

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 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 this translates into local actions ranging from the fight against pollution; the safeguard of and 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 are already experiencing the immediate consequences of climate change and environmental degradation in their own territories and had to put in place concrete local solutions to ensure access to essential resources to all their inhabitants. The city of **Gao (Mali)** set up water wells to address by the increasing droughts and desertification, affecting biodiversity, wild and domestic animals, heavily impacting the livelihood and the economic development of local communities. **Lere (Nigeria)** improved and accelerated the planting of trees and developed urban and irrigation 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, Sfax has opposed the reopening of a polluting plant near its coastal, and Valparaiso has collaborated with local communities to ensure the access to natural resources and essential services such as water, food, health and housing; recognized as human rights.



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The panel discussion highlighted **powerful examples of local governments enhancing environmental rights through local and human-rights based responses to the climate migration crisis**, in a context of increasing forced displacements induced by climate change worldwide. The speakers underscored those environmental rights are **not only about safeguarding natural resources and their sustainable management, but also on about to 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)** 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 climate change 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; **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 foster a sustainable ecological transition of the city, 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*), which entailed a joint-work with city networks (ANVITA), local associations and citizens to open *third places* (tiers-lieux) to migrants to guarantee their long-run insertion within local communities and allow their participation in design and implementation of local strategies for environmental sustainability. In another context, 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 exile of numerous men in search for 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)** put forth a vision of natural resources as “*common goods*”, which must not only be preserved and restored, but must also be sustainably used by local community (including citizens, migrants, undocumented persons) through a democratic management. 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; as well as to leverage country’s increasing decentralization and regionalism to foster a people and planet-centered planning and vision.

Barcelona and Grenoble’s representatives underscored the “extraterritorial” dimension of environmental rights, referring to the idea that a local government can have a positive environmental impact if it exceeds its own legal boundaries or geographical borders. Both **Barcelona** and **Grenoble** promoted the fight for environmental justice by defending the model of “**Doughnut Economy**” which aims at simultaneously fulfilling essential rights for all while respecting the global climate boundaries. The city of **Barcelona (Spain)** **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 international networks like Electronic Watch, to measure and mitigate both the internal and external environmental impacts of the City of Barcelona. The **city of Grenoble (France)** 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 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**, seen as opportunities to advance on climate-related issues, such as mobilities and migrations. **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).