

Secretary Kerry Video
Strong Cities Network Global Summit
Recorded May 31, 2016 for Strong Cities website

I congratulate the Strong Cities Network for its highly successful inaugural Global Summit, held in Antalya on May 11. Special thanks are due to Turkish Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu and Antalya Mayor Türel for their vision and hard work in hosting this event – and thanks, as well, to the many mayors, other municipal leaders, and representatives of civil society who came from around the world to participate.

Unity is essential in countering violent extremism; we all know that. Terrorists can emerge in any country and the lies they propagate can rapidly circumvent national borders. Through global gatherings such as the Summit, regional workshops, and the constant exchange of information and ideas, the Strong Cities Network can help us to implement best practices in responding to a threat that endangers us all.

The Summit on May 11 featured dramatic testimony from the survivors of terrorist attacks, from former members of violent extremist groups, and from municipal leaders who have held their communities together despite efforts by radicals to sow division. The message conveyed was a powerful one – of determination, resilience, and a commitment to pluralism and respect for the rights and dignity of every human being.

The Summit's major theme was the imperative for us all to work together – across political boundaries, but also across religious lines, across the divide between local and national, and across the separation between the public and private sectors. Attention was called to social media programs such as Peer-to-Peer that enable students everywhere to create their own messaging initiatives and thereby encourage young people to channel their energy and activism in peaceful and productive ways.

The Strong Cities Network is also, as the name implies, bringing some of our great urban centers together to share lessons learned through the exchange of personnel and the comparison of past experiences and current challenges. The Government of Denmark, for example, has set up exchanges with the cities of Amman, Beirut, and Tunis to help build capacity for countering violent extremism in critical areas.

I encourage the leaders of all cities and subnational governments who have joined the Strong Cities Network to participate actively in its efforts; and I ask those who have not yet joined to consider doing so. By making that choice, you will plug into a rapidly expanding campaign to attack the root causes of violent extremism; you will find help in taking practical steps to safeguard the security and well-being of your citizens; and you can demonstrate your support for values of decency and mutual respect that are essential to economic and social progress and that are at the heart of civilization itself.

Thank you and best wishes to you all.