

## United Cities and Local Governments

### FOUNDING CONGRESS FINAL DECLARATION 'Cities, local governments; the future for development' Paris 5 May 2004

1. We, the Mayors, leaders and representatives of the cities and local governments of the world, serving the populations of rural and urban communities; small, medium and large towns, metropolises and regions; gathered in Paris, France on 5 May 2004 to create a new unified world organisation of local governments;
2. **Recognising** the achievements of the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA) since 1913, the World Federation of United Towns and Cities (UTO) since 1957, and Metropolis since 1984, in developing municipal international relations and strengthening local government worldwide;
3. **Welcoming** with the greatest satisfaction the fulfilment of the commitments made by mayors and local leaders at the 1996 United Nations Conference on Human Settlements in Istanbul to establish a single voice for cities and local governments across the world;
4. **Convinced** that global challenges of a rapidly changing world are felt first locally and need to be dealt with principally at the local level, by the sphere of government closest to the citizen;
5. **Aware** of the challenges posed to local governments by unprecedented urbanisation with more than half of the population living in urban areas;
6. **Strongly committed** to creating peaceful, fair, sustainable and inclusive societies for all, based on solidarity, citizenship and human rights;
7. **Emphasising** our core values of democracy, self-government, decentralisation and good governance, which are at the heart of the Worldwide Declaration of Local Self-Government;
8. **Reaffirming** the commitments of the Worldwide Declaration on Women in Local Government adopted in Harare in November 1998;
9. **Recognising** the vital role of local government as a force for development, and essential to the achievement of the UN Millennium Development Goals, which are part of our daily duties in serving our cities and communities;
10. **Acknowledging** the importance of the appointment by the UN General Assembly of the new rules of procedures of the governing council of UN-HABITAT and the role of the United Nations Advisory Committee of Local Authorities (UNACLA) as important first step for promoting dialogue between local authorities and the United Nations system on sustainable urbanisation strategies and good urban governance.
11. **Establish** a new world organisation, United Cities and Local Governments, to be the united voice and world advocate of democratic local self-government, and commit ourselves to:
12. **Establishing** a strong, democratic organisation, with a broad, diverse membership, and representatives in every country of the world;
13. **Renewing and deepening** our partnership with United Nations and the global community, and building an effective and formal role for local government as a pillar of the international system;
14. **Underlining** our commitment to promote world peace through the increasing involvement of local governments and their communities in the development of a fairer world based on solidarity and democratic values.
15. **Supporting** the development of strong and effective democratic local self-government, and the establishment and strengthening of national local government associations throughout the world,

through initiatives, programmes and platforms for capacity building exchanges and partnerships, within the framework of decentralised cooperation and Municipal International Cooperation;

16. **Stressing** the importance for international donors to build on this framework in their programmes and projects for local governments;
17. **Becoming** the source of key information on the situation and the evolution of local government all over the world, through the establishment of a Local Democracy Watch;
18. **Addressing** the issues, concerns and challenges for our cities and communities and, in particular, sustainable development and social inclusion, decentralisation and local democracy, and cooperation and diplomacy.
19. Within the framework of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, we will organise an action based worldwide Millennium Towns and Cities Campaign, as called for in the Local Government Declaration to the World Summit on Sustainable Development, working in partnership with the UN. We propose to tackle the issues facing us in the following three key areas in order to reach the goals.

### **I. Sustainable Development in a Globalising World**

20. The effects of globalisation are particularly visible at the local level. Current global dynamics stimulate exchange and communication, but they also increase the link between the local and the global, deepen inequalities, and challenge existing international institutions and balances as never before. Local governments have, in this context, a key role to play in sustainable development. We, local leaders from around the world, commit to the following principles:

#### **Poverty alleviation and social inclusion**

21. Implementing a holistic and multidimensional approach (with an economic, social, political and cultural dimension), we bring together broad social policies, economic growth, protection of citizens' rights and promotion of participation. Our responsibilities in housing, health and education allow us to develop responses adapted to the needs of our communities. Our strategic role in economic development makes it possible for us to create more possibilities for our citizens and to improve their lives and working conditions. The new organisation will encourage the collaboration of cities in a network for social inclusion.

#### **Cities without Slums**

22. It is estimated that today, about one billion people live in slums, and this figure will grow rapidly unless effective action is taken to reverse the process. Forward-looking cities across different continents, working with the organisations of the poor, have shown that major progress can be achieved, without recourse to mass forced evictions, through effective strategies to integrate slum-dwellers into the mainstream life of the city, providing them with essential services. We are committed to attaining the Millennium Development Goal of significantly improving the lives of over 100 million slum-dwellers by the year 2020, whilst preventing new slum formation.

