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UCLG Congress – World Summit of Local and Regional Leaders: Wednesday, 13 November 2019

United Cities and Local Government (UCLG) World Summit of Local and Regional Leaders officially opened on Wednesday evening, during a ceremony entitled, “Local and Regional Governments, Sentinels of Dreams.” The Congress also met in plenary to discuss local democracy, and convened Town Track sessions on accessibility and gender. An inaugural regional Assembly Track, addressing decentralization and finance, Agenda 2030 and the Right to the City, and resilience, also convened. This new Track has been established as a permanent policy process for UCLG. The Executive Bureau of the UCLG World Council convened for its last meeting under the current mandate. A new Executive Bureau will be appointed for the 2019-2022 mandate in Durban during a meeting of the UCLG World Council.

Plenary Sessions

Official Opening of the UCLG World Summit: To the sounds of the Ndlovu Youth Choir, South African poet and storyteller, Gcina Mhlophe, opened the Summit on Wednesday evening. Mxolisi Kaunda, Executive Mayor, eThekwin Municipality, South Africa, invoked the spirit of ANC founders, John Langalibalele Dube and Pixley Ka Isaka Seme. He said the Summit would build on the great work of local and regional governments.

Graça Machel, Chairperson, ACCORD Board of Trustees, announced plans to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the



Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, Acting President, South Africa

UN in 2020, stating it would feature dialogues between youth and political leaders, and plant 75 million trees.

Fabrizio Hochschild Drummond, UN Under-Secretary General, noted that local and regional leaders are in the vanguard of pioneering solutions and confronting global risks in an increasingly complex world. He invited the UCLG to support and contribute to a UN75 (www.un.org/UN75) Initiative consisting of dialogues to take place around the world on the future envisioned by the SDGs, and on tools for global cooperation that would culminate in a leaders' meeting in 2020.

Mpho Parks Tau, President, UCLG, emphasized participation, women's rights, mobility and financing. He highlighted the unveiling of the International Municipal



Emilia Sáiz, UCLG Secretary-General; **Mpho Parks Tau**, President, UCLG, **Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma**, Acting President, South Africa; and **Graça Machel**, Chairperson, ACCORD Board of Trustees, dance to the music of the Ndlovu Youth Choir.



The Ndlovu Youth Choir performs during the opening ceremony of UCLG.

Investment Fund, which is based on a partnership between UCLG, the UN Capital Development Fund and the Global Fund for Cities Development.

Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, Acting President, South Africa, reflected on challenges for cities in providing tangible development opportunities in the face of shrinking resources and unequal wealth, stressing the need to give a voice back to the people.

In her closing remarks, Thembu Nkadimeng, President, South African Local Government Association (SALGA), thanked participants for their contribution, expressed appreciation to UCLA Africa, and looked forward to the remainder of the meeting.

Reinventing Local Democracy: Moderator, Sanjay Pradhan, CEO, Open Government Partnership, opened the session by describing four dimensions of the reinvention of local democracy: public involvement in municipal budgeting; citizens overseeing and reporting on public policy implementation; the maintenance of a lobbying register to curb interest-peddling; and consideration of whether those who are excluded can be empowered.

Ada Colau, Mayor of Barcelona, President, Barcelona Metropolitan Area, and Co-President, UCLG, highlighted that

citizens can be an important resource when local authorities are financially- or capacity-constrained.

Souad Abderrahim, Mayor of Tunis, Tunisia, stressed that decentralization is fundamental for democracy but requires citizen commitment and participation. She emphasized that digital connectivity between government and citizens can help local democracy.

Roland Ries, Mayor of Strasbourg, and Co-President, UCLG, warned against the corrupting effects of populism and stated that in order to defend democracy it needs to be continuously improved. Keboitse Machangana, Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, reminded participants that while the number of democracies is increasing the quality of democracy is declining. She also stressed that democracy is not just about civic and political rights but involves social and economic rights.

Amos Masondo, Chairman of the National Council of Provinces, South Africa, emphasized that law and especially the constitution is critical for democracy and that reinventing democracy should be kept on the agenda continuously.

