



**WORLD
URBAN
FORUM**
ELEVENTH SESSION



JOINT STATEMENT TO THE 11th SESSION OF THE WORLD URBAN FORUM

Of the Organized Constituency of
Local and Regional Governments





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On the occasion of the 11th session of the World Urban Forum, taking place in Katowice, the organized constituency of local and regional governments gathered within the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments (GTF), facilitated by United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), gathers to reiterate our support, as partners for transformation, to achieve the contribution of the Universal Development Agendas. The 11th Session of the World Urban Forum posits an opportunity to stress the importance of local and regional governments in addressing crises, in accelerating the localization of the global goals through the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, as a basis to reach the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework and the Global Compacts for Migrants and Refugees, bringing about a new model of development anchored in social, economic, environmental, and territorial sustainability.

Local and regional governments have worked to mitigate the worst effects of the pandemic and engage in a sustainable recovery by adding the dimension of care to their service provision. Caring for their communities has come to mean a way of governing with empathy, prioritizing the public goods responding to the needs of people regardless of gender, age, , disability, economic or administrative status: ensuring economic sustainability and enabling livelihoods and wellbeing in our society. This shift towards a brighter future needs to be a collective effort that facilitates access to basic services and the defence of the rights of our communities.

We live in a tense, unequal world, and we are at a crossroads. We face linked, unprecedented crises, and we must act. We face crises that continue to expose our systems' shortcomings and roll back the right to the city and increase inequalities. While in recent years local public services have been key to protecting our communities, we continue to see an endemic lack of resources in many parts of the world and above all an imbalance between powers and responsibilities. This is a consequence of a lack of commitment to the New Urban Agenda and this lack of commitment could result in the failure to deliver on the sustainable development goals and the universal development agendas.

Within this context, it is critical that the international system rises to the task and includes all stakeholders in the construction and consolidation of sustainable peace. It is in this moment, when the risk of getting back to the times where force prevailed is real, that we must step up for dialogue, build on international agreements, and think about the importance of multilateralism.

#Listen2Cities





Local and Regional Governments and peacebuilding

Local and regional governments are one of the main foundations of democratic societies, representing spheres of government closest to the people. International city to city cooperation, sister city links, and mutual assistance through capacity-building programmes and international municipal solidarity initiatives are a valuable contribution to multilateralism that has shown to be vital for the construction of a more peaceful and just world.

In any and all conflicts, it is cities and regions that are targets of violence, but they are also spaces that care, that provide services and that are involved in safeguarding the most vulnerable populations: women, children, older populations, impoverished people and migrants and refugees are at the most risk and yet it is often cities that are protecting them and **becoming the last safe haven in contexts of war. It is important that border local and regional governments, which support displaced populations, in particular children, women, and young people,** are able to have the necessary resources, and to bring them to decision-making to ensure they are protected.

The **consolidation of peace and local democracy** needs to be a critical focus for a future that is sustainable and meets the aspirations of our communities. To this end, multilevel and multistakeholder alliances will be more key than ever.

It is essential that national governments and the international systems consider the approach of local and regional governments and their networks to peacebuilding and the potential of transformative local diplomacy to build peace in times of turmoil. Working with academia and the civil society will also be essential to anticipate future crises, in particular those that will most likely revolved around planetary resources such as food and water.

We are seeing mayors and local and regional governments which is in itself an attack on local self-governance, and a direct hit to the founding principles of the municipal movement. The local and regional governments constituency stands ready to support mayors and local leaders under attack, and foster peace and local democratic self-governance even in the most conflicted scenarios. Fostering sister city relations is critical to promoting peace in post-conflict reconciliation and reconstruction.

Care at the center of local service provision

It is essential to build upon the display of care provided by local and regional governments over the past years. Care is a dimension that needs to be incorporated into any and all policy decisions, starting by protecting our communities' health and access to healthy territories. We need to honour our commitments to universal and equal health coverage by ensuring vaccines are a



public good and by bringing all stakeholders together in the development of a pandemic treaty.

The need to bridge the digital divide is more crucial than ever, with digital rights and the protection of human rights at the digital level becoming increasingly vital, and local and regional governments being the first sphere of government to acknowledge this reality. It is necessary to carry out an equality framework to ensure full inclusion and participation of all, including vulnerable groups, in the digital sphere, and creating public infrastructures to facilitate equal access to the internet in public spaces and to guarantee adequate support as a new public service.

Fostering inclusive gender equality and the participation of women and local feminist leaders in decision-making is core to the democratic processes, and key to enabling governance with empathy and responding to the diverse needs and aspirations of communities. Involving persons in vulnerable positions in governance, in particular older persons, migrants and persons with disability, will contribute to territories that work for all.

