

**SIDE EVENT High Level Meeting on the New Urban Agenda:
SDG Cities: Women-led businesses supporting Women-led cities**

27 April 2022

1230-1400 Millenium Hotel, New York

Key words

SDG Cities, Women Empowerment, Women Leadership, Women Mayors

Objectives

- i. To promote women’s equal rights in leadership at all levels of decision-making, including subnational and local governments.
- ii. To recognize the importance of women leadership of cities and businesses to drive more equal and prosperous urban society
- iii. To galvanise support for women-led cities by women-led business through the SDG Cities Global Initiative

Summary – abstract (max. 300 words)

Women and girls represent half of the world’s population and also half of its potential. Women’s equal participation and leadership in political and public life is essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) by 2030. Encouraging women to take on leadership roles allows for financial independence, confidence, self-esteem, and role modelling for young women. Women in leadership enables the perspectives and lived experience of women and girls to be better reflected in decision making and is therefore key to ensuring an equal, inclusive and fair future society.

However, women are significantly underrepresented at all levels of decision-making worldwide and achieving gender-parity is far off. Currently only 22.5% of the 193 UN Member States are led by women,¹ around 5% of mayors worldwide are women,² and 8.1% of the CEOs of the top 500 companies are women.³ The global Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) pledge to end poverty, protect the planet, end gender discrimination and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030. As long as women continue to be excluded in leadership roles, and while they continue to face multiple obstacles as they progress into such roles, major gaps in SDG achievement will prevail.

Cities, which accommodate 55% of world’s population and are key to the local, “end-mile” achievement of the SDGs. Providing women with the right platform to share their ideas can enrich an organization's overall outlook and strategy and achieve tangible benefits. As mayors, and with the support of city networks, women have a means to express their ideas, demonstrate change and contribute to the local, national and global discourse that shapes cities. As we seek to promote women leadership of cities, it is key that their positive impact is known.

SDG Cities is a global initiative that aims to support 1000 cities accelerate their achievement of SDGs and positively impact on 1 billion lives by offering a systematic way to support cities becoming sustainable and resilient. It does this by connecting data to inclusive, evidence-based strategic planning, to high impact project development and financing. It accompanies this process by strengthening local institutional capacity and systems in key areas of data management,

¹ <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/female-world-leaders-jacinda-ardern-new-zealand-election-belarus-b1077339.html>

² https://www.uclg.org/en/Locally_elected_women_to_BeCounted_to_achive_SDG5

³ <https://quantic.edu/blog/2021/12/06/how-many-fortune-500-ceos-are-women/>

governance, planning, financing, and service delivery - foundations for urban transformation. It is implemented at scale through the provision of digitized tools, technical support hubs and a Cities Investment Facility that channels finance into SDG impact initiatives.

SDG Cities aims to empower and promote women-led cities by launching a “Women-led businesses for Women-led cities” window. This brings women CEOs and mayors together to support the success of women-led cities. It will provide a platform for women leaders to share experience and overcome obstacles together, and will mobilizing a catalytic fund to support financing strategic priorities that can accelerate the achievement of SDGs in Women-led cities.

This session will bring together women business leaders, mayors and UN principals in a dialogue on the opportunity for women leaders of businesses and cities to make a difference in accelerating the achievement of SDG, and overcoming obstacles faced by women leaders.

Guiding Questions for discussions

- i. What is needed to increase women’s leadership today?
- ii. What are the benefits to having women in leadership?
- iii. How can women mayors support women’s entrepreneurship and ultimately empower women?
- iv. How can women-led businesses globally support women-led cities.

Expected outcomes and impact

Initiate a new implementation window of the SDG Cities Global Initiative on Women-led business for women-led cities.

Outline the format of the session

[5 mins] Introduction of the panelists and topic

[15 mins] Amina Mohamed: Keynote - Women leadership and the SDGs

[10 mins] Mackenzie Scott: Making a difference through business and philanthropy

[10 mins] Maimunah Moh’d Sharif: Why we need more women-led cities

[10 mins] Mayor 1: Opportunities and obstacles for women in city leadership

[10 mins] Mayor 2: Opportunities and obstacles for women in city leadership

[10 mins] Carole Crist and Liane Freire: Vision for a Women-Led Business for Women-Led Cities initiative

[10 mins] Discussion

[10 mins] Sima Bahous: Closing Remarks

Speakers

Amina Mohamed	United Nations Deputy Secretary General
Mackenzie Scott	Author, philanthropist
Maimunah Moh’d Sharif	UN Under Secretary General, Executive Director, UN-Habitat
Mayors (tbc)	
Carole Crist	Business leader, former First Lady of Florida
Liane Freire	CEO, Blendlab Brazil
Sima Bahous	UN Under Secretary General, Executive Director,, UN-Women

