



2023 Counter-Terrorism Week SIDE EVENTS

19-23 JUNE 2023

UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS • NEW YORK

**Strong Cities
Network**



Leveraging the Potential of Cities in P/CVE: The Role of Mayors and other Local Leaders in Implementing the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy

23 June 2023

1500hrs – 1630hrs, UNHQs Conference Room # and online

Concept Note

OVERVIEW

On 23 June 2023, the [Strong Cities Network](#) and European Union will co-host a 90-minute side-event during the [UN 2023 Counter-Terrorism Week](#), which will allow mayors and other local leaders to share experiences, good practices and challenges with preventing and responding to violent extremism in their communities. It will also highlight practical steps for enhancing the role of these important preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) stakeholders in UN and other multilateral dialogues focused on addressing the dynamic violent extremist threat environment.

Among the event's objectives include increased awareness among Member States and [UN Global Counter-Terrorism Compact](#) entities of a) the contributions that mayors and other local leaders can make to whole-of-society P/CVE efforts, including through facilitating the localized implementation of the [UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy](#) (UNGCTS) and relevant national frameworks; and b) the added-value

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of including the voices of local leaders and the perspectives of cities in multilateral conversations around the formulation of P/CVE policies and the development of P/CVE programs.

BACKGROUND

Cities have a number of often overlooked comparative advantages in P/CVE. These are based on cities (whether big or small or urban or rural) proximity to and understanding of local communities, the trusted relationships they have developed with them as a result of their traditional service delivery responsibilities, and how local governments are well-positioned to identify and defuse inter-communal tensions and address local socio-economic grievances before they manifest in extremist violence.

Given the highly localized nature of violent extremist threats, which are increasingly driven by local grievances, it is critical that national and multilateral P/CVE efforts reflect the voices of local leaders so that these efforts can be translated into effective and sustainable local action.

To-date, important progress has been made in operationalising the whole-of-society approach to addressing terrorism and violent extremism enshrined in the UNGCTS and the UN Secretary-General's [PVE Plan of Action](#). However, the potential of mayors and local governments have remained largely untapped. This is due to a number of factors, including that overly centralized and securitized approaches to these challenges remain predominant.

The Strong Cities Network, including with support from the EU's [STRIVE Cities initiative](#), has been working with local leaders and governments around the world to overcome the barriers to more city-led P/CVE efforts and allow local governments to tap into their full potential as leaders in prevention.

PROGRAMME

1500 – 1515: Welcome Remarks

Speakers:

- **Markus Lutz**, Counsellor and EU Counter-Terrorism/Security Expert, Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, New York City
- **Charlotte Moeyens**, Senior Manager, Strong Cities Network

1515 – 1630: Panel Discussion – Leveraging the Potential of Cities in P/CVE

Speakers:

- **Asha Omar Geesdiir**, Child Protection and Gender Advisor, City of Mogadishu, Somalia
- **Joseph Matovu**, Mayor, Nansana Division, Uganda

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- **John Kwoba**, Director, Busia Municipality, Kenya
- **Marco Meesters**, Deputy Head of the Department of Crises and Incident Management, City of Amsterdam, the Netherlands
- **Edward Flynn**, Senior Human Rights Officer, UN Counter Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate

Each speaker represents one of the many cities that Strong Cities Network has previously engaged, including through its EU-funded [STRIVE Cities](#) programme, which supports Strong Cities Regional Hubs in the Middle East and North Africa, as well as East and Southern Africa. Speakers will be invited to share their approaches to and challenges with mounting an effective and sustainable city-led response to issues of hate, polarization and extremism, as well as outlining their needs for local implementation of the UNGCTS and other relevant frameworks.

The panel will then open for discussion with the broader audience.

ABOUT STRONG CITIES

[Strong Cities](#) is an independent global network of more than 175 cities and other local governments dedicated to addressing all forms of extremism, hate and polarisation, while promoting a human rights-based prevention framework.

Through in-person and online convenings, exchanges and trainings, Strong Cities facilitates sharing and learning among mayors and other local leaders as well as municipal-level practitioners. By doing so, it helps local authorities leverage their full potential in prevention, while complementing national, regional and global efforts. For more information on the Strong Cities Network please contact Allison Curtis, Head of Networks and Partnerships (ac@strongcitiesnetwork.org).

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