

## 2023 SDG Action Weekend Side Event

### Women-led Cities: Bringing Gender Responsive Actions, Solutions and Partnerships from the Local Level to Scale

Date: September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Time: 14:15 – 15:45 EST

Location: CR 2

#### Summary

The SDG Progress Report shows that just 12% of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) targets are on track. Progress of 50% is weak and insufficient. There is limited advancement leading to the reversed progress on more than 30% of the SDGs. Unless action is taken, the 2030 Agenda will become an epitaph for a world that might have been. The crises of our time – environmental, social, health, economic, and conflict – all have local dimensions. It is long argued that 65% of the SDGs could not be achieved unless Local and Regional Governments (LRGs) and local actors are fully and equitably involved in implementation. Thus, for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to achieve its transformative potential, it must be fully realized at the local level – it needs to be localized.

Women constitute roughly more than half of the global population but only lead 5% of cities. They face disproportionate exposure to inequalities that limit their right to the city, including but not limited to experience of sexual violence and harassment in urban public spaces, limited property rights, gender blind infrastructure and public spaces and gender biased data sources. While planning and financing for inclusive infrastructure and services and gender responsive local development remain inadequate, 700 million people in cities live without improved sanitation, contributing to poor health conditions, and 156 million are living without access to improved water sources. Vulnerable groups, including women and girls and marginalized communities, are particularly affected by the lack of access to basic infrastructure in transport, energy, water & sanitation.

However, many women leaders of LRGs have been successful in improving lives and inspiring a better future for all through their role in mobilizing the global climate movement, pushing for social protections, and enabling progress in their participation in decision making. The achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment is integral to each of the 17 SDGs. Only through ensuring the rights of women and girls are achieved across all the goals will inclusive transformative change to cities and communities be realized.

In line with this, the Women-led Cities (WLC) window of the SDG Cities Global Initiative, jointly implemented by UNH, UNCDF and Ellaimpacta, aims to accelerate progress towards gender equality and increase opportunities for women by improving safety for women in the city and equitable access to basic services and infrastructure, while supporting women entrepreneurship, equal work rights, and political empowerment as women engage equally in local decision making for the localization of the SDGs. Uniquely, Women-led Cities is a partnership between women business leaders globally and women mayors worldwide. It fosters the growth and development of women in leadership and results in establishing new generations of women business leaders and women political leaders. Working together, women leaders of cities and businesses will advocate at all levels of government for transformative local action in support of human rights, gender rights and equality.

Women Led Cities contributes to a vision of a world where at least 50% of leaders at all levels are women and where gender-based violence is history, Women-Led Cities presents a strategic opportunity to form a grand, multi-stakeholder coalition to promote women in leadership and expand effective impact investments and gender transformative financing in cities. It provides a crucial space for the

engagement of women- led businesses, civil society and the private sector together with female mayors and local leaders, to promote an effective and ambitious gender responsive action agenda for cities. As gender equality stands as a foundational to achieve the 2030 Agenda and it is a cross-cutting High Impact Initiative of the SDG Summit, Women-Led Cities not only bolsters this fundamental objective but also catalyzes comprehensive progress across each of the six major transitions that are being highlighted at the 2023 SDG Summit, fortifying the path toward the accelerating SDG achievement. Likewise, the momentum generated by Women-Led Cities aligns with the aspirations of the Local2030 Coalition High Impact Initiative on Localization. The Local2030 Coalition serves as the largest United Nations system-wide network for localizing the SDGs. Through its leveraging of the whole system's networks of local stakeholders, the Coalition has the potential to bridge integrated knowledge, expertise, innovative solutions and investments to accelerate action on the SDGs. The Coalition is mobilizing the UN system and partners to showcase how its collective work supports necessary socioeconomic and environmental transitions at local and sub-national levels and identify strategic scalable opportunities. By amplifying the voices of women-led businesses, civil society, and the private sector in collaboration with female mayors and local leaders, Women-Led Cities not only fosters a gender-responsive action agenda but also empowers localized solutions. This synergy not only deepens the impact of gender-transformative financing but also enhances the resilience and effectiveness of local initiatives, thus forging a harmonious bridge between global sustainable development objectives and grassroots progress.

### Objective

The objective of this event is to further discuss how women leaders of businesses, cities and communities can join forces to drive positive local transformation through inclusive leadership, economic empowerment and reduced inequality and contribute to the High Impact Initiatives on gender equality and localization and the six transitions. To this end, the event will focus on the importance of investing in female mayors and gender responsive local solutions to promote economic opportunities, better services and infrastructure. The event will provide a forum for discussion and contribute to key commitments, announcements and solutions and a way forward for building a solid coalition for women led cities.

### Moderators:

Shipra Narang Suri - Chief, Urban Practices Branch, Global Solutions Division, UN-Habitat  
Liane Freire – CEO BlendLab

### Speakers: (2 panels)

1. Maimunah Mohd Sharif – Executive Director, UN-Habitat – Opening Remarks
2. Luiza Helena Trajano – CEO, Magazine Luiza
3. Hon Rohey Malick Lowe – Mayor of Banjul, the Gambia
4. Hon Yucel Yilmaz – Mayor of Balikesir and President of the Union of Municipalities, Turkiye
5. Hon Sharon Dijksma – Mayor of Utrecht, Netherlands (TBC)
6. Pascal Lavoie – Director, Federation of Canadian Municipalities
7. Ilan Goldfajn – President, Inter- American Development Bank
8. Jessica Espinoza – CEO, 2X Global
9. Emilia Saiz – Secretary General, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) (TBC)
10. Mourad Wahba – OIC, UNCDF