**UCLG Committee
on Social Inclusion,
Participatory Democracy
and Human Rights**

**CITIES FOR RIGHTS
POLITICAL DOCUMENT**

COMMITTEE'S REPORT ON MECHELEN'S CITIES AND MIGRATION CONFERENCE

Local governments rally for a human rights-based global governance of migrations

As part of the Global Conference on Cities and Migrations held in Mechelen (Belgium) on 16-17 November, the UCLG Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights organised a side event, "Human Mobility and the Right to the City", and coordinated the session "Human Rights of migrants", included in the official programme of the Conference".

In September 2016, the UN General Assembly adopted the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, requesting an international conference on migration to be held in 2018, in order to adopt a Global Compact for a Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. One month later, the New Urban Agenda was adopted at the Habitat III conference (Quito, October 2016). This document tackles migration as a structural component of cities, and invite states to allow the full exercise of all inhabitants' human rights, regardless of their administrative status.

The Global Conference on Cities and Migration, convened by the International Organisation for Migrations (IOM), UCLG and the Mechelen City Hall, aimed at consolidating local governments' contributions to the Global Compact. The conference strengthened the narrative on migration as an opportunity for cities. Indeed, the declaration adopted calls for taking into account local governments' perspective in the process towards the Global Compact, and to guarantee the respect for migrants' human rights by ensuring access to basic services, as an essential step towards a sustainable management of migration flows. Conference participants called for strengthening the partnership between local governments, civil society and the academia in order to contribute to the making of a global policy on migration that respects, guarantees and promotes universal human rights.

The Conference was opened on November 16th by Mr Bart Somers, Mayor of Mechelen; Mr William Swing, Director General of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and Ms Emilia Sáiz, UCLG Secretary General.

Mayor Somers welcomed all participants to the conference by highlighting the fact that, over the recent years, Mechelen city has accomplished to "turn diversity and migrants into the new normal". Swing emphasised the need for conceptualising migrants "as holders of rights, not as statistics, phenomena or waves". Finally, Sáiz referred to the Right to the City as a guiding principle for the governance of migrations in cities and territories.

Side event "Human Mobility and the Right to the City"

The UCLG Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights, alongside EMMAUS International - Organisation for a Universal Citizenship and the Global Platform for the Right to the City, organised the side event "Human Mobility and the Right to the City".

The session counted with **Abdoulaye Thimbo**, Mayor of Pikine (Senegal); **Amélie Canonne**, from EMMAUS International (OPCU); **Amina El Oualid**, Vice-president of Nador Regional Council (Morocco); **Berta Cao**, responsible for migrations and refugees at Madrid's City Hall; **Joseph Schechla,** from Habitat International Coalition (HIC-HLRN), and **Lola López**, Commissioner for Migrations and Inte-culturality at the Barcelona City Hall. A large number of participants from all over the world attended the session.

The roundtable's main goals were:

1) *To shed some light on different practices carried out by local governments aimed at making migrants access to universal rights"sanctuary" on the basis of a dialogue between local officials, researchers, civil society and UN Human Rights system.*

2) *To contribute to the emergence of a united voice of local governments for a global governance of migrations that respects universal rights and counts on local governments.*

3) To strenghten the network of *cities and civil society* for universal rights and the Right to the City

Magali Fricaudet, executive coordinator of UCLG's Committee and the session's facilitator, kicked off the dialogue recalling that migration is closely linked to the massive urbanisation process taking place worldwide, which is transforming cities, territories and regions into living spaces characterised by diversity and mobility levels increasingly higher.

Even though some migrants are well educated and able to quickly integrate in hosting societies by entering the labour market, for most of them migration is an imposed reality. Indeed, the city is, for many, an opportunity for survival, escaping from increasingly adverse conditions in rural areas – such as climate change, the abandonment of rural development policies, land grabbing and unfair trade conditions resulting from international free trade agreements.

Therefore, migrants settle in cities hoping to get access to urban services and to get to enjoy a more decent life and their Right to the City. However, given the complex economic setting, too often they only get to settle in the socio-spatial margins of the city.