Assembly Track

Opening Session: Inaugurating the new Assembly Track, Jean Baptiste Buffet, UCLG, explained that these sessions,



Mayors participate in the inauguration of the Town Hall Track



Jean-Pierre Elong Mbassi, Secretary General, UCLG Africa

organized by region and theme, would aim at working beyond the Summit as a permanent policy process for the world organization.

Assembly on Decentralization and Finance Led by Africa: The session was chaired by Léandre Nzue, President of UCLG Africa, and moderated by Jean Pierre Elong Mbassi, Secretary-General, UCLG Africa.

Philipp Heinrichs, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), stressed that Africa's population will double in the next 30 years - with 70% of the growth being in major, small-, medium- and intermediary-sized cities. He highlighted associated challenges linked to the need to design sustainable cities that can provide a decent quality of life, and how cities can access and constructively spend the funds required for this projected growth.

François Paul Yatta, Head of Programmes, UCLG Africa, noted that cities will require the equivalent of 5% of Africa's GDP for amenities and infrastructure. He explained that access to financial markets would require: credible credit ranking; dialogue between subnational and national authorities; and reforming relations between central and subnational governments. He shared work on an African Territorial Agency that could help in this regard.

Jeff Makhubo, Councillor, City of Johannesburg, South Africa, shared experiences ranging from the development of the city's first municipal bond in 2004 to the first green bond in 2013. He emphasized the importance of local capacity to ensure that funds can be generated and spent where they serve the people. Fatimetou Abdel Malick, President, Nouakchott Regional Council, Mauritania, shared experiences with an app that facilitates transparent and effective revenue collection.

Khalifa Sall, former Mayor of Dakar, and former President of UCLG Africa, reminded delegates of the need to strengthen local governments. The ensuing discussions revealed that citizens are more willing to pay taxes if local governments are transparent about revenue collection and city expenditures.

Assembly on Aligning Local Priorities with the 2030 Agenda, and the Right to the City: "Lightning rounds: European actions on the SDGs," led by Europe: This session was facilitated by Marlène Siméon, Director, European Platform of Local and Regional Authorities for Development. Fernando Medina, Mayor of Lisbon, identified challenges to achieving the SDGs, including the absence of a European consensus on monetary union, and discussed the lack of a coherent migration policy. Ilaria Bugetti, Regional Councillor, Tuscany, called for budgetary alignment with the SDGs in the EU.

Jocelyne Bougeard, Deputy Mayor of Rennes, France, outlined how gender parity legislation in France has yielded some positive outcomes. Anders Knape, Lord Mayor of



Obed Bapela, Deputy Minister of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs, South Africa

Karlstad, Sweden, Executive President, Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), underscored leadership at the local, regional and administrative levels, and the need for equal access to health services for both men and women.

Jan van Zanen, Mayor of Utrecht, President of Association of Netherlands Municipalities, explained that municipalities are ahead of national governments on SDG implementation. Angelika Poth-Mögele, CEMR, called for awareness raising around the SDGs and challenged a tendency to outsource SDGs to international affairs ministries.

Núria Marín Martinez, President of Barcelona Provincial Council, highlighted 15 years of work in the Maghreb region on gender policies, and participatory democracy in Morocco. Mindaugas Sinkevicius, Mayor of Jonava, President, Association of Local Authorities in Lithuania, outlined cooperation agreements with Ukraine, Georgia and Moldavia and his country's eastern partner policy framework.

Gunn Marit Helgesen, Councillor of Telemark, and President, Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities, explained that the SDGs serve as guiding principles for city urban planning and democratic, inclusive and participatory governance in Norway. Carlos Martínez Minguez, Mayor of Soria, and Vice-President, UCLG, pointed to the need for the European Commission to align all policies with the 2030 Agenda, and for a clear roadmap and milestones to be achieved by member states over time.

Carla Montesi, Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DEVCO), European Commission, reflected on European development policy in the context of building: strategic partnerships with a global network of local authorities; national frameworks to empower local authorities; and partnerships between European cities and local authorities.

Assembly on Resilience, Urbanization and Heritage, led by Eurasia and Asia-Pacific (ASPAC): This Assembly was moderated by Dave Cull, Co-President, UCLG-ASPAC.

