



Convening of the UCLG Forum of Regions in November 2021

Pact for the Future: The ecosystem of cities and territories

Regions occupy a strategic position in the territorialization and localization of the global agendas. Beyond their exclusive or shared competences in terms of public services and management, regions represent a key actor in the strengthening of the relationship among local, national and international entities and agendas. In this sense, the UCLG Forum of Regions calls upon regional governments and their associations to promote and achieve a territorial vision of global and urban phenomena and, in particular, of the overlap between the two.

In its last World Council, UCLG announced the need to establish a new Pact for the Future, to be materialized in a pact for people, for the planet and for the government and democracy. The development of this pact aims to improve multilateralism, with a new system in which regional governments are also provided with their own, integrated space.

The constant movement and flow of products, people and information around cities expand beyond their geographical and administrative boundaries. The territory enables an integrated and comprehensive approach to the urban-rural ecosystem that includes the metropolis, the relationship with other regions and the State government, as well as their presence in the international sphere.

During the pandemic, the importance of solidarity, and coordination and collaboration among different spheres of government, with citizens and with different sectors of society, became clear. The current context must transform governance structures and territorial dynamics. In this light, it is necessary to consider the role of the regions, particularly in order to ensure a fair, sustainable, green, resilient and egalitarian recovery.

Under the Presidency of CONGOPE, the Consortium of Autonomous Provincial Governments of Ecuador, the UCLG Forum of Regions invites regional governments from all continents to join a political gathering in November 2021, in order to reflect on and determine the key role of regions in the Pact for the Future.

In preparation for this meeting, the Forum has established the following road map that seeks to mobilize and position the regions on a range of key issues.

Road Map

Starting at the UCLG World Congress in Durban, debates have been launched to define the agenda of the Forum of Regions. In addition to CONGOPE, regions such as Catalonia, Santa Fe, Azuay, Nouakchott and Gauteng, among others, have confirmed their interest in driving a permanent dialogue, with a view to mutual support and a common position in the different international agendas.



Following this historic process, in November 2020, the Forum of Regions organized a parallel event within the framework of the European Week of Regions and Cities around the contribution of regions to the urban agenda and the global goals, principally based on the current challenging context.

As a result, the following objectives of this road map are highlighted:

Objectives

- I. Work on the co-creation of a joint narrative and agenda for regions, as transformative actors of the urban agenda and international processes, with a unique role in the Pact for the Future.
- II. Organize opportunities to enhance political dialogue, the exchange of practices, experiences and visions at a global level, among regions and relevant partners.
- III. Provide support and collaboration among peers to strengthen regions' capacities towards territorial development.
- IV. Mobilize an increasing number of regions to join forces towards international positioning, in order to facilitate their integration into multilateralism, in line with their transformative role within territories.

Key themes

1. Pact for People: Advanced territories that leave no one behind

Sustainable development has a clear territorial dimension that must be taken into account by all spheres of government, addressing themes such as mobility, infrastructure, resilience, digital connectivity and economic development, among others.

Specifically, the **New Urban Agenda** is considered a platform through which to accelerate the localization of the SDGs, and in particular the achievement of SDG 11 on cities. 2021 marks the fifth anniversary of the adoption of the agenda in Quito. This is a key moment to take stock of the progress made up until now, and to promote the role of regional governments.

Territorial dynamics enable us to observe key themes, such as **unequal occupation and demographic distribution in cities**. Regional governments can contribute to an integrated perspective that aims to combat depopulation and restore territorial balance.

The Catalan government has proposed an initial approach of '**Advanced Territories**', accompanied by a series of activities on the topic to be developed by the Forum of Regions, which culminate in a guide and advisory process to be presented at the Forum of Regions in November. Advanced Territories will be defined based on an analysis of the coincidence of three main aspects:

- Territorial cohesion: Regions provide a comprehensive framework of the links between cities and territories, which enables them to address the existing gaps and ensure opportunities for all.
- Competitiveness: Cities and territories must be equipped with the necessary tools to achieve resilience and sustainable development.
- Physical and digital connectivity: Infrastructure and mobility within territories need further attention, particularly during the pandemic crisis. The digital transformation to adapt to the new times requires equitable and sustainable digital access, including in the most remote areas.

Activities will include the promotion of a benchmarking of experiences on the New Urban Agenda, the organization of a webinar, the development of a joint declaration, and a guide to Advanced Territories.

2. Pact for the Planet: Urban-rural linkages for ecological transition

Food systems provide a concrete example of the importance of considering and addressing urban-rural linkages, especially during the recovery from the pandemic, since they ensure increased resilience, strengthened economies and the involvement of local communities.

Food production and consumption implies direct and indirect impacts on greenhouse gas emissions, the conservation of species, and people's relationship with their surroundings and the environment. Food systems are therefore the cornerstones of the climate change and biodiversity agendas, and consequently of the ecological transformation of the territory.

Viewed through an urban-rural lens, regions play a key role in the planning and management of food systems, as well as of tourism, shared water and natural resources, and the expansion and organization of cities, mobility and infrastructure works.

In this sense, the Forum of Regions emphasizes the relevance of the territorial management and consideration of **rural and ecotourism**, which has been growing at an extremely rapid rate since the pandemic, and which requires attention in terms of its impact on the environment, society and communities.



In 2021, international summits on Food Systems, Biodiversity (COP 15, Kunming) and Climate Change (COP 26, Glasgow) will take place, which will be defining moments to drive a political debate on the role of regions.

Consultations and opportunities to present case studies, as well as messages from the regions, will be promoted around these events.

3. Pact for Government and Democracy: Multilevel governance and social justice

Inequalities are not limited to large urban centres, and a broad vision that attends to the specificities of each locality while understanding the relationship and impact among cities, territories and countries, is needed. Multi-level governance must consider the integrated ecosystem of cities and territories.

Among the key lessons learnt from the pandemic, the importance of ensuring **quality public services** for the whole population, particularly the most vulnerable, stands out. The territorialization of public services emerges as an urgent objective, especially in view of mobility constraints and the COVID-19 crisis.

In particular, we have seen **healthcare services and the health conditions** of the population on the verge of collapse. Regional governments have competencies within this area that influence access to and the quality of healthcare services, and provide a territorial vision that can offer a comprehensive observation on the state of the situation, across the ecosystem of cities and metropolises.

Regions can serve as a bridge between priorities at the international, national and local levels, from a territorial perspective of caring for people and the environment, driving a shared agenda for well-being.

In both national and sub-national systems, governance, regulatory and fiscal mechanisms must aim to strengthen the capacities of cities and regions towards a development model that has care for people at its core.

Activities on this topic may include the exchange of institutional arrangements and practices for addressing inequalities and strengthening public services at the territorial level.

Relevant dates

15-19 February, virtual

UCLG Annual Retreat
Opportunity to present and share the Road Map

25-26 March, virtual

SDG Global Festival of Action



TBC April, virtual	Global Dialogue – Food Systems Summit <i>Joint consultation with the Forum on Intermediary Cities</i>
17-30 May, Kunming, China	COP 15 Biodiversity
26-29 May, Cordoba, Argentina	5th World Forum of Local Economic Development
6-15 July, New York, USA	UN High-Level Political Forum (HLPF)
21-25 July, Khutaya, Turkey	2nd World Forum of Intermediary Cities
TBC Sept or Oct, New York, USA	Food Systems Summit
16 October	Anniversary of the New Urban Agenda
1-12 November, Glasgow, UK	COP 26 Climate Change
November, date to be confirmed	Meeting of the Forum of Regions