#### **Sustainable environment**

23. Building on our work to disseminate and implement Local Agenda 21 and the agreements of Rio at the local level, local governments are committed to finding innovative ways to ensure quality of life on our planet for future generations, and make optimal use of the resources available for the benefit of our communities.

#### **Water and sanitation for all**

24. Water is a basic need, and a basic right, of our communities. Access to sufficient, good quality water at a reasonable price must be a right for all, and requires both legislative and social measures to protect the least advantaged communities. We commit ourselves to ensuring efficient, fair and sustainable water management and sanitation within our areas and our competences. We also commit ourselves to raising awareness of the importance of water and its rational use by all sectors (agricultural and industrial) and to strengthen the competences of local actors as a whole. Finances will be raised through making an appeal to the solidarity of the consumers and suppliers of the North and the South.

### **Creating multicultural cities**

25. The cities of the 21st century are multicultural spaces. The new cultures that result from the mix of different languages, religions and cultures constitute a major asset of our cities. This reality can also lead to tensions which local governments cannot ignore and must be determined to address. The protection of cultural diversity, within a democratic legal framework, should be one of the pillars of local government actions. Local government is the only sphere of government where new residents have the right to vote and are able to influence the shape of their new home. Local governments are committed to develop the Local Agenda 21 of Culture that will be adopted at the Forum of Local Authorities for Social Inclusion that will be presented at the World Urban Forum in September 2004.

### **Broad basic rights**

26. Well aware of the needs of our communities, local governments propose the creation of a legal framework favourable to increasing the fundamental rights of all citizens, including the right to education, health care, access to housing, the right to work and respect for gender equality and the rights of minorities and marginalized groupings. We are committed to promoting the implementation of Human Rights in our cities
27. **Facing** violence, war and terrorism, it is becoming increasingly clear that local governments assume an important responsibility in ensuring the security of their citizens and intend to play an important role in fostering peace, security and justice.

### **Basic Services for all**

28. We are committed to working with all partners, public and private, to enhance the capacity of local authorities to expand service delivery for all our citizens and create a more enabling development environment for those we serve in our cities and towns.

### **Education for all**

29. Local government has the duty of providing opportunities for all citizens regardless of sex, race, religion and age, and access to advanced forms of contemporary knowledge and skill, for education and self-development;

## **II. Decentralisation and Local Democracy**

30. In recent years, local governments and their associations have promoted innovation in public administration through advocating decentralisation and local self-government. The adoption of a World Charter on Local Self-government remains one of the key objectives of United Cities and Local Governments, building on the work of its founding organisations and their partnership with UN-Habitat.

### **Respecting Diversity**

31. Respecting the differences and diversity of the different regions of the world, and conscious of the fact that local government is an integral part of the national structure of each country and needs to adapt to the national context, we commit ourselves to advocate decentralisation processes that develop a democratic system of governance and an adequate basic service provision for, by and with the community.
32. This process should be based on general principles such as subsidiarity, accountability, transparency, equity, citizenship, predictability and the rule of law, and should be accompanied by the broad devolution of powers and adequate resources.

### **Adequate Resources**

33. One of the cornerstones of decentralization is the implementation of a transfer of financial resources between the different spheres of government. Local authorities need these resources to carry out their mandate, to develop services but also to ensure capable human resources to serve their citizens. At the same time, the involvement of local governments in decisions concerning their income is crucial.

### **Strategic Partnerships**

34. Local governments need to work closely with all stakeholders in the governance process to be successful. Public-private and civil society partnerships are crucial to the efficient management of public resources and the improvement of services. The complexity of the services demanded by our citizens, and the interdependent factors that go beyond local government powers, make it a local government responsibility to protect the interest of its community when dealing with private sector.

#### **Women's participation and gender equality**

35. Equality by law is not enough. There cannot be democracy without a balanced participation of women and men in representative bodies and local decision making. The participation of women and taking their needs into account with the aim of achieving equality will be at the centre of the agenda of our world organization.

#### **Deepening local democracy**

36. In a globalising world, public decision making processes are more and more complex with far reaching impacts. Increased participation is a demand from the citizen and a means to find the legitimacy necessary for strengthening social relationships. The development of new forms of participation across the world, such as neighbourhood councils, e-democracy, participatory budgeting, citizen initiatives and referendums, are examples of this phenomenon.

### **III .Cooperation and Diplomacy – a challenge for our cities**

37. Cities, local governments and associations of local authorities have developed great experience and interest in relations with peers from around the world. They have a major contribution to make to peace, growth and development through Decentralised Cooperation and Municipal International Cooperation.

