

## “Women Led Cities”

### CSW67 Side Event

**Date: March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2023, 10am-11:15am**

**Location: Conference Room A, UN Headquarters, New York, NY**

#### Context

More than 50% of the world’s population are women, but only 5% of the world's cities are led by women. Often, women led cities are constrained by a lack of technical capacities, and inadequate financial resources including lower budgetary allocations and fewer revenue generating opportunities. Yet research has shown that female leadership in cities is more likely to result in greater expenditure in traditionally feminine areas such as education, health care, and social assistance spending<sup>1</sup>. Empowering female mayors, therefore, is a promising strategy to promote urban systems for gender responsive service delivery, inclusive planning, budgeting, and regulatory framework, as well as inclusive infrastructure investments.

The Women-led Cities (WLC) window of the SDG Cities Global Initiative will address gender inequality and increase opportunities for women by improving safety for women in the city and access to basic services, while supporting women entrepreneurship, equal work rights, and political empowerment as women engage equally in local decision making.

Uniquely, Women-led Cities is a partnership between women business leaders globally and women mayors worldwide. It will foster the growth and development of women in positions of authority and result 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 change in support of human rights, gender rights and equality.

#### Presenting The Co-Creation Journey

In April 2022, at the Urban Agenda High Level Meeting in New York, UN-Habitat and the UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) joined efforts to promote a Women Leadership Global Initiative, to accelerate the achievement of SDGs in cities, and directly tackle gender inequality. The discussion of “Women-led Cities” highlighted the role of women in leadership as a powerful and essential driver for positive change. A group of global businesswomen leaders engaged with the initiative and demonstrated their interest in its promotion through the establishment of “Ellaimpacta Alliance,” an

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<sup>1</sup> Political Research Quarterly 2018, ‘Representative Budgeting: Women Mayors and the Composition of Spending in Local Governments’

alliance of women leaders and institutions to support financing and implementation of the Women-led Cities window.

In collaboration with UN-Habitat and UNCDF, EllaImpacta Alliance will promote The Co-Creation Journey which serves as a global co-creation process, with the aim of empowering women in leadership through leveraging a global catalytic fund and engaging women leaders through social and economic inclusive growth, leadership strengthening, and SDG acceleration and achievement.

### **Overall expected results**

The ‘Women-led Cities’ window is a call for women leaders to stand in solidarity as change makers to accelerate the achievements of the SDGs in and through cities. The window will increase opportunities for women at the national and local level, which, in turn, will result in establishing new generations of women-run businesses and political leaders. This window will create a collaboration between female city leaders and female business owners and leaders, to foster the growth and development of women in positions of authority. As a consequence, women city leaders will continue to advocate at all levels of government for responsive change to ensure implementation of inclusive policies. With the right technical support and inclusive urban investments, WLC will allow women leaders bring much needed social and economic transformation that focuses on the well-being of women and girls and the marginalized segments of society.

### **Objective**

The Women-led Cities side event at CSW67 will discuss the role and impact of women in decision-making, to accelerate the achievement of SDGs in cities and directly tackle gender inequality. Promoting better cities for women & better women leaders for cities, leadership challenges will be addressed at different levels of local government, as well as the challenges faced especially by women in such roles. The aim of this is to highlight the valuable contributions that women mayors and representatives of local governments make to inclusive, representative democracies. The discussion will provide a platform to share best practices and challenges regarding women’s meaningful participation in leadership, highlighting possible concerted actions to respond to these challenges.

Additionally, development goals will be explored at different leadership levels and areas of business and investment, with the aim to highlight the valuable potential and contributions that women-led businesses provide to inclusive and impactful financing and investment.

The event will also showcase experiential knowledge on how to make cities of the future more gender responsive and inclusive for all citizens including women and youth. The event will focus on the importance of investing in female mayors and local solutions to promote economic opportunities, better services and infrastructure. The event will provide a forum for discussion and contribute to key recommendations and a way forward for building a solid coalition and a comprehensive blueprint for women led cities.

### **Guiding Questions**

- i. How can we, as a coalition, make cities of the future more inclusive and responsive to the needs to women and girls and other vulnerable populations?

- ii. Promoting female leadership at all levels of decision-making roles in governments and private sector is key for a real and transformative change for women and girls. What are some of the best practices and lessons we can share in this regard?
- iii. What are some barriers that women in positions of leadership face, and what actions are needed to increase opportunities and encourage women to take up leadership positions in business and politics?
- iv. What are some of the proven advantages of having women in political or business leadership? How have their actions led to implementations of the SDGs and NUA?
- v. How can women mayors support women’s entrepreneurship and provide opportunities for economic empowerment of women of all ages and abilities?
- vi. What could be an effective transformative partnership to promote better cities for women and better women leaders for cities, promoting inclusivity of all? Women-led businesses, women-leaders, and women-centered cities are key here.

### **Proposed Agenda – Launching Women-Led Cities Initiative**

1. **Introduction** video and opening remarks, Ms. Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Executive Director of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (*UN-Habitat*)
2. **Keynote speaker** - Luiza Helena Trajano, CEO of Magazine Luiza and associated companies
3. **Perspectives from the Mayors**
  - a. – Hon. Mayor Rohey Malick Lowe, from Banjul, The Gambia
  - b. – Hon. Mayor Dr. Selina Hayat Ivy, from Narayanganj, Bangladesh
4. **Overview of WLC**, objectives and outcome – Liane Freire, Founder and CEO of BLENDGroup
5. **Supporting women led cities through partnerships** with financing institutions and development partners– IDB /SIDA
6. **Closing Remarks:** UNCDF Officer-in-charge Mourad Wahba