



# **Press Release: The Ministry of Local Government and UN-Habitat, under the HAYA Joint Programme, launched thematic workshop series to ensure safe and inclusive public spaces for Palestinian women and girls**

**Date:** Tuesday, 05 November 2019, Ramallah

The Ministry of Local Government and UN-Habitat, under the HAYA Joint Programme, launched the first in a series of thematic workshops to ensure safe and inclusive public spaces in the Grand Park Hotel in Ramallah. This thematic workshop focused on “innovative approaches to the design and implementation of safe and inclusive public spaces,” and participants included representatives from various ministries, diplomatic missions, UN Agencies, the private sector, civil society organizations, academic institutions, and other development partners. The event took place under the patronage of the Ministry Local Government and the Representative Office of Canada in Ramallah, as well as UN-Habitat representatives. National media outlets and journalists attended this first workshop.

The series of thematic workshops is seen as a platform for professionals, decision makers, and stakeholders to build momentum and initiate a participatory dialogue to encourage positive change in attitudes and behaviours towards more inclusive and safe public spaces for Palestinian women and girls in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

In her opening remarks, Ms. Ohood Enayeh, Head of Local Planning in the Ministry Local Government, expressed her hope for the further development and improvement of public spaces in the Palestinian community, especially for women and girls. “Making public spaces safe and inclusive is a right exercised by all Palestinian citizens in their city. We seek to achieve this right through the reexamination of the concept of public space. This is done in preparation for



the enactment of legislation and policies responsive to this right in all our local government  
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Ms. Cecilia Andersson, UN-Habitat Headquarters Urban Safety Expert thanked the Government of Canada, the Ministry of Local Government, and the participants on behalf of the UN-Habitat for their commitment in assuming a leading role to advance the rights of women, men, boys, and girls to safe, inclusive, accessible, green, and public spaces. Ms. Andersson discussed the two global processes vital in strengthening the importance of public space in the global debate on sustainable cities, namely the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, including SDG 11 on public spaces in sustainable cities and communities and the New Urban Agenda 2016 on promoting safe, inclusive, accessible, green, and quality public spaces. "Safe public spaces are a vital ingredient of successful cities. They help build a sense of community, civic identity, diversity and culture. Good quality public space provides opportunities for women and girls to rest, work and meet, gives protection from crime, shelter from climate, seclusion from traffic and a democratic right to take part in city life."

The workshop was enriched by the contributions of a number of local professionals in public space design and implementation. Architect Ms. Nadia Habash, the Head of Habash Consulting Engineers and an adjunct professor at Birzeit University, presented a local design experience, explaining, "The Rehabilitation and Revitalization of Bethlehem Old Market Project aimed at providing a safe and convenient public space for both sellers and buyers, providing shelter from weather conditions, full accessibility for the disabled and elderly, hygienic gender bathrooms, and sufficient lighting. Convenient spaces were allocated to farmers especially women to sell their crops with dignity in a safe environment rather than squatting on sidewalks and endangering themselves."

The workshop's conclusion found participants in agreement that public spaces need to advance to become more comprehensive and safer, particularly for women and children, older persons, and persons with disabilities. Observable differences were highlighted in how men and women utilize these spaces, linked to gendered power hierarchies. Participants stressed the urgent need to build on emerging data and develop innovative approaches to the design and delivery of urban safety and inclusive public spaces supporting the needs of the Palestinians society.

### **About HAYA**

The five-year HAYA Joint Programme is funded by the Government of Canada and jointly implemented by a consortium of UN agencies consisting of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), the United Nations



Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). HAYA brings together the Palestinian Authority (PA), UN agencies, civil society organizations, community-based organizations, and other partners to reduce the vulnerability of women and girls to all forms of violence and from the threat of such violence. The Ministry of Women's Affairs and the Ministry of Social Development are key partners of the HAYA Joint Programme, along with other ministries including the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Justice, and the Ministry of Local Government, and various municipalities, civil society and community-based organizations. HAYA seeks to end violence against women and girls through various outreach and awareness-raising activities to change harmful practices and attitudes perpetrating and validating violence, increase access to necessary services for survivors of violence, as well as strengthen the institutional capacity of government officials to develop and implement legal and policy frameworks promoting and protecting women's and girl's rights to live free from violence. It also focuses on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all, achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls, and making cities inclusive safe, resilient, and sustainable.

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