This is why access to rights and to the Right to the City is at the heart of migrations. Local governments, both at departure and hosting countries, have a key role to play to render migrants' social inclusion effective, by facilitating their access to rights.

What are the main violations of rights forcing people to migrate?

What practices are best suited for guaranteeing migrants' universal rights and their participation in the local environment, beyond states' prevailing "security-based" approach?

Abdoulaye Thimbo, Mayor of Pikine (Dakar metropolitan area, Senegal) highlighted the difficulties posed to urbanisation by the lack of accompaniment by the national government, which does not provide sufficient support to welcome a growing population unable to access to Dakar's city centre. In this regard, the mayor called for starting to work on rural migrants' rights from their very arrival at the city, by promoting their integration into the urban setting. With this goal, the city of Pikine, in partnership with an organisation of Senegalese female lawyers, set up a "tent of rights" where anyone aware of rights abuses can resort to. This facility allows for working on the rights of women victims of rape and sexual violence.

Amélie Cannone, from the French NGO EMMAUS International – Organisation for a Universal Citizenship, mentioned some of the threats posed to the governance of migrations by the lack of effective decentralisation in cities. "Obtaining resources constitutes the first challenge to guarantee the rights of migrant people: cities have the competences on services aimed at guaranteeing fundamental rights, but too often they cannot rely on the financial resources they need". On the other hand, she underlined the lack of consultation from national to local government for the making of migration policies. Yet some cities are still making big efforts to welcome migrants and raise awareness among local citizens about that – it is necessary to highlight the work done with civil society networks in this regard. Being local governments who translate rights into concrete actions, it is easier for civil society to have a working relationship and permanent dialogue with the local level.

A second challenge is to guarantee access to human rights and to services regardless of inhabitants' administrative status. In this regard, it is also needed to combat xenophobic discourses and to reaffirm that human rights are universal

"Approaching migrations through the lens of the Right to the City allows for thinking about people's needs and rights in a comprehensive manner – including aspects like housing, citizenship, access to services..."

Ms. Canonne also set the focus on the linkage between migrations and sustainable territorial development: "In Italy, urban municipalities have coordinated with rural municipalities to enhance access to housing according to land needs and migrants' skills". Approaching migrations through the lens of the Right to the City allows for thinking about people's needs and rights in a comprehensive manner – including aspects like housing, citizenship, access to services, etc.

Finally, Ms. Canonne concluded by highlighting that human rights' indivisibility needs to be defended. Regarding negotiations towards the Global Compact for a Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, Ms. Canonne stressed the need to keep building alliances between civil society, local governments and academia as a way to enable a better knowledge of territorial realities and to promote an alternative policy aimed at guaranteeing right based on practices that are already taking place locally.

According to **Joseph Schechla**, from Habitat International Coalition – Housing and Land Rights Network (HIC-HLRN), "current legal models approach migrants and refugees as people in transit, not as permanent holders of rights". Mr. Schechla addressed the international legal framework of migrations, highlighting that legal models currently framing the governance of migrations "are not adequate anymore, since they were not set up in the context of current dynamics and dimensions of the phenomenon".

Mr. Schechla presented the priorities, challenges and lessons learnt from the work carried out by HLRN in the MENA region and, particularly, from the "Sanctuary in the City: Beirut". This project aims at establishing a human rights guarantee charter for migrants in hosting cities, based on thematic priorities such as the right to work, to healthcare, to education and to gender equality.

Special attention was paid to the "great prevalence of forced early marriage among poorest strata of society and, particularly, among refugees and displaced girls". The lack of effective legislation protecting girls in some host countries in the region pervades an effective fight against this phenomenon despite existing international obligations.

Lola López, Commissioner for Inter-culturality and Migration at the Barcelona City Hall, shared with the audience how Barcelona's strategy on the subject is based on the "work with local civil society to 'sanctuarise' migrants' rights". She presented the City Hall's policy on that matter, emphasising two particular aspects:

Mechelen advocates for embracing diversity and to fight racism

Interview with Mechelen's Mayor **Bart Somers**

Source: Paul Van Welden

Why did you decide to host this conference as Mechelen's Mayor?