Ilsur Metshin, Mayor of Kazan, Russian Federation, and President, UCLG-Eurasia, discussed the rapid growth of Eurasian cities and called on UCLG to play a role in attracting finance from international financial institutions for city investment. Metshin closed his contribution with a call for support for his candidacy in the UCLG Presidency election.

Li Mingyuan, Mayor of Xi'an, China, outlined the city's efforts to balance industrial development and environmental protection, including through poverty alleviation and support for low carbon living. Rashid Ayupov, Mayor of Turkestan,



Thembisile Nkademeng, SALGA

underlined the importance of UCLG-Eurasia's heritage preservation and conservation activities, and condemned terrorist calls for the destruction of heritage sites.

Tri Rismaharini, Mayor of Surabaya, Indonesia, and President, UCLG-Eurasia, described multi-stakeholder participation in an "environment cadre" explaining how climate change measures have contributed to the enhancement of public parks and mangrove conservation.

Jun Sung-tae, Vice-Governor, Jeju Special Self Governing Province, Republic of Korea, spoke of the island's receipt of UNESCO awards for biosphere, natural heritage and geoparks. Alena Gubanova, Mayor of Astrakhan, Russian Federation, outlined measures to tackle flooding and wild fires exacerbated by climate change. On the Moscow Climate Forum, she discussed the importance of leadership training in disaster reduction and city resilience.

Moderator Dave Cull, Co-President, UCLG, summarized recommendations from the Assembly, on: localization of the SDGs through local governments and their associations; the localization strategy of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction; influencing the Global Covenant of Mayors on policy change and climate resilience; and strengthening UCLG's regional advocacy and activities. Additional recommendations were put forward on the leadership role of young people on climate change.

Town Hall Track

Inauguration Ceremony: Introducing the session, Fernando Casado Caneque, Centre of Partnerships for Development, noted that the successful adoption of SDG 11 (Sustainable cities and communities) marked the transition from the Habitat III slogan, "listen to cities" towards a focus on inclusive urban development, and invited mayors to describe how their "cities are listening."

Rohey Malick Lowe, Mayor of Banjul, The Gambia, and Mohamed Sefiani, Mayor of Chefchaouen, Morocco, made opening statements. Representatives from UCLG partner constituencies then introduced the five policy papers to guide discussions and outcomes from the Town Hall Track, namely: Inclusive and Accessible Cities; Gender Equality; Right to the City; Addressing Informalities; and Partnerships for Urban Sustainable Development.

Town Hall on Accessible and Inclusive Cities: Moderated by John Paul Cruz, World Enabled, this session explored how local leadership can promote universal design principles in line with the Global Compact on Inclusive and Accessible Cities.

Maria Soledad Cisternas Reyes, UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy on Disability and Accessibility, stressed that accessibility is a bridge to inclusion and securing diverse rights. Marinalva Cruz, Deputy Secretary, Sao Paolo City, Brazil, stressed that investing in accessibility should not only be viewed as a cost, but also an opportunity to maximize the potential of all citizens. Jennifer Canaveral Guzman, Urban Development Institute, Colombia, discussed how she, as a hearing-impaired architect, draws on universal design to develop accessible public infrastructure.

In a video message, Silvia Gascun, Director, Longevity Centre at Isalud University, Argentina, outlined the World Health Organization (WHO) initiative on age-friendly cities, noting it aims to integrate older residents within diverse city spaces. Fatimetou Abdel Malick, President of Nouackchott Regional Council, Mauritania, and Yousef Shawarbeh, Mayor of Amman, Jordan, outlined how their municipalities made provisions for accessibility.

Noting that most countries have accessibility regulations but struggle with implementation, the ensuing discussions proposed solutions such as: involving civil society to sustain good practices beyond electoral cycles; training architects and urban planners in universal design; and raising awareness on the inherent dignity and rights of all people.

Town Hall on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment:

This session was moderated by Sri Husnaini Sofjan, Huairou Commission.

