



**UCLG Executive Bureau Opening**  
**Speech by the UN-Habitat Executive Director Maimunah Mohd Sharif**  
**29 May 2020**

- Honourable Mayors and Governors
- Secretaries General of UCLG Regional Sections
- Representatives from local and regional government networks
- Fellow colleagues from the United Nations
- Ladies and Gentlemen, Local government friends

A very good morning, afternoon or evening to all of you, wherever you are!

I am very happy to participate in this UCLG Executive Bureau. The last time I was able to be with you was in Strasbourg in May 2018, today I am grateful that we can be together through this zoom connection. I am very happy to see that UCLG continues to grow strong, proving itself resilient, responding efficiently to the sudden challenge of Covid-19, and demonstrating deep relevance to the issues we are now all tackling in cities around the world.

Many of you know about the exceptional collaboration between UCLG, Metropolis and UN-Habitat in the Live Learning Events we have been hosting together since 25 March, under the banner “Beyond the Outbreak”. It was my genuine pleasure to participate in 11 of the 13 live learning sessions and to share key messages with city leaders facing the pandemic.

I had the opportunity to interact with city and regional leaders, and other speakers, about the impact of this crisis. Cities have been in the frontline of the response and are in the vanguard of formulating and testing new policies. I would like to take the opportunity and share with you two key take-aways from the sessions.

**First**, adequate housing is now clearly recognized as a matter of life and death. We will not be able to move towards a new normal if people in informality remain at risk. We need to pay special attention to women, older people and persons living with disabilities. We owe vulnerable communities the promise that we will create the space and opportunities for new jobs and more jobs.

**Second**, solidarity with all communities - including marginalized groups, migrants, refugees, and displaced - is necessary to regain prosperity. Cities must ensure that the digital revolution does not leave anyone or any place behind. We want to provide safe mobility today and start planning the sustainable mobility of tomorrow.

And of course, cities now need funds to recover better, with more resilience against future shocks.



Dear friends, as we began this year, just a very few months ago, we also launched the Decade of Action for the 2030 Agenda. It is clear that if we are to achieve the SDGs, cities will be at the forefront. UCLG has been a critical partner in identifying areas where we must invest time, energy, and vision in support of these shared goals. The outcomes of our live learning sessions also show a clear path for collective action for today and for the years to come.

I am delighted with the increased engagement that UCLG is undertaking with the United Nations System, and I am very proud of the pivotal role that UN-Habitat is playing in bringing the local and regional governments closer to the UN. Only yesterday, we had the pleasure to co-organise, together with UNEP and UNDP, a political dialogue between Ministers and Mayors about the need to strengthen multilevel coordination for the implementation of the Paris Agreement and how the response to COVID-19 needs to take into consideration greener policies and initiatives to build back better and ensure a sustainable socio-economic recovery.

This response should also be multilateral, which is why I am very pleased to be here - joining my colleague Mr. Tedros Adhanom, Director general of the World Health Organization, who has been working tirelessly, day and night, to spearhead our coordinated response to COVID-19. I am also very glad to see here, Mr. Fabrizio Hochschild, Special Advisor on Preparations for the Seventy-Fifth United Nations Anniversary. This year, the UN celebrates its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary. This is a landmark moment, an auspicious occasion to renew the spirit of the San Francisco Conference in 1945, when countries decided to come together to find common solutions to global challenges in the aftermath of World War Two.

Together we are all stronger in building a more sustainable, just and happy world under the umbrella of Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Thanks very much to all of you for your attention.