

# Policy Council: Opportunities for All, Culture and City Diplomacy: Keys to Sustainable Development and Peace

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## BRIEFING

In our World Congress in 2016 in Bogotá, UCLG committed to foster heritage, creativity, diversity, understanding and peace. The UCLG Policy Council “**Opportunities for All, Culture and City Diplomacy: Keys to Sustainable Development and Peace**” is the place to share initiatives in these areas and to hold in-depth discussions about related policies and their impact at local and global level.

Around the world, local governments have demonstrated that they can improve social, cultural and economic policymaking by fostering an environment of collaboration and dialogue with their citizens. Engaging marginalized groups in municipal decision-making can contribute to more inclusive public policies and ensure that services meet the needs of all citizens.

UCLG members share the strong belief that strong **local democracy** is the foundation of national development and international peace, prosperity and solidarity. Local governments have engaged internationally for peace, and have a role to play in dealing with conflicts at home. As the sphere of government closest to the people, we have a rich experience in developing **dialogue** among communities, and it is us who feel the consequences of conflicts most directly. International actors, such as UN organizations, transitional administrations, peace-keeping forces and NGOs, increasingly recognize this experience and invite local governments and their associations to join peace-building efforts.

**City diplomacy** has a long history. The UCLG Constitution affirms that municipal international cooperation and decentralized cooperation, partnerships, twinning, international local government diplomacy, sister city links, and mutual assistance through capacity-building programmes and international municipal solidarity initiatives are vital contributions to the construction of a peaceful and sustainably-developed world. We remain convinced of the need for capacity-building initiatives, in particular through city-to-city and association-to-association activities. City-to-city cooperation and international municipal solidarity are key to building a more prosperous world. Exchanges between cities have proven to improve quality of life, reduce the environmental impact of all human activities and boost economic activity to achieve prosperity and a better future for all.

The protection of heritage, the understanding of diversity and the fostering of creativity are key elements of dialogue to forge peace from the bottom up. **Heritage, creativity and diversity** are the most important elements of local cultures, as expressed in the Agenda 21 for Culture and the UCLG Policy Statement “Culture, the fourth pillar of sustainable development”. Sustainable local development relies on culture and peace as vital elements of citizenship, integration and coexistence. Many cities and territories actively implement policies for education, culture and peace, in particular:

- a. To build on the cultural and heritage potential of cities and territories to promote a sense of place, identity and belonging;
- b. To protect and promote cultural diversity as a prerequisite for innovation, co responsibility and the peaceful resolution of conflicts;
- c. To ensure that service delivery for citizens is in place despite difficult contexts;
- d. To promote and facilitate peace as an alternative to violent conflicts;
- e. To acknowledge creativity as an aspect of human experience and a source of progress.

This Policy Council will debate how to protect the core values of culture, foster city diplomacy and cooperation through capacity development, and promote solidarity and peace as the bases for sustainable development.