Our city is very proud to invite the United Nations and the international community of local governments because we are proud of the city we are. Our city embraces diversity and believes this isn't something bad, but the new normal. Our city is formed by up to 138 different nationalities, and yet we believe each one of these nationalities can feel they belong to the same community.

The process of integration involves all stakeholders; all of them must take part in the process of the new reality posed by diversity. Even though this complexity, Mechelen is rather successful, so we want to show it to the world, especially in a time of populism and negative messages around migration. We believe there is a need for positive examples. As a small city, we can give hope in a troubled time. We want to show the world that living together can be a successful and positive reality, and the more that we work on that path we see that it's true.

If you have a city that embraces diversity, people become richer, more open and learn from each other. And you become stronger in a globalized world, having much more possibilities to be successful.

How do you work with migrants and diversity at a concrete level?

I would first like to make a difference between newcomers and people with migrant background. To newcomers, we are focused on embracing them. When a newcomer arrives, he or she is appointed with a "buddy", a person that has been established in Mechelen for long and knows the city. For six months they are together, so he or she can learn the language, discover the city, meet with other local people so he or she can have a link out from his or her original background (be it in terms of nationality, language…).

In the beginning, we also had people who were a little bit reluctant to migrants. They used to say "they have to adapt to us, not the other way around". But after a while, the truth is they all start talking to each other about human things, they ask "how do you feel?" so the newcomer talks about his or her family or the home that he or she misses, and so they become friends and family. That's some of the things we do.

With people born here from migrant background, what we try to do is to prevent segregation. I want schools where people from different backgrounds can sit together and have the same opportunities. That is why, for instance, we try to establish contact with families and school managers to promote diversity in classroom. It cannot be good that the reality of a young boy in school is not the reflection of what his or her country will be in a close future. We need more diverse environments in order to stimulate the discussion around our sense of community; around who we are. I believe in a city embracing diversity and living together with all its people and backgrounds.

What would be your recommendation for the Global Compact on migrations?

National institutions and international organizations must understand that those who are at the frontline of migration policy and have positive attitudes towards migrations are especially cities. So we call for a global compact that supports cities and that gives them the instruments to do their work. We also call to enshrine the idea that everyone is unique and has multiple identities. If we must explore how to build new communities based on multiple identities, I believe cities are the most suitable place to do such. National governments and international organizations must put cities at the center of migration policies.

Could you tell us about the situation of migrants in Nador?

Official figures do not provide a clear image. Migrants in Nador are known for their movement: they may live in peripheral areas or in surrounding forests, as well as go and come back from the neighbor city of Oujda.

Regarding the work of associations dedicated to support migrants, we have some organizations working for the "MERs" – Moroccans that are coming back from abroad – and other groups advocating for a human approach to migration. In general terms, however, it should be noted how there are still few associations working on this topic. Nonetheless, the municipality has just signed a partnership agreement between the City Council and a local association to facilitate migrants' access to public space and to organize public events, such as culinary exhibitions, conferences on migrants' human rights and awareness raising events on the richness of diversity.

Historically, Nador has rather been an "exporting" city in terms of migration. At the current moment, however, the city has also become a bridge towards Europe for migrants from the rest of Africa. That is why we now deal with both emigration and migration transit.With the closure of the Melilla border, the region has gone through a difficult period. Faced with the influx of migrants trying to get past the barbed wire that separates the two territories, we established a reception office for migrants, guiding them to education programmes, health services or public administration facilities. When the situation is particularly difficult, we also work with other local administrative authorities to resolve the situation in the best possible way. But our work on this subject is new and still limited.

Emigration shouldn't be a problem. Internal migration can be a solution, because it can create job opportunities. But in our region we don't have universities, nor work, infrastructure, investments or business ... In addition, we are a border town with Melilla; people coming back see the difference between Europe and Africa; contrasts between the two cities are striking, something which strongly conditions migrants to try to cross the Mediterranean.

