

## **Local and regional governance crucial to sustainability debate**

**700 local and regional leaders came together in Florence for UCLG World Council.**

At the invitation of Matteo Renzi, Mayor of Florence, the City of Florence hosted 700 local and regional representatives from over 40 different countries gathered in the UCLG World Council from 9 to 11 December.

The main decisions of the UCLG World Council focus on the definition of the UCLG Strategy for the coming six years and pay particular attention to the contribution of local and regional authorities to the international debate on sustainability around Rio +20.

In his opening address, the President of UCLG stressed that building governance from the bottom up will be crucial for the future of our planet. Our citizens are taking the streets demanding solutions. We the local and regional leaders will need to be engaged in the global solution that is being sought. The Florence Declaration, recalling the core values of the cities: culture, ethics, and sustainability, was read during the Opening ceremony.

Members of the World Council agreed that international and national strategies for sustainable development should take into account local and regional visions. Members recall the role of cities, local and regional governments in mitigating and adapting to climate change and the need to plan for disaster risk reduction and further develop sustainable urban planning. Furthermore, UCLG highlights the need to emphasise strong links between good governance and sustainable development. The importance to guarantee access to water as a basic right and to work on the right to the city are also strong positions put forward. In that respect, as an upshot, we can mention that UCLG adopted in Florence the Global Charter-Agenda on Human Rights in the City. Brice Lalonde, Executive coordinator for Rio +20 emphasized the need to include local and regional authorities in the international sustainability debate.

In preparation of the World Water Forum to take place in Marseille in 2012, a memorandum of understanding was signed between the World Water Council and UCLG. Loïc Fauchon, President of the World Water Council highlighted the importance of the collaboration between both institutions.

UCLG members also agreed to produce the Third Report of the Global Observatory on Decentralisation on the "Governance of Local Basic Services", together with the development of an Index on local governments and decentralization, according to the views and experiences of local and regional leaders.

The World Organisation further commits to advocate for specific recognition of local and regional authorities before the international community and towards the third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III). UCLG agreed to update the international urban sustainable agenda and to provide renewed impetus to the United Nations Advisory Committee of Local Authorities (UNACLA). UCLG further confirmed its commitment to the joint agenda with Cities Alliance.

UCLG members have expressed their solidarity and support to the democratic processes taking place in the Mediterranean region. A new Working Group on the Middle-East and Near East has been formed, and two others on the Economic Development.

The gathering counted with the presence of mayors from cities around the world such as Rabat, Dakar, Paris, Stuttgart, Sevilla and with the participation of numerous mayors of Italian cities. It further brings together private partners and key international partners, representatives of Cities Alliance, UNFCCC and OECD.

The Council was chaired by Kadir Topbas, Mayor of Istanbul (Turkey) and President of UCLG, and by the Co-Presidents Antonio Costa, Mayor of Lisbon (Portugal), Muchadeyi Masunda, Mayor of Harare (Zimbabwe), IIsur Metshin, Mayor of Kazan (Russia), and Ted Ellis, Mayor of Bluffton (USA), Treasurer.

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United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) is the biggest organization of local and regional governments in the world, present in 140 countries and 7 world regions (Africa, Asia-Pacific, Euro-Asia, Europe, Latin America, Middle-East and West Asia, North America, Metropolitan section). UCLG represents and defends the interests of local governments on the world stage, regardless of the size of the communities they serve. UCLG's mission is to be the united voice and world advocate of democratic local self-government, promoting its values, objectives and interests, through cooperation between local governments, and within the wider international community.

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