

United Cities and Local Governments

Local and Regional Leaders World Summit

Mexico City 16–20 November 2010

The Summit Key Messages

We, the mayors and representatives of the world's cities and local and regional governments, coming together in Mexico City from every continent, have discussed the crises, challenges, opportunities and key issues facing us and our communities, and have agreed the following main conclusions.

Global Crises – Local Solutions

1. The impact of the economic and fiscal crises

The economic crisis, which has led in many countries to a fiscal crisis, continues to have a severe impact. Many local and regional governments face a “perfect storm”, caught between increased needs of citizens, growing demographic pressures, and much reduced financial resources. Since local governments' financial flexibility is usually far less than that of national governments, the problems faced are severe.

We recognize that local governments cannot always avoid significant budget reductions, and that we have to consider innovative ways of organising public services, aiming to reduce overhead costs, and preserving, as far as possible, the level and quality of services provided to our citizens and communities. However, successful change also depends on good planning and consultation, and often incurs up-front costs of transition.

Moreover, good quality investments for local economic development provide employment and help meet other economic, environmental and social objectives.

Our message:

We urge national governments to ensure that local and regional governments are not disproportionately impacted by budget and fiscal reductions, arising from the economic and fiscal crises. Any reductions should take account of demographic and other cost pressures, and should be phased to enable proper planning to protect front-line services. Necessary investments for the future need to be maintained even in difficult periods.

2. Saying No to recentralisation

The economic and fiscal crises have also led in many cases to other steps by central governments to take back more control over their local and regional governments. This may be through financial strings attached to grants or transfers, through reorganisations carried out without adequate consultation, or through new laws limiting local discretion. Sometimes, political changes at national level have also led to the curtailment or reversal of ongoing decentralisation processes.

Today, therefore, and in many countries, we see a risk of “recentralisation” by central governments, reversing a worldwide process, since the 1980s, of democratic

decentralisation. This is a dangerous tendency which we vigorously oppose. We reaffirm that strong local self-government is an essential element both for economic and social progress, and for democracy.

Our message:

We call on all governments, irrespective of political colour, to complete, strengthen and maintain effective laws and policies for democratic decentralisation and local self-government, including the necessary powers to achieve effective local development, and a robust fiscal and financial framework enabling local governments to carry out their tasks.

3. Meeting the climate change challenge

Despite the lack of progress in international negotiations on climate change, at local and city level we remain committed to taking action to reduce such change, mitigate its impact, and to adapt to it where practicable. Our towns and cities are also in the forefront when it comes to questions of energy; oil and gas are finite resources, and we have to be leaders in moving to cleaner and greener sources of energy.

Thousands of cities, local and regional governments around the world have already signed up to taking strong action on climate change and use of energy. We affirm our commitment to take positive action in our own communities, to reduce carbon emissions, enhance energy efficiency, and increase use of renewable energies.

With more frequent severe weather events arising from climate change, the issue of risk management and prevention becomes more and more important. This is a shared responsibility between the international, national, regional and local levels.

Our message:

We call on national governments and the international community

- **to take bolder binding steps to prevent severely damaging climate change, and to mitigate its impacts,**
- **to work with the cities and local governments of the world, in particular through UCLG, as partners in this common mission**

We support the Climate Pact which many cities will sign here in Mexico City, and other similar public commitments by our members.

We encourage UCLG's members to join the Resilient Cities Campaign for risk management and prevention.

The city of 2030 – our local vision for a sustainable future

4. Empowering our cities to meet the challenges

The world's population is growing, and in particular the proportion of the population living in urban areas – in particular, in medium and smaller towns – continues to rise.

However, this rapid increase in urban population, which impacts in particular on low-income countries, puts huge pressure on local infrastructures. Since in too many countries, the process of decentralisation – especially financial - is incomplete, cities and local governments often lack the necessary capacity to tackle the challenges they face.

Most cities and towns are re-engineering themselves economically, responding to the impact of globalisation, and to rapid demographic and technological change. These in turn lead to changes in the urban fabric, in ways of living, working and moving around the city.

