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UCLG Congress – World Summit of Local and Regional Leaders: Thursday, 14 November 2019

On Thursday, the agenda of the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) World Summit of Local and Regional Leaders included a meeting of the organization's General Assembly and the launch of elections for the presidency. Delegates also convened in a second plenary and in a series of meetings, including Assembly and Town Hall sessions, to prepare recommendations to the World Assembly, which convenes on Friday.

The process to elect the new president of the UCLG began in the evening. Four candidates have expressed their interest in the position, which will be put to a final vote on Friday afternoon.

Plenary Sessions

Localizing Sustainable Development: Gearing up to the Implementation Decade: Moderated by Edgar Pieterse, University of Cape Town, UCLG Ubuntu Advisory Group, the session marked the launch of the fifth edition of UCLG's Global Report on Local Democracy and Decentralization, How local action is transforming territories and communities (GOLD V).

Pieterse congratulated the UCLG authors, and remarked that the world is aflame with bush fires and protest. He noted growing recognition of a confluence of multiple crises of inequality, the environment, unemployment, and political legitimacy.

Núria Marín Martínez, President of Barcelona Provincial Council, Spain, welcomed the publication, which her provincial council has supported since 2017. She called for a new urban agenda in the face of multiple adversities and noted the report's conclusion that municipalities have been leaders in implementing global commitments, and underlined the need



Edgar Pieterse, African Centre for Cities, launches the 'The Localization of the Global Agendas' report

to collaborate in networks, alliances and partnerships in the context of multilevel governance.

Berry Vrbancovic, Mayor of Kitchener, Canada, welcomed the role of UCLG in supporting municipalities to localize the SDGs through national local government associations, especially through its learning section.

Babacar Mbengue, Mayor, Commune de Hann, Senegal, welcomed the opportunities afforded by UCLG Africa to forge stronger links with other cities and towns, underlining work on the Dakar Urban Plan for Horizon 35.

Carla Montesi, Director for Planet and Prosperity, Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DEVCO), European Commission, congratulated UCLG on the publication of the GOLD report. She noted the role of UCLG in facilitating partnerships within the EU and beyond and underlined the new Commission's commitment to local governments in the context of implementing policies in areas such as climate change.



Panel speakers during the session 'Localizing sustainable development: gearing up to the implementation decade'



Participants attend the launch of the 'Plant Trees Not Bombs' campaign, a Global Peace initiative designed to highlight the need for increased action to reduce and halt the effects of climate change.

Ilsur Metshin, Mayor of Kazan, Russian Federation, called for maximizing the use of the UCLG platform. Clare Short, Chair, Cities Alliance, noted the transformational nature of the SDGs, adding that national governments were moving in the wrong direction by failing to address inequality. She suggested that the SDGs could be a radicalizing force in the hands of the poor.

Marina Ponti, Global Director, UN SDG Action Campaign, stated that the Congress agenda brings to life four values: integration and breaking through silos, using the territorial approach; universality; trust between people and institutions; and a hope that underlies the urgency of the work.

Summing up, Pieterse highlighted issues raised by the panel as: the value of practical examples, including the use of digital platforms to enable the dissemination of good practices; the observation that the SDGs represent a broad normative framework and a cultural revolution, re-engaging from the bottom-up to rebuild institutions; the need to overhaul the global financial system so as to reframe incentives, in alignment with the SDGs; and the need for institutional reform, with a seat at the global decision-making table for local governments dedicated to engaging with a movement of citizens.



Eugenie Birch, University of Pennsylvania, US

Assembly Track

Assembly on Multilevel Governance and National/Continental Advocacy, led by the Americas: This session was moderated by Paola Andrea, Deputy Director, Intendencia de Montevideo, Uruguay. Several speakers expressed concern over the governance crisis in Latin America, describing it as a landmine that has already exploded, threatening the ability of citizens to live together.

Johnny Araya Monge, Mayor of San José, Costa Rica, identified factors behind the governance crisis in countries like Chile, highlighting poverty and protests against growing inequality.

Bev Esslinger, Councillor, Edmonton, Canada, discussed the mistrust of politicians and anger that has manifested between Canadian regions. Leticia Mazzini, Deputy Mayor, Canelones, Uruguay, underlined the ability of local governments to engage directly with citizens, focusing on gender and the impact of poverty on women and children. Berry Vrbanovic, Mayor, Kitchener, Canada, spoke of his municipality's response to the decline of the local automobile manufacturing, involving collaborative delegations to Silicon Valley.

