face is very different from the crises we face at home. The enemy is invisible. Even more challenging than a world war, this one is happening all over the planet at the same time. Unlike past pandemics, COVID-19 is truly global in its impact stopping the world's economic engines in their track.

This is why we need a multi-lateral approach. The answer is not less globalisation but more global collaboration. I see local government associations as a network of talent, knowledge and action. Cities that have recovered share experiences with those in the grip of the crisis; and those that are about to enter the storm can better prepare by having the right strategy shaped by experiences and resources from more advanced cities.

Building local solutions

This network can work together to:



- (1) support or increase capacity of the healthcare systems,
- (2) Alleviate shortages of needed medical supplies,
- (3) Ensure business continuity especially in the provision of basic urban services
- (4) Guide/apply confinement and quarantine measures whilst keeping the most vulnerable protected
- (5) Support vulnerable communities and evolve inclusive programmes that help them deal with immediate, medium term and long term solutions
- (6) Give advice to economic stakeholders and the private sector to ensure that jobs are protected and recovery takes into account the most vulnerable groups

To my mind, local government associations are well-placed to start planning for a more inclusive and resilient post-Covid world by making a strong case for cities and human settlements to secure much needed resources from global, regional, national and community level financial recovery programmes.

Local Government Associations can encourage cities to undertake a new model for sustainable, healthy and equitable city. They can also create the forums for co-creation of concrete road maps, for cities to go from the present unsustainable situation, to the new equitable city.

Local Government Associations can play a catalytic role and facilitate the conversation, collecting the data for evidence-based decision-making. They can also support of national, regional and international efforts in the recovery phase phase.

Local Authorities can also facilitate various recovery programmes including in urban finance, capacity building, response to systemic issues, technology, and global and regional integration.

Friends and colleagues,

I believe we can find new ways for collaboration to ensure that urbanisation works for everyone. As the Secretary-General said the world cannot return to the way it was and cities must lead the way to making sure a more inclusive world is the truly legacy of COVID-19.