Why is it important for you to attend the Cities and Migrations Conference in Mechelen? What can it bring to Nador and cities facing similar challenges?

Migration is a global phenomenon. In globalization, everyone goes everywhere, people meet. If there are no borders in the internet, there shouldn't be any boundaries in mentalities. When we go to an international forum such as Mechelen, we learn from the experience of cities carrying out local policies to tackle and support migration in a positive way. Cities that lived the same situation, have worked before us on this subject and have managed to more or less integrate migrants and to make known the richness of diversity.

Do you have any recommendations for the Global Compact on Migration?

A key demand is the socio-economic development of the migrants' regions of origin. We can not behave with all cities in the same way, because every city and every country has its own specificity. So when we talk about a city like Nador, I would like us to talk more about the economic development of the region.

For the Pact it is necessary to insist on the need to locate national migration strategies, which are still too centralized. We must also fight against racism. I think we should also talk about the professional qualification and pedagogical support for migrants. We must also talk about the participation of migrants in this process: in Nador, aim to include them into our own local action agreement. Finally, I would like to encourage the participation of women in the creation of wealth and women's entrepreneurship in relation to this issue.

Nador: Guaranteeing universal rights in a city crossed by migratory routes

Interview with Nador's Municipal Council Vice-President

Amina El Oualid

Firstly, the need for rethinking the concept of citizenship, rooting it on the residence rather the nationality. Ms. López argued that "for Barcelona, the residence register is particularly important, since it is the means of entry to most public services. The city must therefore become a sanctuary city that will not allow its inhabitants to be expelled. This is why we have issued a residence card that certifies all neighbours' residence in the city". The Barcelona City Hall has set up an integrated service to provide support to migrants and refugees, including legal and linguistic support.

Secondly, the Commissioner also argued that the city's inter-culturality policy is aimed at "building citizenship out of diversity, so anyone can be part of the community without giving up on their identity". To this end, the City Hall has recently adopted an Inter-culturality Plan that is based on three main principles: equality of access to rights and equal opportunities; recognition of the city's cultural and religious diversity, and the promotion of dialogue between the various people and communities living in Barcelona.

Finally, Ms. López explained that, in Spain, the nationwide Law on Foreigners notably reduces local governments' action range and their capacity to set up welcoming policies for migrants.

Berta Cao, responsible for migrations and refugees at the Madrid City Hall, picked up on the same topic, arguing that "cities do not hold the competences required to change structural conditions of migrations" and that "we cannot directly intervene in this reality; instead, we need to rely on our work with local organisations".

Ms. Cao also recalled that the Madrid City Hall shifted its former policies on the subject, previously based on a security approach. This required important "awareness raising efforts among citizens in order for newcomers to be seen as neighbours and as holders of the same citizenship rights as them".

In this context, "we are strengthening the city's relationships with municipal networks both at the Spanish and international levels in order to find common ground and to share experiences".

How to establish mutual help and solidarity networks to achieve a universal guarantee of human rights and the Right to the City?

What role for networks of cities?

How to establish mutual help and solidarity networks between departure and hosting cities to allow for a better protection of migrants and their families, as well as a shared development between those territories?

Mayor Thimbo insisted in highlighting the role of peripheral territories regarding migratory flows, since they host larger figures of migrants. On this field, the work carried out by the network of peripheral cities FALP is remarkable. The mayor also underlined the importance of decentralised cooperation in order to foster sustainable territorial development while guaranteeing migrants' rights. The mayor emphasised the need for cooperation to involve not only an exchange of knowledge, but also an inter-cultural exploration and mutual learning, linked to personal experiences.

The cooperation between Pikine and Nanterre – both of them being FALP members – for instance, enabled setting up projects for accompanying city women initiatives that create locale incomes. Investing in local economy is a priority for Pikine, since the city has a 30% unemployment rate. Decentralised cooperation may be a relevant trigger in this regard. The mayor also explained how the partnership with an Italian NGO allowed for obtaining funding for a raising-awareness project on the risks linked to irregular migrations.

