

PRESS RELEASE:

Local Government Associations: multiplying and upscaling of measures

#BeyondTheOutbreak

The Live Learning Series hosted by UCLG, Metropolis, and UN-Habitat, is a momentous exercise of local and regional governments sharing their experiences, initiatives, and actions to support their communities facing the pandemic through the provision of key basic services.

Nairobi, Barcelona, 9 April - The live learning session that took place today, co-organized by the Capacity and Institution Building Working Group of UCLG, brought together associations of local and regional governments, partners from the civil society, key actors from Local Government Associations (LGAs), and the United Nations to address service delivery towards members, liaising on behalf of members with other levels of governments and the provision of learning and exchange possibilities.

The Mayor of Utrecht, President of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG) and Co-President of UCLG, **Jan van Zanen**, the CEO of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), **Brock Carlton** and the Director of the Global Solutions Division of UN-Habitat, **Raf Tuts** opened the session, framing the conversation around the work that LGAs all over the world were doing in an often-difficult national context. **Jan Van Zanen** highlighted the importance of imp keeping democratic processes alive, and the role of the Association of Netherland Municipalities (VNG) in linking the local and national level during the pandemic.

"It is important to stand together, to share information and communication. We, as VNG, are providing research and expertise, and we work on guiding on the right direction, even if we don't have all the answers," he said.

Raf Tuts, from UN-Habitat, said UN-Habitat was looking to support local government associations; in particular those from areas are in the earlier stages of the pandemic, through sharing of resources and experiences. He praised the role of local government associations in recovery processes, through *"supporting communities that help deal with solutions, and providing advice to economic stakeholders to ensure the recovery continues"*.

Brock Carlton, CEO of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities highlighted the important role of the associations in laying out demands from their members to national governments. In his words, “we need to gather the needs and challenges from cities, into a coherent list of policies. We are the joint voice that says that we need these measures”. Over 160 participants attended the session that explored how the outbreak affected the work of local governments and their associations. The first part of the session was a roundtable between CEOs of LGAs, discussing challenges and actions of associations, and was moderated by the Co-President of the UCLG Working group of Capacity and Institution Building **Sebastien Hamel**.

The **Frente Nacional de Prefeitos** and the **National Confederation of Municipalities** from Brazil, the **Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces**, the **South African Local Governments’ Association**, and the **League of Cities of the Philippines** gathered to showcase what Local Governments Associations from all over the world were bringing to the table during the outbreak and beyond. **Some of the key questions posed included:**

What new services are being developed? Are new products available? What are the political challenges related to the intergovernmental coordination of the emergency? How can local approaches and methodologies be replicated? Have the associations been able to adapt to a new context?

Information provision and coordination among spheres of government **as a critical issue to be** addressed to guarantee that the needs of the citizens are met and that efficiency is guaranteed. On-line platforms are being developed to share knowledge and provide answers to frequently asked questions to municipalities, particularly smaller ones. Looking ahead this crisis should help us determine the capacity building agenda of the local governments associations to support their membership.

One of the recurring themes of the live learning exercises has been how societies can provide, in the aftermath of a crisis, greater access to opportunities. This was brought up in the **interactive dialogue** and was structured around the challenges and priorities raised by the associations, with participants from the **Consortium of Provincial Autonomous Governments of Ecuador CONGOPE**, **United Cities of France**, **the Association of Indonesian Municipalities**, **the Italian Association of Cities and Regions of Europe** and **the Turkish Association of Municipalities**.

Participants discussed how the world will look in the years ahead, focusing on how solidarity and decentralized cooperation among communities, and dialogue

between states and local and regional governments will be key to resolving the current challenges.

The financial feasibility of local governments systems around the world which, run public service provision without the usual sources of income is a great concern for Local Governments Associations and need to be urgently brought to the attention of national and regional governments.

The session wrap-up was facilitated by **Elkin Velasquez**, UN-Habitat's Regional Representative for Latin America and the Caribbean, who said it was essential to consolidate the important role that local governments (at all levels) have been playing in policy making, but also to enhance their capacity to strengthen their membership and provide new services to their members.

Emilia Saiz, the Secretary General of UCLG, closed the session, stating that LGAs had to be creative, and see what should to be changed to be fit for purpose and truly respond to the needs of their membership. She highlighted that the COVID-19 outbreak has *"acted as a magnifying glass, that shows us how the problems that we already have are exacerbated. This also refers to the governance aspect. LRGs will need a different space in the decision-making in the aftermath in order to not go back to how things were. Articulating a joint response with concrete proposals will be critical and a responsibility that UCLG is willing to undertake together with its partners, member cities and associations"*.

The live learning exercises will continue throughout the month on Wednesdays and Thursdays during the crisis. Access to technology in service delivery during the current crisis, Migration, Culture, Local Economic Development and Local Finances will be among the topics covered as cities around the world are 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 www.uclg.org and follow [@uclg_org](https://twitter.com/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 and follow [@unhabitat](https://twitter.com/unhabitat) for further information.

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