Violet Shibutse, Governing Council Chair, Huairou Commission, provided an overview of the gender policy paper, noting a key insight was the value of harnessing the voices and expertise of grassroots women in local government processes. Rút Kolínská, Director, Czech Mother Centers Network, described how the network supports women to contest elections, promotes women- and family-friendly agendas, and strengthens women's leadership at all levels.

Four female mayors then spoke on achievements, as well as challenges facing women leaders. Rohey Malick Lowe, Mayor of Banjul, The Gambia, highlighted her efforts to address



Panel speakers during the special session on 'The future of biodiversity.'

negative gender practices such as female genital mutilation and promote women's access to education.

Carola Gunnarsson, Lord Mayor of Sala, Sweden, lamented the growing backlash against female politicians, especially on social media, noting the importance of solidarity between women within and outside the political system. Responding to the policy paper, she stressed the need to reach out to women in both urban and rural areas.

Silvia Baraldi, Councillor of Legnago, Italy, highlighted efforts to counter gender-related hate crimes, such as a campaign that engaged graffiti artists and schools to discuss the importance of language and promote civic values. Fernanda Hassem, Mayor of Brasiléia, Brazil, attributed her election as a young mayor to the mobilization of women voters, and pledged her commitment to fight for respect and equal opportunities for women and girls.

In the ensuing discussion, participants highlighted, *inter alia*, the importance of strengthening networks for sharing information and best practices, and ensuring the further institutionalization of local consultative processes to mainstream gender in local government structures.

Local4Action Track

The Power of Youth in Building Resilient Urban

Communities: This interactive session was organized and facilitated by Habitat for Humanity and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. Using games to animate participants, the facilitators introduced the PASSA YOUTH framework that helps train young people to become community leaders.

The session called on a panel of young leaders to discuss the role of youth in building resilience. Christopher Kang'ombe, Mayor of Kitwe, President, Local Government Association, highlighted the challenges of unemployment and the options for youth to organize and make their voices heard.

Zamahlubi Zondo, Slum Dwellers International, emphasized the role of youth in data collection in their communities. Sofia Moschin, Council of Europe Youth Delegate, Italy, stressed that youth should become literate in the use of statistical analysis, such as on migration trends.

Edmundu Werna, International Labour Organization, cautioned that an entire generation of youth was at risk due to unemployment and argued that combining disaster risk reduction with employment generation could solve two pressing problems facing cities.



Souad Abderrahim, Mayor of Tunis, Tunisia

Special Sessions

Special Session on the Future of Culture: The session was moderated by Jordi Pascual, UCLG.

Obed Bapela, Deputy Minister, South Africa, emphasized culture as an expression of social justice and identity, adding that many African cities remain Euro-centric due to the legacy of colonialism, with bylaws that still exclude certain expressions of culture.

Catarina Vaz-Pinto, Councillor for Culture, Lisbon, Portugal, highlighted UCLG's Culture 21 programme and outlined efforts aimed at broadening artistic and cultural experiences in Portuguese cities, such as 'Scholar', a programme on arts and education.

Luca Bergamo, Deputy Mayor, Rome, Italy, emphasized that culture is more than the provision of services like theatre and arts and is about experiences and mobility planning. Christine Makenzie, International Federation of Library Associations, highlighted the 'libraries change lives' advocacy programme in Victoria, Australia, and observed that libraries are often the only free-to-access indoor spaces for social interaction, meeting the need for truly universal and equitable spaces.

Marc Villarubias, Lyon, highlighted the Lyon Charter of Cultural Cooperation involving municipal services, which carry out projects and actions that connect culture and sustainable development across the city.

Special Session on Housing: Ryan Macauley, UN Habitat, moderated the session. Advocating a human rights approach to housing, Leilani Farha, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Housing, reflected on the 2018 "Cities for Adequate Housing." Declaration stressing that laws and policies should be aimed at ensuring the right to adequate housing.

Laia Bonet, City of Barcelona, Spain, provided an overview of the housing situation in her city, noting that middle income households were struggling to pay rent, emphasizing the need to guarantee adequate housing to all citizens. Sheela Patel, Slum/Shack Dwellers International, pointed to the absence of up-to-date lists of informal settlements and lack of their recognition in legal frameworks. Eduard Cabre Romans, Global Platform for the Rights to the City, advocated a "metropolitan approach" to urban housing and making the connection between housing and public services.

