

Report on the session “Environment and climate change: Building a Human Rights approach at the local level” in Grenoble

From 29 June to 1 July, 2022, [UCLG](#) and its [Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights](#) (CISDPHR), co-organized the **International Meetings on Climate Migrations on “Human mobility, climate change, environmental rights: what role for Local and Regional Governments?”** with the [City of Grenoble](#), in the framework of the [2022 International Forum of Well-Being](#) of Grenoble.

On Thursday, 30 June, the UCLG-CISDPHR organized a special session on “**Environment and Climate Change: Building a Human Rights approach at the local level**”, inviting LRGs to explore new avenues for reflexion at the international level on the notion of “environmental rights” and how it translates into local actions. The session was an opportunity to explore several local initiatives ranging from the fight against pollution; access to natural resources (land, water, forests, oceans), to the inclusion of climate migrants.



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The panel was moderated by **Amanda Flety-Martinez**, coordinator of the UCLG-CISDPHR; and was attended by **Hon. Abubakar Buba**, Lere Municipality (Nigeria); **Victor Bahamonde**, Office of the Governor of the Region of Valparaiso (Chile); **Mohamed Ben Maouloud**, Deputy-Mayor of Gao (Mali); **Emmanuel Carroz**, Deputy-Mayor of Grenoble (France); **Carla Canal Rosich**, Global Justice and International Cooperation Department, city of Barcelona (Spain); **Med Wajdi Aydi**, Deputy-Mayor of Sfax (Tunisia); **Jehanne Degrasset**, Deputy-Mayor of La Roche-sur-Foron (France); **Lionel Nzamba**

(UCLG Africa); **Justine Festjens** (Terres Solidaires, OCU); **Matthew Scott** (Institute Raoul Wallenberg).

Several participants recalled that LRGs have been already experiencing the immediate consequences of climate change and environmental degradation in their territories and put in place concrete local solutions to ensure access to natural resources and basic services to all their inhabitants. The city of **Gao (Mali)** set up water wells to address the increasing droughts and desertification affecting biodiversity; while heavily impacting the livelihood and the economic development of local communities. **Lere (Nigeria)** improved and accelerated the planting of trees and developed urban irrigation and farming systems to mitigate the risks linked to the brutal erosion of wild and human life and floodings due to climate change. The **Region of Valparaiso (Chile)** and the city of **Sfax (Tunisia)** have been long facing the rarefaction and degradation of their natural resources, mostly due to the activities of private companies. In response, the City of Sfax opposed to the reopening of a polluting plant near its coastal area; and Valparaiso strengthened the participation of local communities to ensure the access to natural resources and essential services such as water, food, health and housing by recognizing them as human rights.



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In a global context of increasing forced displacements induced by climate change, the panel discussion highlighted **powerful examples of local governments enhancing environmental rights through local responses to the climate migration crisis**. The speakers underscored that environmental rights are not only about safeguarding natural resources and their sustainable management, but also about guaranteeing basic services and essential human rights to every single person affected by the effects of climate change, especially migrants. The city of **Lere (Nigeria)**, for instance, focused on the notion of **safety**: by mitigating the climate crisis, LRGs help enable safe environments for their inhabitants; while preventing forced climate-induced displacement. Moreover, LRGs facing increasing climate migration are at the forefront to develop broader rights-based approaches to ensure **migrants' right to work and inclusion**: **Gao (Mali)** helped climate migrants' integration by giving them access to local job market through gardening or water

wells remunerated-activities, thus both **developing a new local economic model and making migrants actively contribute to environmental resilience.**

The panelists additionally stressed the need of **democratic participation and cooperation with civil society to advance human rights-based local initiatives on climate action.** The city of **Grenoble (France)** brought to the fore its comprehensive policy of “hospitality”, aimed at **fostering participatory democracy tools to promote a sustainable ecological transition of the city and to meet the needs of all inhabitants, regardless of their situations and past trajectories.** The local government of **La Roche-sur-Foron (France)** exposed its special measures for the reception of migrants and vulnerable people, as part of its territorial *Pact for transition (Pays Rochois en transition)*. The pact entailed a joint-work with city networks (ANVITA), local associations and citizens in view to opening *third places* (tiers-lieux) to migrants and guarantee their long-run integration in local communities and to allow their participation in design and implementation of local strategies for environmental sustainability. The city of **Gao (Mali)** has facilitated the creation of associations of women dedicated to the protection of the environment: while facing both climate-change effects and local communities’ disintegration due to the increasing men’s departures to look for better economic opportunities, **the creation of these associations are not only empowering women and mitigating the consequences of desertification, but are also laying the ground for the promotion of environmental rights and more sustainable territories for the inhabitants.**



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Some participants highlighted how climate actions have contributed to develop new governance paradigms, emphasizing the extraterritorial responsibility of local governments. For example, by guaranteeing access to water as a human right, the **Region of Valparaiso (Chile)** pushed for the recognition of natural resources as “*common goods*”, which must be preserved and restored, but also enjoyed by local community (including citizens, migrants, undocumented persons) in a sustainable manner through democratic and participatory approaches. In doing so, the Region is willing to establish a new socio-territorial contract with its inhabitants after decades of land privatization and rights violations; and to leverage country’s increasing decentralization and regionalism to foster a renewed vision for people and planet-centered planning.

Barcelona and Grenoble’s representatives underscored the “extraterritorial” dimension of environmental rights, referring to the idea that local governments can have positive environmental impact– or positive externalities – on surrounding territories which goes way beyond its legal obligations or geographical borders. Both **Barcelona (Spain)** and **Grenoble (France)** promoted the fight for environmental justice by defending the model of **“Doughnut Economy”** which aims at simultaneously fulfilling essential rights for all and respecting the environment. The city of **Barcelona has drawn attention to the issue of public investments and procurement**, warning that many local governments tend to forget the human and environmental-rights violations related to polluting industries and to global supply chains that they are part of and invest in. The Municipality has implemented a specific methodology - jointly with other international networks like Electronic Watch - to measure and mitigate both the internal (within the city) and external (in the surrounding territories) environmental impacts of the City of Barcelona. The **city of Grenoble** is also working on a series of new indicators to reach self-sufficiency and reduce its negative impact on other territories and called on local governments from developed countries to open new reflexion on their **“extraterritorial duties” towards territories which more exposed to climate threats**.

Lastly, several speakers advocated for new and reinforced cooperation between LRGs to advance environmental rights worldwide. **Mohamed Ben Maouloud of Sfax** called for an improved cooperation between local governments regionally, especially regarding the **welcoming of climate migrants**. **Lionel Nzamba (UCLG Africa)** invited to reactivate **public-private partnerships and bilateral local governments’ partnerships** as opportunities to advance on climate-related issues, such as human mobility. **Emmanuel Carroz (Grenoble)** encouraged all local governments to join Grenoble’s advocacy, aimed at impelling national governments **to act more promptly on environmental transition, human rights and peace values and to support local governments in this**.

In his final remarks, Emmanuel Carroz reminded the next important steps to pursue the reflection and amplify local efforts on environmental rights, migration and climate action: the **World Human Rights Cities Forum of Gwangju** – which will be focused on the linkages between climate change and human rights- and **UCLG World Congress in Daejeon**, Republic of Korea (both from 10-14 October 2022).