



ASIA PACIFIC REGIONAL CONSULTATION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Global Charter-Agenda for Human Rights in the City follow-up process

Report of the session held on October 6 in the context of the 2021 World Human Rights Cities Forum (WHRCF) by the UCLG Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights and UCLG ASPAC.

The session brought together local government, civil society and international partners' to collectively address the role of human rights in Asia Pacific local government agendas. It aimed at nourishing the UCLG update process of the Global Charter-Agenda for Human Rights in the City, led by the Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights (CSIPDHR). **By order of speakers, the event counted with the participation of:**

Lee Yong-sup, Mayor of Gwangju (South Korea)

Linda Voortman, Alderman of Utrecht (The Netherlands)

Amanda Flety, Coordinator of the UCLG-CSIPDHR (Spain)

Bernadia Tjandradewi, Secretary General of UCLG-ASPAC (Indonesia)

Lee Dong-jin, Mayor of Dobong-gu (South Korea)

Bak Heonyong, Manager of Planning and Public Relations of Daejeon (South Korea)

Joko Hartono, Head of National Unity, Politics and Community Protection of Semarang (Indonesia)

Leticia Clemente, City Budget Officer of Baguio (The Philippines)

Windi Arini, Regional Asia Programme Officer, Raoul Wallenberg Institute (Indonesia)

Katia Chirizzi, Deputy Regional Representative of the OHCHR Regional Office for South-East Asia (Bangkok)

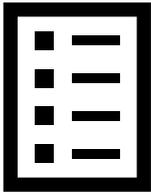
Mugiyanto, Human Rights Advisor at the President Office (Indonesia)

Pong Cruz, Senior Advisor of World Enabled (The Philippines)

Ahmad Rifai, Executive Director of Kota Kita Foundation (Indonesia) and regional representative of the Global Platform for the Right to the City



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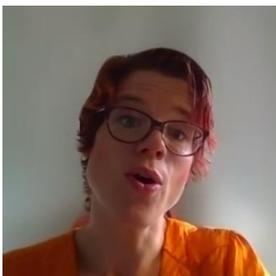


Addressing shared priorities and building a common agenda on human rights



Local authorities across the Asia Pacific region embrace human rights to foster inclusion and participation at the local level. According to the Mayor of Gwangju and UCLG-CSIPDHR co-president **Lee Yong-sup**, this trend can help advance human rights and democracy from the bottom-up to national and regional levels. Gwangju's human rights policy is a good example of this trend, built after more than a decade of human rights cooperation.

The update process of the **Global Charter-Agenda for Human Rights in the City** now provides a meeting point for Asia Pacific local authorities to advance



a common understanding on the role of human rights in building more inclusive cities. This process can have both local as well as global impacts, as argued by the Alderman of Utrecht and UCLG-CSIPDHR co-president **Linda Voortman**, who also sees this as an opportunity to revamp human rights cities cooperation. She welcomed this event as a good opportunity to bring specific regional perspectives on human rights cities cooperation to the global framework posed by Charter-Agenda and Pact for the Future initiatives.



Local governments can get inspired by the human rights-based approach to build a more sustainable future: Upholding the universal need to enjoy the right to a healthy environment, shifting from a vision of economic sufficiency to one of social equality, advancing an inclusive and ethical digitalization process...



The coordinator of the UCLG-CSIPDHR, **Amanda Fléty**, addressed the wider UCLG human rights roadmap to be carried out through three simultaneous courses of action, distributed along 2021 and 2022:



- ❖ An update process of UCLG Charter-Agenda for Human Rights in the City, to be held through regional meetings, direct consultations of local and regional governments via two questionnaires and free contributions forms;

- ❖ An advocacy process developed throughout the international campaign “10 > 100 > 1000 human rights cities and territories by 2030” to amplify the number of self-declared local and regional governments committed to translate and protect human rights values and principles in their territories (10 in 2021, 100 in 2022 and 1000 in 2030);
- ❖ An **e-learning process** to be developed through e-tools and a MOOC course on concrete policies, projects, programs led by local and regional governments to implement the human rights-based approach.