Andrea summarized the panel's key messages, including possibilities for: re-engineering multilevel governance by



Johnny Araya Monge, Mayor of San José, Costa Rica

harnessing allies in the private and public sector; embracing social, as well as technological innovation; and enhancing the role of local government alongside central government, using international platforms such as the UCLG.

Assembly on Migration Management and Peacebuilding, led by the Middle East and West Asia (MEWA): Mehmet Duman, Secretary General, UCLG-MEWA moderated the Assembly. Common challenges were identified as migration, social inclusion, local development and governance, and climate change.

Musa Hadid, Mayor of Ramallah, Palestine, and Co-President, UCLG-MEWA, stressed that his region shares common global challenges of climate change, poverty and financial issues but has specific challenges of migration and peace.

Mohammed Saadie, Mayor of Deir Nbouh, Lebanon, and President, UCLG-MEWA, stressed that migration and refugees require different approaches. He called for more UN support to empower local governments to take action on the SDGs.

Mustafa Tunç Soyer, Mayor of İzmir, Turkey, emphasized the importance of involving local governments because solutions have to come from the local level and recommended that cities orient their strategies according to the SDGs. An interactive discussion ensued, that highlighted the need for, *inter alia*, regional solidarity around common challenges; awareness raising on the SDGs among local government staff.

Assembly on Public Space and Demographic Challenges, led by Metropolis: This session was moderated by Xavier Tiana, Metropolitan Area of Barcelona, Spain.

Frank Nägele, Permanent Secretary for Administrative and Infrastructure Management, Berlin, Germany, noted that the downside of the major urban area's attractions is economic growth and competitiveness, because these do not go with sustainable development.

Liu Baochun, Director of Foreign Affairs, People's Government of Guangzhou Municipality, China, outlined rapid urbanization trends and expressed hope that the Assembly would set a milestone for members of UCLG and Metropolis by enabling new collaboration. Liu Mei, President, Guangzhou Women's Federation, presented an initiative to provide spaces for mothers to breastfeed outside the home, citing the public health and economic returns.

David Makhura, Premier of Gauteng Province, South Africa discussed governance challenges in an era where urbanization is characterized by exclusion, and where urban poverty is experienced alongside those enjoying great affluence.

Nelson Fernandez, Director, International Relations, Montevideo Municipality, Uruguay, described the



Liu Mei, President, Guangzhou's Women Federation

role of Metropolis in facilitating cooperation through internationalization. Elisenda Alamany, Metropolitan Councillor, Barcelona, Spain, reflected on citizen dissatisfaction with political institutions and issues around democratic participation, noting that the people of Catalonia are experiencing a period of economic, social and institutional crisis. She lamented the failure of institutions to keep up with the advances in society, and welcomed the role of the Assembly as an opportunity to share ideas.

Town Hall Track

Town Hall on Right to the City: The session was moderated by Eduard Cabré Romans, Habitat International Coalition.

Leilani Farha, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing, made the case for building an alternative movement, which she called "The Shift," stating it is necessitated by the "whole slew" of violations against human rights that have come with intensive urbanization. She added that a key goal is to combat the "financialization of housing" at the expense of urban poor, and advocate for governments to be accountable for providing adequate, affordable, and secure housing.

Outlining key conclusions and messages contained in the thematic position paper, Nelson Saule, Global Platform for Right to the City, said striving for the common good of all inhabitants is the underlying concept, noting this also implies that all citizens should define, claim, and promote these rights. He highlighted a number of ways forward, including the need for more coalition building to co-create cities of the future, and promoting enabling legal and policy frameworks.

Local authority and civil society representatives then discussed issues raised in the position paper. Speakers included: Josef Mayoral, Mayor of Granollers, Spain; Gyyongu Shin, Human Rights Special Advisor to the Mayor, Gwanju, Republic of Korea; Rohey Malick Lowe, Mayor of Banjul, The Gambia; Patrick Braouezec, President of Plaine Commune, France; Imen Ouardani, Vice-Mayor of Sousse, Tunisia; Anaclaudia Rossbach, Cities Alliance Regional Manager for Latin America and the Caribbean; Ana Falú, Executive Director, Centro de Intercambio y Servicios Cono Sur Argentina (CISCSA); Catherine Djila, Caritas, Cameroon; Frederick Kusambiza, PlanAct; and Christine Makenzie, International Federation of Library Associations.