These experiences show that cultural exchange allows for opening up spaces to solidify a working and emotional relationship between departure and hosting territories, based on which it is possible to contribute to communities' territorial development.

Amina El Oualid, the vice-president of the Nador Regional Council (Morocco), argued that "working with civil society in raising awareness among inhabitants is crucial for migrants to be seen as rights-holders". In this regard, the government of Nador, despite its limited resources, has set up an action plan for the city that includes multicultural, social and sport-related actions for the inclusion of migrants. The plan is particularly rooted in working with local civil society on migrants' access to rights – especially, healthcare – and raising awareness among the local population against discriminations. For that, the Council of Nador can rely on national initiative IDH's support.

> *"Working with civil society in raising awareness among inhabitants is crucial for migrants to be seen as rights-holders"*

The city of Nador, a border town with Melilla (a Spanish enclave in Northern Africa), is split in two by the border from where migrants transit to Europe. Ms. El Oualid compared this border to an open wound on African land, and denounced the situation in which Morocco has become European borders' watchdog. She also explained that the city government is seeking to implement policies to foster youth opportunities in Nador – already difficult – and to improve access to social rights.

In this context, Ms. El Oualid stressed the work carried out alongside civil society and local associations to raise awareness among local population about migrants: "in Morocco, most families have some emigrated member, but the Moroccan society is still averse to foreigners. This is why it is so important to raise awareness among the population.

What is the Global Compact for a Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration about?

How to advocate for human rights-based approach from the alliance between civil society and local governments?

According to **Solène Bedaux**, in charge of migration issues at the Political Advocacy area of Caritas-France, argued that the main concern regarding the Global Compact is the chance it may end up introducing more border controls and strengthening international cooperation for migrants' return and readmission between departure and arrival States.

Negotiation towards the final agreement are organised around six thematic sessions. The Zero Draft will be issued in December, in Puerto Vallarta (Jalisco, Mexico), as part of a conference. State representatives have left few or no space for subnational and social representatives, as very few participants expected from civil society and local governments. Caritas is trying to bring migrants' voice in this process.

A meeting of civil society organisations will take place in February to get a joint set of demands to bring to the Global Compact's process, by articulating an alternative narrative to current policies, whose violent consequences have resulting in 6.000 refugee children gone missing in 2015 in Germany. Civil society wants to take part in this process and to defend a vision which is respectful towards rights.

After the interventions of speakers from the roundtable, other event participants gave their inputs to the discussion. Issoufou Ganou, Executive Secretary of the Land Observatory of Burkina Faso, argued that we need to approach rights from territories, building on linkages within a single region or metropolitan area, and between urban and rural territories. In this context, and since cities are facing scarcity of housing and land, it is important to re-valorise land sports with new facilities in some territories, thus creating employment and revitalising local public services.

It is also important to work on land distribution with a view to guaranteeing the Right to the City. Indeed, African cities people tend to occupy land spots in an irregular manner. In the continent's cities, 30% of urban land is not built, which gives place to great speculative activities on land and results in expelling newcomers to further places. Therefore, implementing the Right to the City involves actual housing policies, rather than parcelling the land out, noting how "people need to be accompanied to see their right to housing realised based on the knowledge about their own rights".

On the other side, Mr. Ganou argued that "decentralised cooperation has driven enthusiasm and improved support to migrants". He recalled the experience on decentralised cooperation between Ouagadougou and Oudel, which brough together a local association and a community of peasants.

Aligi Molina, Deputy Mayor of Palma de Mallorca, emphasised the need for sharing local practices that may be useful for cities of all sizes. For instance, he identified the "involvement of civil society – particularly, neighbours and migrants' associations – to develop an integrated strategy against xenophobia and racism". In this regard, he explained that Palma has set up reporting mechanisms that provide specific support to people who has denounced a violation of his or her rights. This services involves migrants and local organisations.