Liza Cirolla, Center of African Cities, presented the UCLG 'Rethinking Housing Policies' report, noting that it positions local governments as important players while acknowledging the challenges they face. Patrick Jarry, Mayor, Nanterre, France, highlighted the housing strategy in Nanterre, which



Ada Colau, Mayor of Barcelona, Spain



Delegates between sessions.

makes social housing compulsory and obliges property developers to sign up to the housing charter.

Noraini Rosian, Mayor, Subang, Jaya, Malaysia, discussed strategies to mitigate a 2005 policy on squatter resettlement, which resulted in the creation of new slums, generating a vicious cycle of deprivation. Igin Volodin, Mayor Ekaterinburg, Russian Federation, outlined a spatial development strategy aimed at balanced development and increasing the efficiency of urban spaces. Gordan Yang, Taipei City, Taiwan, presented on a social justice policy in Taipei focusing on social housing, policy tools to reduce speculation and upgrading the real estate trading registration system.

Laia Bonet, City of Barcelona, Spain; Christopher Kang'ombe, Mayor, Kitwe, Zambia; Patrick Braouezec, Plaine Commune, France; and Roland Ries, Mayor, Strasbourg, France, reflected on key messages including the need for: strengthening strategies towards effective peer learning and political advocacy; a multilayered approach to unplanned settlements; and defending the fundamental right to housing.

Special Session on Ecology for the Future: This session was moderated by Gino van Begin, Secretary-General, ICLEI.

Amanda Eichel, Executive Director, Global Covenant of Mayors, described climate emergency declarations as a pathway for city policy responses, and called for actions plans and implementation. Hastings Chikoko, Regional Director for Africa, C40, noted that the Extinction Rebellion movement has underlined an important policy disconnect on climate change.

Herménio Celso Fernandes, Mayor of São Miguel, Cape Verde, outlined his municipality's focus on the blue economy, given Cape Verde's economic reliance on oceans. Mohamed Sefiani, Mayor of Chefchaouen, Morocco, described the value placed on local agricultural products and local gastronomy in the absence of fast food outlets.

Steven Bland, UN Habitat, called for a shift to human-designed systems based on the ecology of trees, and embracing circular, long-term and systems-based ideas. He outlined Habitat initiatives on urban planning and participatory design and the use of participatory data to support urban poor who are most affected by climate change.

Ghanshyam Pandey, Mayor of Tulsipur Sub-Metropolitan, Nepal, underscored the role of local communities in tree planting. Fernanda Hassem, Mayor of Brazil, underscored the role of cities in climate action, noting this is where both economic growth and risk are concentrated and where a territorial approach can be pursued.

Special Session on Biodiversity: Moderator Gino van Begin, Secretary-General, ICLEI, opened the session by outlining urban biodiversity platforms, such as "Cities With Nature," noting it has been officially recognized by the Convention for Biological Diversity (CBD) as a knowledge sharing and reporting platform for the Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework.

Marie Daigle de Lafontaine, City of Montréal, Canada, highlighted the instrumental role played by Mayor Valérie Plante, in expanding urban green spaces and making them accessible to all citizens.

Kobie Brand, Regional Director, ICLEI Africa, outlined a common roadmap for the subnational community in the lead up to the "Paris Moment for Nature," at Kunming, China, in October 2020, explaining that it comprises a range of thematic and regional consultation events, and collective policy positions. Sara Kupka, Regions4, stressed the importance of vertical integration of strategies and action plans for the Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework.

Madelaine Yorobe, Mayor of Iriga, the Philippines, described efforts to create spaces for biodiversity and other sustainability initiatives, including a total ban on smoking.

Responding to a question on how to raise the profile of biodiversity in urban agendas, Brand said that while this was the first time a special session on biodiversity has been held at a UCLG Congress, many cities are active in the biodiversity space, with "unprecedented support" for the role of cities and local governments in the UN biodiversity process.



Panel speakers during the Executive Bureau Meeting.