The exchange underscored the need to question assumptions about what constitutes an attractive or competitive city, with the observation that viewing cities from a human rights lens



Debra Roberts, Working Group II Co-Chair, IPCC

calls for more polycentric and human-scale approaches. The city of Gwangju, Republic of Korea, was cited as an example of how to balance rights and social responsibilities, through its emphasis on civic education to change mind sets. Among measures that cities can take to counter growing exclusion and poverty, speakers called for: valuing the social, not just economic, function of land to reduce speculation; and providing spaces for excluded groups to access services and participate in governance processes.

Town Hall on Sustainable Urban Development:

Introducing the session, moderator Eugenie Birch, University of Pennsylvania, US, said the discussions would explore how to establish multi-stakeholder partnerships that are effective, efficient and transformative.

Marina Ponti, Global Director, SDGs Action Campaign, said the 2030 Agenda offers a global framework for building multi-stakeholder partnerships.

Ralphe Horne, UN Global Compact for Cities, invited representatives of the eight constituent groups of the General Assembly of Partners (GAP) to highlight key messages in the thematic position paper, noting, among other principles, the importance of: having a shared vision; being inclusive and respectful; building trust; having a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities; and monitoring progress.

Laia Bonet, Deputy Mayor of Barcelona for the 2030 Agenda, Spain, and Mohamed Sefiani, Mayor of Chefchaouen, Morocco, provided examples of how their cities are including citizens' voices in planning for sustainability. Noarini Roslan, Mayor of Subang Jaya, Malaysia, noted that to drive change, partnerships require focus.

A round of "Lightning Presentations" then took place, highlighting good partnership practices from around the world. Lana Finikin, Vice Chair, Huairou Commission, discussed a women-led project in Jamaica that advocates for improvements to public spaces to enhance safety for women, noting it has helped to institutionalize consultation processes beyond electoral cycles.

Katherine Kline, GAP Co-Chair for Older Persons, described the partnership-building process used to introduce the

World Health Organization (WHO) age-friendly cities initiative in Santiago, Chile, noting the country currently ranks first in the number of affiliated cities.

Hannes Lagrelius, World Blind Union, underscored that a focus on smart cities does not automatically lead to digital inclusion. He outlined how Chicago used participatory action research to identify excluded groups and create a more liveable city for all.

Jane Katz, Habitat for Humanity International, highlighted a collaborative project in Zambia that worked with local authorities to introduce pro-poor land policies. Larry O'Brien, GAP Co-Chair for Civil Society Organizations, discussed an Australian project that brings together a housing association and other stakeholders to build "homes for life," for older people and people living with disabilities.

In a final breakout session, participants developed some messages for the World Assembly. They included suggestions on mechanisms to enhance transparency in partnerships, such as: requiring any party participating in a GAP to sign up to an ethical code; agreeing on the value-added of a project prior to implementation; and capacity building to reduce asymmetries in information and power within partnerships.

Town Hall on Addressing Informality in Cities: The session was moderated by Clare Short, Chair, Cities Alliance.

Representatives of three GAP partners outlined recommendations from the thematic position paper. Beth Chitekwe, Slum Dwellers International, described the paper as a clarion call to local leaders, highlighting recommendations on: strengthening access to land, services, and livelihood opportunities; national safeguards for development projects in cities to do no harm; recognizing residents of informal areas as full and equal citizens; and promoting evidence-based planning.

Steve Weir, Habitat for Humanity International, emphasized that changing systems also requires changing narratives, noting a common denominator among mayors who are transforming cities is that they are also transforming perceptions of the informal sector. Caroline Skinner, University of Cape Town, said diverse studies reveal that informal settlements are places of work that contribute to economic development of cities.



Participants during the session 'addressing informalities' that focused on how cities and regions need to adopt innovative visions.

Yvonne Aki-Sawyerr, Mayor of Freetown, Sierra Leone, explained how incorporating the voices of residents of informal settlements, who constitute one-third of her constituents, helped build a transformative agenda for slum upgrading. Rodrigo Corradi, Director of International Relations, Municipality of Porto Alegre, Brazil, described how they use participatory budgeting as an entry point for providing services to incorporate irregular settlements.

Mousa Hadi, Mayor of Ramallah, Palestine, and Mpho Moruakgomo, President, Botswana Association of Local Authorities, also provided perspectives on how they address informalities in their respective contexts.

In the ensuing discussion, several speakers noted that 14 November marks International Street Vendors Day, saying it provides an opportunity to move away from criminalizing street traders to recognizing their economic contribution. Aki-Sawyerr explained how her municipality works with informal traders' associations to negotiate which public spaces can be used for trading and where it is prohibited. The session closed with a reminder that a new narrative is not enough in itself, as enabling policy frameworks and structured engagement of citizens are also needed.

