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**Open Letter Chair Peter Kurz, Mayor of Mannheim  
Global Parliament of Mayors**

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For the first time we are facing a pandemic sparked by the Sars-CoV-2 virus. Together we must find a way to safeguard especially our vulnerable citizens and the health system that supports them. Now is the time for evidence-based sustainable leadership and not for populist shouting. Mayors have the unique position to lead their cities, unite the people and to overcome the biggest obstacle we are facing.

The World Health Organization believes we, as a collective, have the power to suppress and control this pandemic. Now is the time for action; this is the first pandemic that we, as mayors, united city leaders and local governments can control by taking urgent and clear action.

We have learnt through the feedback of many colleagues (and I experienced the same here in Mannheim), the expertise of academia, the WHO, national and local health services, that when the growth of an epidemic or pandemic becomes exponential, gradual restrictions and actions are no longer sufficient to slow the spread. When containment proves to be no longer sufficient, then only clear and forceful measures to restrict or minimize social contacts will help. This controlled collective action could be perceived by some as radical limitation for the daily lives of people and freedom of movement. However, these drastic measures will be the essential factor to protect all of us and especially the most vulnerable in our society.

Several cities have demonstrated that this virus can be suppressed and controlled. I believe cities and countries can control this pandemic, but action can only be effective when it's clear, fast and collective. To be strategic at this time means to be fast.

We are still in the peak phase of the spread and are therefore doing everything in our power - through these drastic measures - to achieve a mitigation. Even though we as mayors are used to acting quickly and 24/7 is our daily routine, the dramatic developments in the centre of this pandemic are happening at the speed of light. This frame is intended to illustrate that there is no time to exchange views with our valued colleagues on an international level as usual, in addition to the important local, regional and national decision-making bodies. We simply do not have capacity, although the exchange is of course not at zero.

I understand that the possibilities of mayors vary from country to country. We see clearly that mayors are now harnessing their power to act quickly and decisively. Anyone who cannot do so, or can do so only partially in their own city because of

their national situation, must demand this quick and decisive intervention from the state and have the duty to convince all of us to take their side.

I cannot emphasize enough how mayors are uniquely positioned. They are on the spot, so they are close to the people and therefore have a great responsibility. This dual role as decision-makers and advocates for their citizens makes local governments the decisive authority to deal with these global challenges in a different and more effective way.

As soon as the now indispensable shutdown is organized the better the situation can be surveyed. This includes how the assistance for those living alone, companies, the unemployed, etc. can be regulated. Even more questions will rise, above all: how do we get our cities, our societies back on track and how do we keep people stable in this crisis of unprecedented hardship? Because one thing is clear: besides the very practical and material things, many people will also experience a psychological emergency situation. That is the moment when we as mayors have to seek an exchange, which is then meaningful, urgently necessary and also shapeable. We must also prepare for this moment. We will then see how important it was in the past to invest in international relations and networks, to build them up and actively shape them.

Together we must use this situation to think through how the finances of cities work. It is increasingly clear that the current financial structure and arrangements between the federal, state and local authorities is not suitable in many countries.

The Global Parliament of Mayors is ready to connect mayors with each other. Also, the GPM has worked with the Georgetown University Centre for Global Health Science and Security to realize a meaningful global impact by engaging with pandemic preparedness initiatives that were supported in the GPM Declarations in 2018 & 2019. Now Georgetown University has published online the Rapid Urban Health Security Assessment (RUHSA) that is designed primarily for local government leaders and policymakers to support decisions as they prioritize and build capacities to improve local-level health security.

Mayors and their cities must now successfully implement the drastic measures - stay at home and reduce your physical social contact to the very minimum. And they must ensure that our societies stand together, in humility and solidarity, and overcome this global crisis together by acting cautiously, clearly and therefore effectively on the ground. And I am convinced that we will do so.

Yours sincerely,



Peter Kurz  
Chair Executive Committee  
Global Parliament of Mayors  
Mayor of Mannheim