We have set out a shared vision of the kind of city we are looking to create, in “The City of 2030 – Our Manifesto”.

But to create successful, sustainable cities, we need resources for capital investment in infrastructure and essential services; legal and financial/fiscal powers commensurate with our tasks; and public administrations endowed with strong skills and capacities.

Our message:

We urge the international community to recognize the centrality of the urban challenge for our common future, and work with us to meet that challenge.

We call on the UN and its agencies, national governments and donors, to promote and build partnerships with our cities, local governments and regions, to achieve positive urban development, through well-planned investment and capacity-building programmes.

We recommend UCLG’s members to undertake peer to peer partnerships and networking to promote successful urban development.

5. Good local governance and strategic planning

Local and regional governments across the world, with their democratic mandate, are responsible for shaping the future of our cities and towns. This means creating an inspiring vision for the city’s future, backed up by an effective process of strategic planning for its physical, economic, social, environmental and cultural development.

At the heart of this is the relationship between the city government and its citizens – combining both representative and participatory democracy. It involves building an inclusive city in which all sections are able to play a full role, and are seen to have an equal “right to the city”, supported by clear lines of accountability and a culture of transparency. Special attention must be given to needs of migrant communities within the city’s policies for social cohesion, but also to the positive contribution that they can bring.

Our message:

We emphasize the importance of good local governance in the development of our towns, cities and regions, based on policies of inclusion, participation and transparency.

We also recall the importance for every local and regional government to develop effective strategic planning processes.

We urge national governments and the international community to work with us to develop training and capacity-building initiatives to strengthen local governance and strategic planning.

6. The city and its inter-linked network

The town or city does not stand in isolation, but is inextricably linked to its neighbours, its region and to its rural hinterland. Increasingly, cities and towns are operating not as single economic centres, but as functional economic and social clusters or networks. And within the network, different towns and municipalities play different but complementary roles, depending, for example, on whether they are a core or peri-urban city, or a rural district.

This means that city governments need to work closely with their neighbours in the network, through formal and informal structures of cooperation, and in particular with the region or province of which they form part.

We also strongly underline the continuing importance of rural local governments, who also face major change, whose economy is closely linked to the urban economy, and whose needs must be fully taken into account.

Our message:

We emphasize the need for effective multi-level governance to ensure that issues and needs common to the whole urban-regional territory are addressed in a coherent way. In particular, regional and local governments (urban, peri-urban, peripheral and rural) need to cooperate closely.

We call on national governments, where the current system is inadequate, to adapt and improve the legal framework for cooperation, in full consultation with the local and regional governments and their associations.

Local and Regional Governments – Partners in the New Global Governance

7. A new international status for local and regional governments and UCLG

Our world is - more than ever - inter-connected, inter-dependent and multi-polar. If our planet is to survive and prosper in this era of constant global change and transformation, we need to develop, in full respect of national and cultural identities, shared objectives for our common public good.

To meet tomorrow's challenges, the local level is just as involved as the national and international levels, and good local governance is as significant as good national and international governance.

Because of these changes, we see new forms of global governance starting to emerge, based not only on inter-governmental institutions, but on new forms of multi-actor, multi-level networks, partnerships and organisations. Yet too often, the UN and the international community give less recognition to the contribution of local and regional governments than to other sectors.

Our message:

As leaders of the world's cities, local and regional governments, we affirm our commitment to play a full role, as partners, to meet our common global goals and challenges.

We call on the UN and the international community to recognize, both in formal status and in practical cooperation, the growing contribution of the world's cities, local and regional governments to the global challenges we face together, and to work with us as close partners on all issues of common concern.

To this end, we call on the UN and other key international organisations to recognize UCLG formally as the representative organisation on behalf of the world's cities, local and regional governments, and to cooperate in partnership with UCLG in developing and implementing key policies and programmes.

