

The Smart Madinah Forum promotes people-centered and SDG smart cities

Madinah City/Nairobi, 10 February 2023 – UN-Habitat and Madinah Region Development Authority are co-organizing the Smart Madinah Forum (SMF2023) to take place in the city of Madinah, Saudi Arabia, from 19 to 21 February 2023. The forum will bring together experts from around the world to discuss the role of innovation and technologies in promoting sustainable development and ultimately improving the quality of life for urban residents.

The forum runs under the patronage of HRH Prince Faisal Bin Salman Al Saud, Governor of Madinah Region, and builds on Madinah City's commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Participants worldwide are welcome to join the discussions in Madinah – more attendance information can be found [here](#).

The event is aligned with two of UN-Habitat's flagship programmes, SDG Cities and People-Centered Smart Cities. "Smart cities can have a tremendous positive impact on people's lives, but only when people are at the center of the development process. This is why UN-Habitat is advocating for a 'people-centered smart cities' approach, which aims to show how smart cities can be an inclusive force for good, improve people's lives and build city systems that truly serve their communities", says Pontus Westerberg, Programme Management Officer, Lead People-Centered Smart Cities Flagship Programme, UN-Habitat.

The Smart Madinah Forum SMF2023 will host panels within two main thematic tracks, Sustainable Development Goals and Smart Cities Platforms. The event will feature keynote speeches of the Executive Director of UN-Habitat, Ms. Maimunah Mohd Sharif, and the Lead for the G20 Global Smart Cities Alliance at the World Economic Forum, Ms. Christy Mitchell.

"Smart Madinah Forum SMF2023 allows us to reflect on how to use technology for the benefit of the city. We want to open a space for joint reflection, in which we privilege sustainability and human-centricity. We understand technology as a means to enhance the quality of life of our inhabitants and enrich our visitors' experiences, but never as a goal," said Abdulrahman Ibrahim, Chief Data and Innovation Officer Madinah Region Development Authority.

The forum is expected to generate debates and highlight best practices both from the Arab region and from the rest of the world and provide recommendations for public officials, policymakers, cities, and others on how to adopt people-centered smart city approaches.

About UN-Habitat (www.unhabitat.org)

The United Nations Human Settlements Programme, UN-Habitat, is the United Nations entity responsible for sustainable urbanization. It has programmes in over 90 countries that support policymakers and communities to create socially and environmentally sustainable cities and

towns. UN-Habitat promotes transformative change in cities through knowledge, policy advice, technical assistance, and collaborative action.

UN-Habitat's flagship programme People-Centered Smart Cities, was launched at the tenth session of the World Urban Forum in February 2020 to foster innovative and integrated approaches for programming and implementation in line with UN-Habitat's overall principles for advancing sustainable urbanization.

The People-Centered Smart Cities programme has five pillars: empowering people, making access to technology equitable, responsibly managing data and digital infrastructure, building trust by securing digital assets, and building multi-stakeholder capacity.

About Madinah City

Madinah, officially Al Madinah Al Munawarah, literally means 'The Enlightened City,' is the second-holiest city in Islam, and the capital of the Madinah Province of Saudi Arabia. The city inhabits around 1.5 million people, making it the fourth-most populous city in the country. Located at the core of the Madinah Province in the western reaches of the country, the city is distributed over 589 km² (227 sq mi).

Madinah city is listed in IMD Smart City Index 2021, and ranked 2nd smart city in Saudi Arabia following the capital city of Riyadh, 4th regionally, and 73rd internationally. Madinah is an Early Adopter of ISO37122 Smart City Indicators, among the first ten cities worldwide, accredited by the World Council for City Data. Madinah is the first city in Saudi Arabia to develop a comprehensive smart city strategy.

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