Local4Action Track

Creative Mobilities: This session was moderated by Valeria Marcolin, Co-Founder, Creative Mobilities. Roland Ries, Mayor of Strasbourg, France, and Co-President of UCLG, shared his experience with creative mobility on integrating arts, culture and mobility as a "visionary programme" on urban regeneration. Cecilio Cerdán Carbonero, General Directorate, Global Cooperation and Citizenship, Madrid, Spain, shared how local artists have been invited to repaint old industrial areas that are visible from trains.

Marc Villarubias, Director, Mission on Cultural Cooperation, Lyon, France, described how mobility issues can help urban residents and migrants become better integrated in the city. Jordi Pascal, UCLG Committee on Culture, shared his work on a culture-based manual for local development, and on the 'culture 21 actions' approach that helps communities reinvent their transport approaches. Dionisio González, International Association of Public Transport, stressed that we have the opportunity to convey important messages in public transportation since people spend so much time there.

Cities Facing Crises: This session was moderated by Genevieve Sevrin, Director General, Cités Unies, France.



Ada Colau, Mayor of Barcelona, Spain



Souad Abderrahim, Mayor of Tunis, Tunisia

The session opened with a short UCLG film on how local authorities respond to crises.

Basel Al Houjairy, Mayor of Arsal, Lebanon, highlighted the impacts of the Syrian refugee crisis, with 100,000 displaced people living in the city. He explained how the municipality created a framework of co-existence to manage the provision of services and relations between refugees and citizens.

Fatimatou Abdel Malick, Chair, Nouakchott Regional Council, Mauritania, emphasized the need to consider the multiple roles of local authorities in managing crises, calling for them to be at the heart of reconstruction efforts.

Rob Metz, Mayor of Soest, Netherlands, introduced guidance for local authorities on working with humanitarian actors, emphasizing the role of coordination during times of crisis. Rolland Ries, Mayor of Strasbourg and President, Cités Unies, France, discussed preparation, prevention and crisis management in the context of the 2018 Christmas market terrorist attack.

Special Sessions

The Future of Transparency and Open Government: Co-creating open, inclusive, transparent, sustainable and inclusive territories: Moderator Juana López Pagán, Coordinator of the UCLG Community of Practice on Transparency and Open Government, shared a draft Manifesto on Open Government and Transparency and encouraged inputs.

Malika Ghefrane Giorgi, Special Advisor, Network of Local Elected Women of Africa (REFELA), shared her work on promoting gender-sensitive local government, and enhancing women's leadership skills.

Carlos Martínez Mínguez, Mayor of Soria, Spain, and Vice President for Europe, UCLG, emphasized that quality of life and peaceful co-existence are at the heart of democracy. Mukelani Dimba, Former Chair and Envoy of Open Government Partnership, stressed that the use of exclusive language was a challenge for SDGs and Open Government.

Mohamed Saadieh, President, Union of Municipalities of Dannieh, Lebanon, President, UCLG-MEWA, stressed that there is no development without democracy. María Julia Reyna, Secretary of International Relations and Integration, Province of Santa Fe, Argentina, cautioned against a regression of democracy.

Sofia Moschin, Italian Youth Delegate of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, stressed the importance of data and statistics; and Hubert Julien-Lafférière, Member of Parliament (France)



Panel speakers during the session 'Creative mobilities.'

and President, French Alliance of Territories, shared that governance involves striking a balance between representative and participatory democracy.

Migration: Mohamed Boussraoui, UCLG, moderated the session. Highlighting rural-urban migration as the biggest challenge, Yvonne Aky-Sawyer, Mayor, Freetown, Sierra Leone, emphasized the need to address structural factors driving migration such as conflict, climate change and the lack of economic opportunities.

Jill Helke, International Organization on Migration, noted that the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, recognizes the role of local authorities. Souad Abderrahim, Mayor, Tunis, Tunisia, said local authorities have limited experience in managing migration, emphasizing the need for better engagement and capacity building of local officials.

Omar Hejira, Mayor, Oujda, Morocco, outlined the national legal framework on migration, noting its focus on human rights and participatory democracy. Michael Spindelegger, International Centre for Migration Policy Development, pointed out that local authorities are affected by, but not involved in decision-making on migration, stressing the need for a discussion on future strategies.