Recognizing the positive contributions of migrant and displaced populations to their communities of origin, transit and destination is a prerequisite to ensure that the recovery is inclusive, fair and equitable, regardless of migration status. This recognition requires an active role from all spheres of government and members of society to address and eliminate the sources of discrimination that prevent many individuals and communities to access opportunities and fully enjoy their rights.

The role of local and regional governments as a lever for transformation is becoming more and more evident. All of the lessons that the pandemic has taught us can only be put to the test if local and regional governments are included in decision-making processes at all levels, and if the international system responds to the needs of all actors.

Protecting our communities, the planet, and our governments to deliver a better future.

The right to safe and affordable housing, to healthcare, to basic services, to a clean environment, to quality public education, to efficient mobility with public transport as the backbone, are as necessary now as they were when the New Urban Agenda was adopted. Access to housing remains a challenge, inequalities have risen, and urbanization is not providing equal opportunities to all, but in many cases, it is hampering access to services.

This same issue is true when it comes to technology: an instrument to improve the life of our communities that needs to be accessible and affordable to all people, regardless of age, gender, disability or income. Local and regional governments play a critical role in promoting a fair, ethical and inclusive digital development, harnessing AI and ensuring technology is accessible to all.



Climate action is a necessity in order to ensure a future for our communities. It is essential to develop, together, new patterns and production and consumption that globally go beyond modifications of individual habits. A collective and multilevel response is needed to incorporate a new way of thinking about what “growth” means, rethinking our relationship with nature, and prioritizing planetary wellbeing. Localized food systems that consider nutrition, food security, and the entire food cycle as well as the importance of territories and intermediary cities will be essential to develop fairer models.

Health is a critical dimension that needs to be understood beyond access to healthcare. We need to understand the importance that healthy, liveable age friendly cities and regions, with open spaces accessible to all, can have in the development of healthy communities. The pandemic has shown the importance of ensuring equal and safe access to public spaces, which is starting to be understood by policymakers as a core issue. Transforming public spaces into hubs for socialization needs to go hand-in-hand with facilitating access to safe public green spaces, and planning for our communities needs to be involved in all aspects of policy making.

We need to consolidate all forms of culture including traditional knowledge as a true pillar of sustainable development in caring societies. Public policies must guarantee cultural rights for all and respond both to access, participation and contribution to cultural life, and to the main challenges of our times, such as climate change, accessibility, gender equality, health, resilience, social cohesion and peace. The involvement of civil society is critical to this end and to achieving decent working conditions for the culture sector, whose pre-existing precarity has been severely aggravated by the crisis.

Addressing the renewal of the multilateral system at WUF 11

We need to address the renewal of the multilateral system to respond to the challenges and opportunities of the urban era. We need to develop a system in which local and regional governments are fully engaged by holding a permanent seat at the decision-making tables representing their communities and able to build peace and sustainability from the bottom-up.

We call for a strong international community and updated UN system that reflects the current context, including local and regional governments in all stages of decision-making processes, and placing at the forefront the value and potential of city diplomacy for a renewed multilateral system.

We call on national governments involved in the New Urban Agenda to support the engagement of our constituency, as a cornerstone for the delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals and the achievement of the vision of the UNSG’s Common Agenda. We commend the allocation of time for our constituency to



deliver its messages, and yet we call for the full involvement of our spheres of government in its follow-up and review.

In short: through its localization, we will be closer to delivering a **renewed social contract anchored in human rights**; to **shaping the future between and among generations**; to **delivering global public goods**; and to adapting the **international system** to the challenges and opportunities of the current era.

We call on national governments and the international system to secure adequate financing and revenue streams for better planning and investment to achieve the global agendas. Our fiscal architecture needs to be rethought to empower local and regional governments to strengthen their own resources and achieve the SDGs.

Inspired by the current context, the constituency of local and regional governments gathered in the framework of WUF11 calls for a joint, multilateral response the overlapping crises, including the invasion of Ukraine, while calling on the need for a sustainable recover. This response needs to ensure the development of pathways to peace and transform the commitments that were undertaken in Quito six years ago into reality.

We stand ready, as we already were in the High-Level Meeting that took place only two months ago, to enshrine the principles of the New Urban Agenda by putting the right to the city at the core of our efforts, and to leverage the accelerating potential of the New Urban Agenda to ensure we meet our shared goals. Only then will we be able to place at the center and contribute to the transformation envisioned by the UNSG's Common Agenda, understanding urbanization as a phenomenon beyond cities.

