



Global Network on Safer Cities Consultative Meeting: 'Strengthening the Safer Cities Strategy while responding to COVID-19'

**Speech by the UN-Habitat Executive Director Maimunah Mohd Sharif
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Dear partners, dear friends – a very good morning, good afternoon, and good evening to you all, wherever you are in the world.

I would like to welcome all the partners in the Global Network on Safer Cities (GNSC) to this online meeting. A special appreciation to the Global Parliament of Mayors (GPM) for convening the two-day webinar. My friend Dr. Peter Kurz, Mayor of Mannheim and Chair of the GPM - thank you for joining hands with us.

I would also like to recognise and thank our sister UN agencies who have joined us today and have accompanied our work on safer cities for several decades. UN Women, UNODC and UNICEF have implemented joint programming actions with us on safer cities in several cities worldwide. These can now be further scaled up, building on the evidence of what has worked and not worked. I also wish to recognize the partnerships with international organisations in this endeavour, for example, with *Plan International* we have an ongoing joint programming on 'Safer Cities for Girls'.

Friends - It is now one year since the adoption of the *UN systemwide Guidelines on Safer Cities and Human Settlements* and the *UN-Habitat Strategic Plan 2020-23* at the 1st Habitat Assembly, which took place in May 2019 in Nairobi, Kenya. In the new Strategic Plan, safety is a cross-cutting thematic issue. The delivery of safety in our cities for all will be guided by an integrated and systemic policy and programme approach, coordinated at the municipal level.

Evidence from several decades of work on Safer Cities tells us that the lack of safety in our cities can be addressed by integrated urban planning, management and governance systems, which lead to more equitable, accessible and effective delivery of land, housing, infrastructure and basic services.

In other words, the long-term solutions to safety in cities do not lie in a security architecture, rather in a developmental one. We also now know that these developmental solutions to safety require a comprehensive approach, with a whole of government and whole of society participation, tailored to local context.

This is why UN-Habitat's technical tools and knowhow in supporting cities as key actors in this field is of critical importance, in addition to police and criminal justice system actors.



The 25 years of local government practices on crime prevention and urban safety, spearheaded by UN-Habitat's Safer Cities Programme, provide a useful springboard to scale up our actions in the Decade of Action to achieve the 2030 Agenda. In this regard, UN-Habitat has put forward concrete proposals to Member States for the implementation of the Systemwide Guidelines on Safer Cities and Human Settlements. Key to this is the selection of 15 countries to pilot the implementation of the guidelines, while supporting each other through a country peer review mechanism. The gains cities have made towards safer and secure environments to live, work and play, now require to be supported by robust monitoring and assessment frameworks to record the impact of their interventions.

The COVID-19 pandemic and its resultant control measures, in fact, challenge the gains that have been made in the co-production of safety for all. In particular, for the most marginalised groups including women, children, people with disabilities and older persons. This means that countries and cities will have to redouble their efforts to strengthen their safety strategies while accelerating the COVID-19 socio-economic recovery process.

UN-Habitat is reviewing its suite of tools on safer cities with a view to strengthen the integration of crime and violence prevention into broader urban strategies and interventions. In this regard, we have launched a COVID-19 strategy and campaign targeting informal settlements in 64 countries in the developing world. We welcome partners to join us in this campaign to mobilise the required resources to sustain cities actions in this endeavour.

The successful partner-led safer cities events at the 10th session of the World Urban Forum in February this, in Abu Dhabi, provided a useful learning platform of the array of innovative tools at our disposal. UN-Habitat will 'walk the talk' with you all in the Global Network on Safer Cities (GNSC) towards ensuring that we report back positive outcomes of our joint work at the community level, at the 11th session of the World Urban Forum that will take place in Katowice, Poland in 2022.

Mayor Kurz and colleagues, we look forward to also working even more closely with you, in promoting the role of local governments towards achieving safer cities for all. You can count on our support in this endeavour.

Friends, colleagues - I wish you all successful deliberations in this two-day webinar and look forward to receiving the outcome and accompanying you in the next action steps.