



Live Learning Series hosted by UCLG, Metropolis and UN-Habitat

Local Economic Development

Speech by the UN-Habitat Executive Director Maimunah Mohd Sharif

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City Leaders, colleagues and friends,

Covid-19 is the most significant global health crisis of the last 100 years. Containment measures are having a major impact on the global economy and already causing massive job losses, in the formal and informal economies of our world, in rich and poor countries, in north and south.

The worst is yet to come. Job losses pose serious challenges for families to pay for essential services such as food, rent, and utilities. Economic contraction means less work, but also less tax revenue. Local governments need to finance essential services and social programmes, while seeing revenue dry up.

Many developing countries and cities are already facing severe challenges of food security and household poverty. Children lose out on play, education and even vaccinations. Young adults cannot finish degree courses and have no hope to find employment soon. Many jobs in the urban sectors of hospitality, mobility, culture and jobs such as attending shops or in support of people working in offices were already marginal before and have now disappeared, possibly forever.

Yesterday, this initiative of online live learning had a session focused on Covid-19 in informal settlements and in the informal economy. We were reminded that many essential jobs to keep cities going in the developing world are done by people living in informal settlements or working in the informal economy. We know that even in wealthy countries, people with lower incomes often do not stay at home, travel with public transport and ensure that the essential services keep running. Many of them are women! People in essential service jobs and in the informal economy take a great share of the risk to keep us all safe.

To them, I want to dedicate this session. Moving forward Beyond the Outbreak, Local Economic Development should be the commitment of all city leaders and all of us. We owe them the promise that we will create the space and opportunities for new jobs and more jobs.



Dear friends,

Creating space and opportunities for urban prosperity is the driving motto of UN-Habitat's Strategic Plan for these four years. Our commitments for our work were approved 11 months ago, by all member states of the United Nations, in the first UN-Habitat Assembly, here in Nairobi.

Our first commitment is to reduce spatial inequality. This is now more than important, if we want to improve living conditions for all. **Local Economic Development cannot restart without reducing spatial inequality.** Washing hands: for this, we need more action than ever on increased access to basic services. Public space: we need a new drive for safe public spaces, to compensate for overcrowding, to organise small and safe markets, and to encourage urban agriculture in green areas. Affordable housing: this crisis put this human right again in the spotlight, front and center.

Our second commitment is for shared prosperity, between cities and regions. Collaboration is a crucial message for Local Economic Development. The New Urban Agenda had already this key commitment, *"to taking ... steps to strengthen national, subnational and local institutions to support local economic development, fostering integration, cooperation, coordination and dialogue across levels of governments and functional areas and relevant stakeholders"*. The Covid-19 crisis will oblige all local and national leaders to go back to the planning table, to create the opportunities for local economic development in integrated city-region plans.

Our third commitment is for strengthened climate action. Making cities again healthy, reducing air pollution, protection the environment and making sure that people and communities and the economy have guarantees of safety – from disease and from climate shocks: **these will the drivers of long-term development, more than ever.**

Our last commitment is most relevant today: UN-Habitat was asked by the member states to lead on effective urban crisis prevention and response. That was 9 months before Covid-19. These actions are crucial for socio-economic recovery: to support social integration, cohesion and resilience, leaving no one behind, especially not women, elderly person, refugees and migrants. UN-Habitat will focus its work on supporting the capacity and knowledge of cities to be more resilient and strengthening their economies to better respond to shocks and crises in the future.



I appreciate that we are joined today in this session by my friends of the ILO, which has put up a strong message to the world about the plight of the informal sector workers in this crisis, the need for social protection and the need for international and national government support, now and in the future. **I look forward to join city leaders, national leaders and my friends in the UN system to plan and manage the recovery in the years ahead.** We must together find the ways to make sustainable urban development again a driver of development and peace for all people. Emilia, I am sure that we can do this together!

Thanks very much to all of you.

Every week, twice a week, since 25 March, I joined these learning sessions, to ensure that UN-Habitat's actions address the needs I hear from you. I called on UN-Habitat's country managers to start immediate assistance projects, in all regions. Last week, I launched the **UN-Habitat COVID-19 Response Plan.** Ongoing programmes are being repurposed, such as the Participatory Slum Upgrading Programme (PSUP), which reaches 5 million slum dwellers in 190 cities in 40 countries.

At the start of the session, allow me to thank once more the thousands of participants who have joined these learning events. I like to thank UCLG, Emilia, the UCLG members, Metropolis, the many speakers. With all of you, my support is for local governments who **leave no one and no place behind, whether formal or informal.** Together, we must overcome Covid-19 and reshape our cities and communities Beyond the Outbreak.