



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

**Speech by the UN-Habitat Executive Director Maimunah Mohd Sharif
Thursday, 25 June**

Dear partners, dear friends – a very good morning, good afternoon, good evening to you all, wherever you are in the world.

I once again would like to thank UCLG and Metropolis for co-hosting the series of Live Learning Event webinars, this **time on Safer Cities**. At a time when the COVID 19 pandemic has exposed historical inequalities in our cities and towns, **it is time for a global conversation about what ‘public safety’ means, and how it is best achieved.**

Indeed, our two key global action plans – the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the New Urban Agenda are quite emphatic on the point that there can be **no sustainable development without safety, and likewise no safety without sustainable development**. That imperative has led member states to adopt UN systemwide Guidelines on Safer Cities and Human Settlements building from innovative practices that go beyond a ‘police alone’ approach to addressing **safety as an issue of better urban governance**, inclusive of all inhabitants, regardless of race, gender or age.

Our work on safer cities over the past 25 years has proven that **local governments have a distinct role in coordinating safety interventions at the local level**, in collaboration with other spheres of government, and in partnership with private sector, civil society organisations, women and youth grassroots movements, research institutions and the academia. In this regard, I wish to **acknowledge the work of several of the mayors and local governments present here**, who have worked tirelessly with communities to minimise the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in informal settlements and other vulnerable neighbourhoods of our cities and towns.



Over the past weeks, millions of people around the world have united in peaceful protest to speak out against injustice, inequality, racism and structural discrimination in cities and urban settings around the world. The images of police violence, including the brutal death of George Floyd, have shaken us to the core and call us to reflect deeply on our values, attitudes and actions. The ensuing debate has focused on **questions of legitimacy and trust between the police and the community, often a legacy of historical inequalities in our society.** Cities will need to respond with robust and comprehensive strategies including addressing social problems in cities, that traditional law enforcement, acting alone, cannot. It means thinking critically about how local and national government agencies (including the police) ought to work in concert – in what we call, **a multi-level governance of safety framework.**

At UN-Habitat, the United Nations agency charged with promoting socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities, **we stand in solidarity with cities and communities across the world in condemning these historical inequalities.** As the Secretary-General has stated, **diverse societies require investment in social cohesion against discrimination and inequality** by national and local governments and civil society. Cities and governments are confronting change, and seizing the opportunity to prioritize respect for diversity and inclusion as a common good and shared responsibility. These values are at the core of **UN-Habitat's work on safer cities for all, underpinned by the principle of co-production of security for all.**

UN-Habitat Strategic Plan 2020-23 offers a window of opportunity to reimagine safety in cities in an integrated way, addressing measures aimed at reducing spatial inequality and poverty; enhancing livelihoods and prosperity for all; tackling climate change action and preventing crisis and conflict. **Only by implementing holistic approaches to safety shall cities be able to address historical inequalities in a systematic and inclusive way, leaving no one behind.** In this sense, the **COVID 19 pandemic and its recovery phase present an opportunity for governments to reboot and transform systems.** We have the knowledge, the strategies, the successes and the benefits from institutionalised municipal safer cities policies and programmes that promote inhabitants as the key actors of social transformation, particularly from the region of Latin America. Governments and cities can see what has worked, train implementers in how to use tried-and-tested approaches, learn through communities of practice, measure progress and outcomes in terms of safety improvement, and foster more national and city pathfinders to innovate.

I welcome you all to join UN-Habitat in this redoubled effort, dubbed as 'Safer Cities 2.0', that will involve research, rethinking and pilot projects in 'requesting' countries and with local government as coordinating actors of such interventions.



Remember, we have only ten years to deliver on the SDGs – this is the Decade of Action! As SDG 17 envisions, global partnerships will be at the core of successful delivery of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In this regard, I would like to recognise and thank our sister UN agencies - UN Women, UNODC, UNICEF and UNESCO who have signalled their interest to implement **joint programming actions with UN-Habitat on safer cities** in several cities worldwide, building on the evidence of what has worked and not worked. In the next weeks, UN-Habitat will be launching an **annual community-driven “40 Days Safer Cities Challenge”** that aims at mobilising local governments and communities to action building on the UN systemwide Guidelines on Safer Cities. This is one of the key recommendations emerging from the Partners Consultative Meeting of the Global Network on Safer Cities (GNSC) which took place one month ago. This will be held as part of the annual Urban October celebrations – running from the observation of International Day of Peace (21 September) at UN75, to World Cities Day (31 October).

Today’s Learning Exchange should signal the start a formidable collective effort towards making cities safer for all. Thank you all for joining us in this endeavour.