Ms. Flety stressed how important it was to provide visibility and support to local government commitments on human rights, while continuing to expand the movement of human rights cities by acknowledging its own internal diversity. She recalled this work is being conducted in the framework of a cooperation between UCLG and the UN-OHCHR towards a better international recognition on the role of local governments to protect and promote human rights (resolution A/HRC/RES/45/7 of the UN-Human Rights Council, October 2020).



Learning from local governments' political perspectives and practical experiences



Addressing inequalities, promoting a cleaner environment, fostering participation and greater tolerance at a social level ... These are key priorities for local governments in the region that UCLG ASPAC Secretary General **Bernadia Tjandradewi** believes can be addressed more effectively through human rights approaches. This specific narrative and policy vision can help transform crisis into opportunities. However, any human rights promotion agenda would do well in considering how local governments in the region enjoy different levels of development, capacities and resources.

The current crisis is widening the gap between generations and social classes, affecting particularly the most vulnerable according to Dobong-gu **Mayor**



Lee Dong-jin. The climate emergency and rise of pollution levels are big challenges ahead, already affecting the lives of millions of urban residents in the region. In order to address this scenario and protect residents suffering the most from the changing climate, local authorities such as Dobong-gu are pioneering local action plans to reduce emissions and enhance the existing relationship

between people and nature. Citizens involvement has been key for the success of this strategy in the case of Dobong-gu, particularly in terms of awareness raising and change of live habits. Accordingly, Dobong-gu is also advancing new participatory democracy approaches to local policy-making.



If climate action and participatory democracy are key files in many Asian local governments' agendas, historical memory and economic inclusion are two



other main concerns. Daejeon's Planning and Public Relations Manager **Bak Heonyong** noted how his city's work on human rights focused on recovering the city's memory from traumatic events and massive killings occurred during Korea's War and authoritarian regime. The city is pushing forward to talk and remember these events to reaffirm its present-day commitment to democracy and human rights values. Through its current human rights policy, Daejeon is protecting disadvantaged groups and those who have been most affected by the crisis through economic and psychological support.



Human rights can only come to fruition when people are fully engaged and participate in the policymaking process. When cities focus on advancing a culture of respect and promotion for human rights in the everyday lives of citizens



Mr. Bak Heonyong equally argued how the **forthcoming UCLG World Congress (Daejeon, October 2022)** will provide interested local authorities with an international platform to address these topics; particularly, focusing on how to reinforce cities' resilience based on human rights values and promote cooperation with other spheres of government and international actors.

Taking on human rights approaches to manage diversity is also a key development in the regional agenda. Semarang's Head of National Unity, Politics and Community Protection Agency **Joko Hartono** shared his local government's take on human rights policy, recognizing how Semarang is marked by social and religious diversity. The government has turned diversity from a "social burden into a social asset", promoting positive narratives and favoring conviviality among neighbors through constant participation, mutual trust and political education. Communities are now better recognized for their contribution to overall social development. Addressing communication barriers and including local associations and residents in the policy-making process is crucial to achieve more effective results. Mr. Hartono argued how human rights can't be achieved without democracy and constant participation.



Human rights also offer local governments with a transformative approach to social protection; something especially relevant when considering how the COVID-19 crisis affected the poorest and most excluded.



Baguio's budget officer **Leticia Clemente** addressed the case of women in informal economy or victims of violence, which benefited from enhanced communication channels and extraordinary resources put forward by her municipality. The human rights approach helped Baguio to restructure its action plan and budget, building the capacities of public workers and establishing sound monitoring tools.

Participants recognized how the Charter-Agenda process offers an opportunity for cities to identify shared priorities and establish a common framework to evaluate local government action on human rights. It can also help local governments interested in human rights action tap into related global policy discussions held at UCLG and UN levels. The process should recognize regional diversity (decentralization, thematic interests) and specific policy experiences in institutionalizing the rights-based approach. It should also reflect the narrative of inclusive recovery put forward by regional actors.