8. Partners in international development

Over the last 20 years or more, there has been a huge expansion in the number and scope of local authorities' partnerships for development, through decentralised cooperation and municipal; international cooperation. Through these partnerships, local governments have contributed in important ways to combat poverty, promote local development, improve service delivery, strengthen administrative capacities, and much more. In these ways, local governments have also contributed in practical ways to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

This fertile and cost-effective form of international cooperation has been recognized and supported by some governments, and some international agencies, but the scale has often been very modest. Whilst donors provide substantial funding for decentralisation, too often this is stuck at central government level, with no involvement of the local level.

Local governments are also involved in the debates around aid and development effectiveness. One important means of improving effectiveness is through the strengthening of national associations.

Our message:

We invite the international community, national government and donors to enhance support for local government partnerships for development, which provide flexible and cost-effective means of mutual learning.

We recommend that, where donors support national decentralisation processes, they ensure that the local authorities and their national associations are fully involved as partners, and that at least part of the financing be allocated to them.

We strongly recommend that this support be scaled up, aligned to local as well as national government priorities, and that the respective contributions of donors, central governments and local governments be far better coordinated and harmonized.

9. Partners in global solutions

Global problems and challenges cannot only be analysed and tackled globally – ultimately, as has been said many times, all issues are local. Of course, issues of war and peace, of security or terrorism, of natural disaster and climate change require international and national level action. But in all these fields, local and regional governments can play a vital role in trying out innovative responses, in bringing people together across cultural divides, and in responding to urgent humanitarian crises and needs.

City diplomacy provides an exciting and original means either to prevent foreseeable conflict, or to promote the post-conflict healing process. For it is cities and their people who suffer most in war – and above all the continuing threats posed by nuclear weapons, and their proliferation, concerns us deeply.

Our message:

We reaffirm our support for creative local to local actions for peace and conflict resolution, via city diplomacy and other means of bringing people together across deep divides, and recommend national governments and the international community to give support to these forms of creative action.

We express our support for the call Mayors for Peace Campaign for a nuclear weapons free world by 2020 through a new international Convention.

10. Partners in regional integration

In step with the march of globalisation, we have also seen the development of new forms of world regional structures, seeking in particular closer economic – and sometimes political – cooperation and integration amongst the countries of the region.

The European Union has so far gone furthest down the road of integration, and the African Union also plays an important continental role, whilst Asia and Latin America also have regional cooperation frameworks which appear likely to become in future more important “actors” in global governance

Since all of these organisations make important policy and financial decisions for their region, local and regional governments, in particular their regional and national associations, need to watch developments closely and consider what forms of involvement to seek – whether formal (as with the EU’s Committee of the Regions) or informal, as representative/advocate.

Our message:

We affirm that any organisation of world regional cooperation and integration must take properly into account the implications of its competences and decisions on the regions local and regional governments, and should involve them in all relevant matters.

11. Women’s rights – an essential element of governance

We cannot build a better world without taking major steps to enhance the status and role of women in society, and to promote gender equality. We welcome the creation of UN Women, and share its goals of eliminating discrimination, empowering women, and

achieving equality between women and men as partners and beneficiaries of development, human rights, humanitarian action, peace and security. This requires action at and by all levels of governance.

***Our message:* We affirm our commitment to enhance the role and position of women in all relevant fields of our responsibilities, including the local democratic and participative processes, urban/local planning, and service delivery.**

We request the international community, and in particular UN Women, to work in partnership with us to achieve our goals for equality.

Conclusion – Our Global Future Together

Tomorrow's world will face the many challenges outlined above, but brings also enormous potential for prosperity and social equity based on more sustainable solutions to our ways of living, working, and moving on our small planet.

The quality of governance of our cities, towns and human settlements will be a crucial factor in determining the outcome. This requires that local and regional governments have the right legal tasks, resources and capacity. It also requires an effective system and process of multi-level governance, in which all levels, from global to local, work together to solve our common challenges, create solutions, and learn together.

With our world organisation United Cities and Local Governments, and its many partners, we pledge ourselves to contribute fully, in that spirit of partnership, to achieve our common goals.