

PEACE IN OUR CITIES



Joint Statement on International Women's Day 2021

Urban Networks pledge to continue advancing women's leadership and political participation to build peaceful, just, and inclusive cities. We encourage others to join us!

Too few of our local leaders and mayors are women. Although women account for more than 50% of the global population, they make up less than [5% of mayors](#). According to the United Nations, with data from 133 countries, women constitute only [36% of local elected](#) officials.

Increasing women's participation at the local level is critical to achieving gender equity, and building inclusive societies and peace. Countries with high rates of political participation and leadership by women have [greater responsiveness](#) to citizens' needs on a broader range of policy issues and solutions. Women policymakers also tend to [prioritize violence reduction](#), which helps to secure lasting peace. Specifically, greater representation of women in positions of power in local governments and security sectors results in [improved safety and security outcomes](#) for marginalized communities, fewer adverse outcomes for civilian interactions, and better responsiveness to sexual and gender-based violence.

The pressures of local governance are compounding due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has brought new social and economic problems and threatens local peace and security. Women's leadership is essential to realizing the ambition of fostering and maintaining more peaceful communities. The need for fully inclusive city representation is greater than ever.

While the number of women mayors may be small, they are well-networked. As facilitators of urban networks, we have witnessed firsthand their desire to tap into expertise, share knowledge across borders, and draw on support and solidarity from their peers. Women have also been showing up as leaders and active civil society members in their local communities. We stand in solidarity with [women speaking out against violence](#) globally. We celebrate women organizing marches for justice in cities like [Oakland \(US\)](#) and [Guadalajara \(Mexico\)](#). We commit to supporting women as they work to build peace, safety, and human security in their local communities.

On International Women's Day 2021, ahead of the [65th session](#) of the UN Commission on the Status of Women with the theme of equal participation in decision making, we stand in support of women's leadership and gender-responsive urban policy solutions to build peaceful and inclusive communities.

We are committed to:

Shining light on

- The undue burden placed on women due to COVID-19 and the need to ‘build back more equitably.’
- The risks that women face when they enter politics and work to prevent these risks, including by holding those who threaten politically-active women accountable.

Investing in

- Acquiring accurate data on women’s leadership at the local level and its impact to establish benchmarks that measure gender equity in local governance.
- Local governments that are proactive in implementing gender-responsive policies.
- Women's participation in law enforcement agencies, including women-focused police precincts.

Advocating for

- Meaningful inclusion of women in decision-making processes that can be achieved by multiple means, including by implementing gender quotas.
- A cultural shift and galvanizing the political will necessary to normalize gender and rights approaches to policy making.
- Inclusion of gender in the analysis of local problems and the design of policy solutions.

We pledge to continue advancing these commitments and to model the aspirations they set. By integrating gender analysis and working to increase women’s leadership within our own networks, we are accelerating action on the UN Sustainable Development Goals in the [Decade of Action on SDGs](#), particularly SDGs 5 on Gender Equality and 16 on Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions. We believe this is not only the ‘smart thing’, but also the ‘right thing’ to do.