#### **Learning from our peers**

38. The strengthening of democratic local government is a prerequisite for development and requires a balanced approach towards building the democratic and operational capacity of local government on the one hand, and encouraging the growth of effective civil society organisations. Local governments and their associations have an important role to play as facilitators between sectors, in encouraging partnerships with local organisations, including the private sector.
39. United Cities and Local Governments, could, with the support of the relevant bodies, create thematic commissions of local authorities from different continents aiming to facilitate cooperation and to provide these collaborations with concrete content.
40. Local governments have wide cross-sector responsibilities and the ability to develop integrated approaches in working with their communities. United Cities and Local Governments welcomes the support received by innovative initiatives such as the Cities Alliance, and is committed to strengthening the links with all multilateral partners and in particular with UN Programmes and Agencies.

#### **World Health – a local challenge**

41. Health, and related development issues, and particularly epidemics such as HIV/AIDS, are global threats that need to be tackled locally. The recent examples of rapidly spreading epidemics have shown the impact of comprehensive local approaches and the importance of developed capacities of local governments. The strengthened role of local authorities accompanied by resources and training, and public-private partnerships, will not only enable efficient measures to be taken to limit the spread of the epidemic but also mitigate its social and economic impact.
42. United Cities and Local Governments is committed to working with existing networks by promoting the exchange of knowledge between local authorities in this field.

#### **Peace and dialogue start locally**

43. Within the wider concept of Decentralised Cooperation, the main concerns of United Cities and Local Governments and its members are twofold. First to ensure the development of pluralist, democratic institutions in the local sphere that can effectively answer the needs of their citizenship. Second, to promote tolerance and understanding for the situation of communities around the world and increase the support for international cooperation and solidarity.

#### **The integration of minorities**

44. Equality of rights and the full participation of minorities in decision making is a central element of democracy and a fundamental aim of the new world organization.

45. United Cities and Local Governments is committed to promoting dialogue and peace through 'city diplomacy' and decentralised cooperation. The exchange between local governments, with the involvement of their communities, creates joint values that stimulate tolerance, friendship and mutual understanding.

**From Information Society to an Inclusive Society**

46. New Information Technologies must contribute to increasing the possibilities of all citizens to enjoy their full potential rights, to increasing the capacity of local governments to provide universal basic services, and to improving participation of the citizens in local decision-making.
47. United Cities and Local Governments will work towards an information society of inclusive cities, where diversity in culture, languages and information for all is valued and promoted. We recall the Lyon Local Government Declaration on the Information Society and are committed to promoting its implementation.
48. United Cities and Local Governments will contribute to the preparatory stages of the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (Tunis, 2005), notably through actively participating in the second Local Authorities Summit on the Information Society which will be held in Bilbao on 10-11 November 2005.

United Cities and Local Governments, as the global representative of cities and local governments and their associations, believes decentralised cooperation, municipal international cooperation and city to city relations contribute to transforming the international relations arena into relations between communities, **between** and **for** the citizens of the world. We local leaders and local governments are committed to creating a strong network through United Cities and Local Governments that will support the development of local governments across the world working for a sustainable future.

Local action, undertaken in solidarity, can move the world to a more equal liveable and democratic world.

## **Annex to the final declaration**

New Information and Communication Technologies have a dramatic impact on social and economic development as well as the roles of local institutions. Local Authorities need to face the new responsibilities, particularly making sure that the development of the Information Society does not increase inequality and precarious living conditions of urban communities.

In accordance with the Declaration of Cities and Local Authorities for the Information Society (Lyon 2003) that sets out the principles of an Information Society accessible for all, democratic, equitable and diverse, we local leaders from all the regions of the world commit ourselves to:

Participate in the development of New Information and Communication Technologies that will contribute to increasing the possibilities for our citizens to exercise their rights, to improving access to basic services and to strengthening the participation of citizens in local decision making. Contribute to strengthening the capacity of local institutions to develop technological tools that will contribute to local development, particularly through the participation in capacity building programmes on the information society.

Contribute to the preparatory stages of the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (Tunis, 2005), notably through actively participating in the second Local Authorities Summit on the Information Society which will be held in Bilbao on 10-11 November 2005.

Mobilize all development stakeholders, locally and internationally, including civil society and the private sector, to establish innovative partnerships in the field of the information society, and contribute to overcoming the digital divide through an effective involvement in the Foundation for Digital Solidarity that has been set up following the proposal by President Abdoulaye Wade at the Lyon Summit, and implemented by the cities of Dakar, Geneva, Lyon, the Province of Turin and the Basque Country.