

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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**MESSAGE ON WORLD CITIES DAY**  
**31 October 2020**

On this World Cities Day, we recognize the extraordinary contribution made by grassroots communities in our cities and towns.

The value of communities has been brought into sharp focus during the response to COVID-19.

Cities have borne the brunt of the pandemic.

Urban areas are already home to 55 per cent of the world's population, and that figure is expected to grow to 68 per cent by 2050.

Our rapidly urbanizing world must respond effectively to this pandemic and prepare for future infectious disease outbreaks.

With the pandemic often overwhelming public health and support services, communities have organized to keep their neighbourhoods safe and functioning, engaging with local and national governments to support the official response.

We have seen neighbours shopping and cooking for the sick and elderly, residents cheering health workers, and local volunteer and faith-based groups supporting the vulnerable.

Communities are innovative, resilient and proactive.

They play a vital role in building economically, socially and environmentally sustainable cities.

Let us maintain this recognition of their value.

As we rebuild from the pandemic and engage in the Decade of Action for Sustainable Development, we have an opportunity to reset how we live and interact.

Local action is the key.

When urban communities are engaged in policy and decision making, and empowered with financial resources, the results are more inclusive and durable.

Let's put our communities at the heart of the cities of the future.