Pablo Jurado, Consortium of Provincial Governments, Ecuador, outlined strategies to combat xenophobia following an influx of migrants from neighboring countries, stressing migration can also be viewed as an opportunity. Hüseyin

Keskin, Mayor, Sultanbeyli District, Turkey, noted that his district hosts 20,000 of the estimated three million refugees from 21 countries currently living in Turkey. He outlined strategies to, *inter alia*, provide humane living conditions, address xenophobia, and registration to facilitate needs analysis and streamline support.

Nkulwa Kabila, Youth Delegate, reflected on her experience as a refugee from the Democratic Republic of Congo living and studying in South Africa for eight years.

The Future of Resilience: Debra Roberts, Co-Chair, Working Group II, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, moderated the session. Juan Mari Aburto, Mayor, Bilbao, Spain, outlined strategies to regenerate the city previously blighted by heavy industry, based on prioritizing values that are critical for developing a resilient, transformative city.

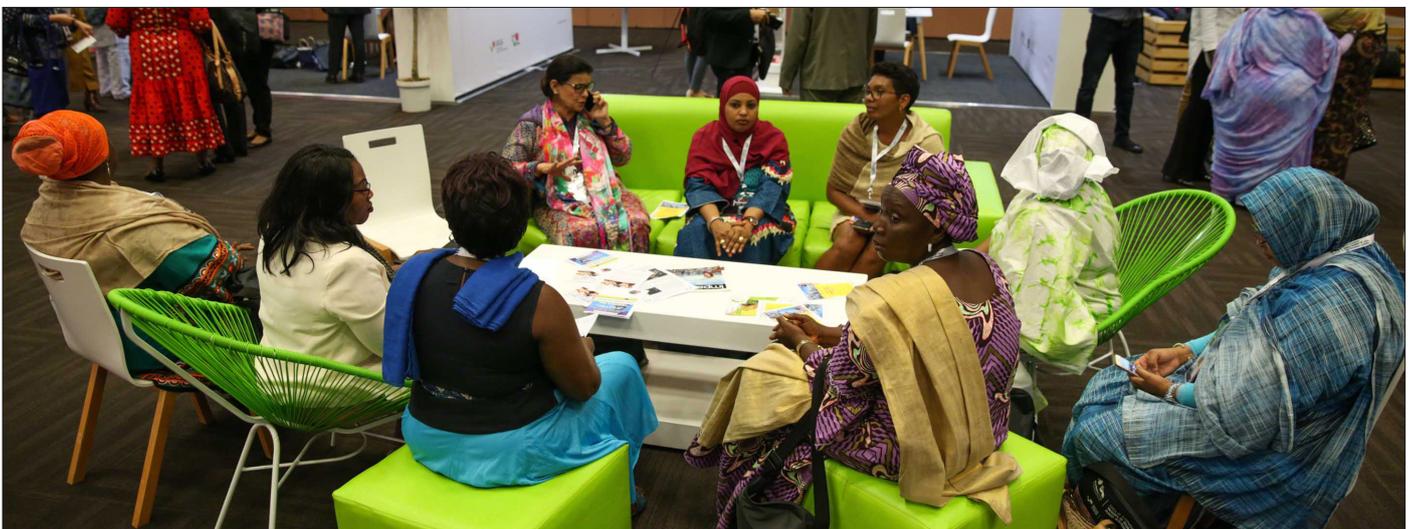
Madelaine Yorobe, Mayor, Iriga, the Philippines, described a science-based decision making approach to recover biodiversity, promote sustainable practices such as reducing plastic waste, and strengthen local leadership in developing contingency and action plans.

Zhasur Azimov, Vice Mayor, Osh, Kyrgyzstan, spoke on the frequent occurrence of natural disasters such as landslides and their impact on migration dynamics. Olcay Ünver, Vice Chair, UN Water, discussed resilience-related aspects of the 2018 Synthesis Report on Water and Sanitation, highlighting required actions on: water management improvements; implementing a circular economy; minimizing food and water waste; adapting to sustainable diets; and for leaders to take a holistic perspective.

Pablo Jurado, Consortium of Provincial Governments, Ecuador, called for focusing on youth, education and new technology, underscoring the role of municipal governments in the context of resilience.

Sara Kupka, Regions4, advocated a regional perspective to enhance the resilience of small and intermediary cities, noting the multidimensional relationship between rural and urban settlements and the transboundary challenges caused by environmental impacts. Corinne Lepage, President, Friends of the Universal Declaration of Humankind, called for creativity in the development of legal frameworks based on shared values and principles.

Sanjaya Bhatia, UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, reflected on links to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, noting the underlying drivers of risk as poverty, health and sanitation.



Participants meet informally throughout the day