Cities for all: Advancing the right to the city through multi-stakeholder cooperation

The event's second roundtable was facilitated by **Windi Arini** from Raoul Wallenberg Institute's (RWI). The Institute has been an important partner for the regional human rights cities' agenda along with UCLG ASPAC¹. It is currently developing various knowledge sharing and capacity building initiatives. Speakers representing various human rights organizations at the local level took the floor in this second segment to share their points of view with the audience.



Katia Chirizzi, Deputy Regional Representative of the UN OHCHR Regional Office for South-East Asia, highlighted how the human rights-based approach was not only key to provide answers to ongoing humanitarian crises within the region, but also to humanizing urban territories in their everyday life. It does so because it gives voice to the most vulnerable in city-making and opens to public scrutiny crucial aspects of city life (e.g: urban planning, infrastructure, early warning systems, climate change and environmental degradation). Equality and non-discrimination principles enshrined in the SDGs and NUA frameworks should influence ongoing policy responses to the COVID-19 crisis as well as to interrelated phenomena (from forced displacement to gender-based violence).



« *Cities are not made of brick and mortar only. People are an integral part of cities. They make cities. This is why all residents must take part in city decision-making processes* »

Mugiyanto, Human Rights Advisor to the President of Indonesia Office, argued how local and regional leaders' commitment and innovation drive are two fundamental factors behind the advance of the human rights cities' movement in Indonesia, along with the active participation of civil society, local actors and national agencies. Indonesia's human rights cities movement has developed in parallel and actively contributed to the reform movement and democratic advance kicked off at a country level 20 years ago. In this context, cities and regencies did not only implement national programs, but put forward their own human rights policies. Policy sustainability remains a key challenge for the further consolidation of this agenda. Mugiyanto argued how



¹ Know more about this agenda here <https://uclg-cisd.org/en/news/human-rights-discussed-uclg-aspac-congress>

collective human rights city agendas at an Asia Pacific and global levels should focus on addressing emerging challenges (the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis, digitalization and climate change) while recognizing how countries might have different systems of governance and particular approaches. In order to foster coherence and reinforce the movement, articulation mechanisms such as the WHRCF Forum or the UCLG-CSIPDHR are more important than ever.

Pong Cruz, Senior Advisor of World Enabled in The Philippines, argued how Asian cities went through major shifts over the last years. Even though the



region is now home to more people with disabilities and elderly people than ever before (one third of the total population), cities are still designed mainly for young people. Facing COVID-19 recovery, many local leaders are promoting a review of urban systems with the universal design vision at the core of these efforts. This transformation should look at people first (how they are, what they need). It should focus on keeping privacy, on providing security and on distributing welfare. Information in cities should be simple to understand, so that anyone could navigate the city autonomously. Redesigning cities should also involve creating accessible physical spaces.

Ahmad Rifai, Executive Director of Kota Kita and regional representative of the Global Platform for the Right to the City, argued how the right to the city approach aims at democratizing cities and claiming everyone's civic role and right to contribute to city-making. Local human rights organizations such as



Kota Kita employ this approach to propose a restructuring of urban spaces where people live and influencing urban development in Indonesia and Asia at large. This transformation favors the creation of inclusive public spaces that people can employ and where people can meet. The right to the city should not only be read in its political dimension, as it also has a symbolic and a material

meaning. Participation is crucial to access rights. Mr. Rifai argued how, even though many Asian cities are fostering participation policies, the role of CSOs remains crucial to bridge the gaps between residents and local authorities, addressing structural barriers to participation and giving voice to the most excluded. As participatory practices can suffer from different forms of domination by urban elites, promoting the right to information is crucial.

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Be welcome to the participatory update process of the Global Charter-Agenda for Human Rights in the City!

Local governments and all actors involved or interested in the human rights cities' movement are invited to take part in this open platform aimed at **co-creating a renewed commitment by local governments on human rights at a global scale**. Follow the link below to access the **UCLG Meets** platform dedicated to this process, where all consultation materials and participation modalities will be uploaded in coming months. This process is set to culminate in the UCLG World Congress of Daejeon (South Korea) in 2022.



<https://www.uclgmeets.org/processes/Charter-Agenda-HR?locale=en>