

GPM Position Paper: Urban Security
Pursuing a multidimensional approach to safe and secure cities
SDG 9/ 11/ 16

Background

Cities around the world face multiple and interconnected threats to public safety and security. These can include political violence, criminality, radicalization and extremism, and human-made disasters. Threats are both physical and digital – with far-reaching consequences on the functioning of cities and the wellbeing of local residents. Crime and victimization can undermine public safety, good governance, economic progress and the achievement of sustainable development. Likewise, cyber-crime, digital malfeasance and cyber-war can disrupt public and private services, critical infrastructure and personal and commercial data. Not all cities are equally prepared for these complex and overlapping challenges. Yet a priority for all local governments is that they adopt a comprehensive, data-based, evidence-informed, and multidimensional strategies to promote safer and secure cities.

The Global Parliament of Mayors supports a comprehensive approach to public safety and security that leverages both law enforcement and social prevention and is built on foundations of scientific practice and respect for human rights. The Parliament rejects the unnecessary and dangerous militarization of security. An over-reliance on military and policing assets and practices, mass surveillance, restriction of civil liberties, and over-incarceration strategies is ineffective and inefficient. The Parliament instead advocates for integrated approaches that privilege intelligence-led and community policing, social prevention, urban planning and shared ownership over public spaces, and the co-production of security and safety priorities with citizens. The careful introduction of new technologies (e.g. crime mapping platforms, police body cameras, gunshot detection, AI-enabled surveillance and other tools) can generate positive security and safety outcomes, but safeguards are essential to avoid unintended discrimination, ensure fairness and the privacy, and safeguard rights and civil liberties.

The Global Parliament of Mayors supports multidimensional approaches to urban security and safety. Key to their success are measures that support the appropriate design and investment in the built environment and lived experiences of citizens – especially those most at risk of victimization. Revitalizing neighborhoods affected by concentrated disadvantage; improving the availability of affordable housing and mobility; involving citizens in planning processes – including at-risk young people; and investing in mitigating risks and enhancing protective factors at the city-scale are all key to multidimensional security. Working relationships between the police, public defenders and prosecutors and elected city representatives and administrators – including through formal consultation platforms – are essential. These approaches are consistent with the New Urban Agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the UN system-wide Guidelines on Safer Cities and Human Settlements.

Objectives

The Global Parliament of Mayors recognizes the global, interconnected and complex dimensions of the safety and security threats confronting cities. No one city nor one level of government can address all these risks alone. More than ever, cities should explore multi-tiered safety and security governance arrangements that draw on

national competencies, improve municipal capacities while also pooling relevant resources across multiple jurisdictions. The Global Parliament of Mayors recommends strengthening strategic inter-governmental partnerships to promote effective public security and safety measures within and between cities, with state and national counterparts, with international organizations (including development banks) and inter-city networks. The scaling-up of urban safety and security requires a wide range of functional partnerships. The core actors involve include, but not limited to, mayors and elected officials, law enforcement agencies, social welfare services, urban planning departments, private companies and service providers, universities, and community and faith-based groups.

The Global Parliament of Mayors is committed to accelerating the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular SDG 16 on peaceful, just and inclusive societies. Specifically, the Global Parliament advocates for the significant reduction of all forms of violence in line with SDG16.1, through data-driven strategies that are evidence-based and respect basic human rights. The Global Parliament also seeks to build on resolutions issued in 2018, to foster urban safety and security policies and practices that are comprehensive, community focused, supportive of social cohesion, and advocating for the design of inclusive urban infrastructure. Moreover, where possible, cities should adopt transparent and open data policies to incubate local security solutions together with appropriate cyber-security competencies, education strategies to build awareness of cyber-security threats, and safeguards to avoid misuse of data.

Urban Security Working Team:

Bongumusa Zondo	Acting Head Safer Cities Unit, City of eThekweni Municipality Coordinator African Forum on Urban (AFUS)
Rebecca Skellett	Head Strong Cities Network/Institute for Strategic Dialogue
Juma Assiago	Coordinator Safer Cities Programme/UN Habitat
Robert Muggah	GPM Co-Chair Advisory Committee, author position paper, Director Igarapé Institute and SecDev Group