Finally, **Emilia Sáiz**, the UCLG Secretary General concluded the session by stressing the need for coming up with concrete ideas. "Some of the issues mentioned here need to find their way to be part of global declarations. To this end, we need a strong leadership by local and regional governments willing to advocate for a vision of migrants and refugees approached through the lens of right rather than a humanitarian perspective. At UCLG, as organisation representing local governments at the world stage, we also need to be able to define common messages".

Thematic session "Human Rights of Migrants"

Magali Fricaudet, as the Committee's coordinator, co-facilitated the session "Human Rights of Migrants", alongside Ms Eloísa Arruda, Secretary for Human Rights of São Paulo. The discussion was aimed at analysing the vulnerabilities migrants need to face and the resulting human rights violations. It also intended to identify practices of guarantee of rights that are taking place at the local scale in cities and territories from all over the world.

The panel saw the participation of the following speakers: Juan Acevedo, Mayor of Upala (Costa Rica); Abdoulaye Thimbo, Mayor of Pikine (Senegal); Kalgso Clavin Thutlwe, Mayor of Gaborone (Botswana); Gustavo Baroja, Governor of the Pichincha Region (Ecuador); Glenda Ovalle, from the Association of Municipalities of Los Altos Metropolis (Guatemala); Amina El Oualid, Vice-president of the Nador Regional Council (Morocco); Berta Cao, responsible for migrants and refugees at the Madrid City Hall (Spain), and Eleftherios Papagiannakis, Athens' Deputy Mayor for Migrants, Refugees and Municipal Decentralisation.

One of the session's main messages was identifying the recognition of migrants as rights-holders as essential for their social inclusion. To this end, some local governments from all over the world have recently issued local identity cards that guarantee access to public services to all neighbours, regardless of their

administrative status. Some others – as in Sao Paulo – are setting up municipal councils of migrants. **Eloísa Arruda**, Sao Paulo's Secretary for Human Rights argued that "Sao Paulo is a city of 12 million inhabitants built by migrants. Recognising migrant people as holders of rights is key for inclusion, and that involves getting them to participate in the city governance". The Secretary also pointed the need for setting up a multilateral system for homologating academic diplomas at the international level, aiming at making access to qualified employment easier in receiving countries.

For its part, **Juan Acevedo**, mayor of Upala (Costa Rica), argued that "newcomers are before anything else inhabitants deserving access to all services". Upala is a province bordering with Nicaragua, and a large part of its population either lives or work in opposite sides of the border. The government has relied on the IOM's support to advocate for a more adequate migration policy at the national level, which has resulted in issuing local identity cards for cross-border neighbours. This document allows this group not to be identified as migrants anymore and to become neighbours with full access to services.

Labour integration was identified as another driver for migrants' social inclusion. In this regard, Mr. Acevedo explained that the city succeeded in getting national labour laws applied to both regular and irregular migrants. In Upala, a micro-entrepreneurship programme is being implemented to facilitate access to the labour market to young migrants. Furthermore, the city government is putting in practice policies to protect most vulnerable groups within migrants – for instance, the "House of rights for migrant women" providing support to young and adult migrant women.

Another relevant point of agreement of the roundtable was the importance to promote a change of approach – from a nationality-based to a residence-based citizenship. In this regard, Berta Cao, representing the Madrid City Hall, underlined that the city has recently adopted a human rights plan and is elaborating the strategy "Madrid, Hosting City" to allow and facilitate every neighbour's access to municipal services through a local identity card. The city also offers public shelters for transiting people and, in order to fight discrimination, it has set up a diversity management unit within the local police to raise awareness among policemen.

Mayor Kalgso Clavin Thutlwe of Gaborone (Botswana) went deeper in the issue of fighting discriminations: "Equality and equity are our main priorities when welcoming migrants, and we apply affirmative action policies to this end". Gaborone holds a long-standing commitment for migrants' rights and against discrimination: back in apartheid times in South-Africa, the city hosted Mandela's and ANC's resistance. At the national level, affirmative action policies are being implemented regarding migrant people, based on the belief that migrants have a positive impact on cities. Furthermore, the city is also engaged in ensuring children and women access to education.

A fourth broadly discussed topic in the conversation was the idea that very often cities are not only departure or arrival points, but, or even transiting areas. Therefore, we need an integrated approach to migrations and to migrants as a global political subject. **Gustavo Baroja**, President of the Regional Government of Pichincha (Ecuador) illustrated that by referring to his country's history: from the 50s until recent times, Ecuador was a country of emigration, exporting labour force to other nations, with hundreds of miles of Ecuadorians leaving the country. Now Ecuador is a destination and transit site. The government, within the framework of the national Good Living Plan (Plan nacional del Buen Vivir), regularized 100,000 people, providing them with citizenship and respecting the principle of free mobility and non-return in this – a principle guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In this regard, Baroja stressed the importance of partnering with universities for carrying out research on migrants as subjects of rights.

On a different note, explained that the management of former migrants arriving at the Pichincha province is being assumed by the regional government, even though it does not hold the competences required to work on their inclusion in the Ecuadorian society. Mr. Baroja also referred to the need for re-thinking international mobility from a global perspective, but also taking into account the social work that needs to be done, especially in family terms.

In this regard, **Glenda Ovalle**, from the Association of Municipalities of the Metropolis of Los Altos (Guatemala), emphasized the importance of consequences of split families. In this regard, he asked for resources and competences for emotional and personal accompaniment, especially for children and women who are left alone either in the receiving or departure country. Mr. Ovalle highlighted the relevance of providing special protection to these groups, the most vulnerable ones in migratory processes.

Amina El Oualid, vice-president of the Municipal Council of Nador, followed this topic by providing the example of the strategy on migration and migrants' rights adopted by the Council of Nador with the support of the National Council for Human Rights. She emphasized the urgency for a human and global approach to migration policies, which needs to be translated into multilateral cooperation based on the shared responsibilities between departure and host cities, respecting human rights and in compliance with international law, with special attention to the vulnerabilities of migrant women. Ms. El Oualid explained that Nador is generating common spaces at the city level to foster cultural exchange, and it is working to insert the city council into international networks that facilitate learning experiences through exchanging knowledge and good practices.

Following this, the mayor of Pikine, **Abdoulaye Thimbo**, highlighted the decentralized cooperation relationship with Nanterre, which is based on strong and personal ties, not only on the exchange of experiences and practices. He eventually highlighted the linkages and shared responsibilities between the departure and receiving cities enshrined through international solidarity.

"In times of crisis, human rights are the first to fall: austerity measures make it very difficult to preserve social cohesion"

A final noteworthy topic was the – sometimes complicated – relationship between local and national governments, especially regarding the mismatch between objectives of migration policies at each level. The lack of sufficient resources to finance human rights policies was also repeatedly mentioned, particularly by representatives of local governments suffering austerity measures applied by their national governments. In this regard, Eleftherios Papagiannakis, Deputy Mayor of Athens for Migrants, Refugees and Municipal Decentralization, argued that "in times of crisis, human rights are the first to fall: austerity measures make it very difficult to preserve social cohesion".

Overall, speakers highlighted the importance of taking the macro-economic global context into account when approaching migrations, since it turns cities into the only alternative for peasants affected by climate change, land grabbing and free trade agreements. In this framework, it was emphasised that the Right to the City is not the obligation to the city, but it is rather based on a sustainable, balanced relationship between the city and its rural hinterland. Speakers also recalled that local governments have a key role to play in building relationships between home and host territories of migrants. In that way, decentralised cooperation allow for contributing to the communities' territorial development.

The need for approaching global migrations through the lens of the Right to the City was also reaffirmed, as a necessary tool for building an effective local citizenship for migrants. In this regard, speakers highlighted the importance of providing to the more marginalised groups –such as women and the Youth–a special protection. Both local governments and civil society representatives taking part in the event underlined their will to keep working for welcoming migrants, and for overcoming the many challenges they are facing in this regard –from insufficient financial resources to xenophobic political discourses. They reaffirmed their positions being aware that, nowadays, the sustainable management of territories needs to be based on actions aimed at recognising diversities and restoring equality, fighting discriminations and hatred discourses.