

## UNITED CITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

### RABAT DECLARATION IV UCLG WORLD CONGRESS "Imagine Society, Build Democracy" Rabat 4 October 2013

**We, mayors and representatives of towns, cities, local and regional governments the world over, from small, medium-sized and large towns and cities, from metropolitan areas and regions, at the service of rural and urban communities, come together from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 4<sup>th</sup> October 2013 in Rabat, the Kingdom of Morocco, on the occasion of the 4<sup>th</sup> World Congress of United Cities and Local Governments:**

1. **Celebrating** the centennial of the creation of the *Union Internationale des Villes*, its contribution to local democracy and the strengthening of local authorities on the global scene, in particular through its decisive role along with the *United Towns Organisation* and *Metropolis* in the foundation of UCLG in 2004;
2. **Confirming** that the founding values of peace, dialogue, and understanding among peoples and cooperation between local authorities are as relevant today as ever;
3. **Acknowledging** that diversity in all its dimensions is an asset for society and a source of innovation;
4. **Concerned** by the crises, armed conflict and natural hazards affecting numerous regions throughout the world and by the pressures on the planet and population resulting from the effects of climate change, food insecurity, lack of housing, poverty, cultural oppression and social exclusion that compromises our ability to imagine the future and build democracy;
5. **Witnessing** the manner in which the global crisis continues to impact on our societies in an unequal manner and in which, although not at the origin of this crisis, local authorities in many regions, in particular in Europe, are directly facing the consequences of austerity that have a direct effect on the access of the poorest to basic services, employment and housing, leading them into a spiral of exclusion and poverty;
6. **Recognising** the need to unite efforts with all networks of local authorities and other partners, in particular with the United Nations and civil society organisations, to promote peace in the world and to define an international agenda that will help overcome the current situation in which half of humanity cannot benefit from the adequate living conditions;
7. **Considering** that Municipal International Cooperation and Decentralized Cooperation, partnership, twinning, international local government diplomacy, sister city links, and mutual assistance through capacity-building programmes and international municipal solidarity initiatives are a vital contribution to the construction of a peaceful and sustainable developed world;

8. **Affirming** the unquestionable political role of local authorities, as effective promoters of peace and dialogue among peoples and shared wellbeing,

***Call for a world at peace.***

9. **Assessing with satisfaction** that the democratic revolutions highlighted during the Declaration of the Jeju Congress in 2007 continue to extend in all regions of the world, mindful that the local sphere is where these democracies are built and reinforced, and aware that forms of citizen participation are multiplying and becoming more diverse, in particular in decision making;
10. **Conscious** that the world has witnessed major changes since the last Congress in Mexico City in 2010, these changes raise concerns in some regions of the world with the apparition of political, social, economic and humanitarian crises. They also bring hope and raise the awareness of the population about their rights to democracy and justice;
11. **Taking note** of the quest led by young people in all regions in pursuit of their rightful place in democratic societies;
12. **Convinced** that democracy is built at local level and that current centralised models must be transformed. The local level, as the level of government closest to the people, is that which can best renew the social contract between citizens and public authorities as they are best placed to identify and understand the needs of communities. States are far removed from the daily needs of citizens and increasingly constrained by the constantly changing and unstable global economic and financial environment;
13. **Encouraged** by the experience of the MDGs in which it was proven that important progress is made where local and regional authorities are involved in the implementation. It has been broadly demonstrated that results are not as satisfactory in cases where the principle of subsidiarity is not applied;
14. **Convinced**, as shown in the *Third Global Report on Decentralisation and Local Democracy*, GOLD III, that investing in basic services should be a priority as it reduces inequalities and contributes to development,

***Call for inclusive, participatory, cohesive, democratic and just societies.***

15. **Committed** to playing our role in overcoming the current crisis, to innovating and revitalising the economy and creating employment in order to meet the increasing demands of essential services for all;
16. **Recognising** this doubly historic moment for UCLG and its members, namely: the assessment of progress of the Millennium Development Goals, and the rapidly approaching Third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development "Habitat III" that will take place in 2016 marking a new phase in development and cooperation in which towns, cities and regions must play a decisive role;
17. **Highlighting** the commitments made during the previous World Congresses, through which towns, cities and regions have affirmed themselves as essential and instrumental actors in reaching the Millennium Development Goals, and welcoming

the increasing recognition of our World Organization before the United Nations, demonstrated by the participation of the President of UCLG in the High-Level Panel on Post 2015;

18. **Concerned** that despite substantial advances, certain Millennium Development Goals (MDG) will not be achieved, such as sanitation, and in certain regions, like Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, these goals are accumulating worrying delays as we see social and spatial inequalities deepen and become more urbanized around the world;
19. Certain that the participation of women in local decision making greatly strengthens the democratic bases of our societies and will be instrumental to reducing inequalities and achieving more just and sustainable societies. Women should be empowered and provided with the legal and financial knowledge and means to fully participate in society;
20. **Conscious** that over the next 20-30 years, demographic growth will largely take place in cities, where one-and-a-half-billion new citizens will need to be accommodated, particularly in low-income peripheries, and medium-sized cities which are on the front line of urbanization challenges,

***Call for a life of dignity for all.***

21. **Noting** the important progress made through the recognition of the role of local authorities in international policies such as the results of the Conference of the Parties in Cancun, the Rio +20 Declaration, the work on the High Level Panel for the Secretary General of United Nations, or the Communiqué of the European Commission on local authorities that requests, "the allocation of increased self-governance to local authorities in partner countries". Despite this undeniable progress, the reform of the international institutions, which should provide local and regional authorities the place that will allow them to contribute to the agenda, is not sufficiently advanced,

***Call for a true global partnership***

**Through this declaration, we, local and regional authorities, our associations and networks commit to:**

**I. Continue our mobilization by maintaining the values that unite us**

22. In the international context of crises and conflict and at a time of democratic development, we wish to place peace and development at the centre of our action, to thereby contribute to renewing democracy from the local level up and to engage directly with the youth to involve them in the development of their towns, cities and territories.

**II. Take determined steps toward the formulation of the Agenda of Towns, Cities and Regions of the XXI century**

23. In December 2012, during the VI Africities Summit, held in Dakar, and in the framework of the UCLG World Council, cities and regions recognized the need to create the Agenda of Towns, Cities and Regions of the XXI century in order to

reflect the shared values that unite UCLG members and partners in the lead up to Habitat III. They also recognized the need to develop the international strategy of local and regional authorities in the implementation of the Development Agenda and ensure the promotion of concrete local solutions that are adapted to the challenges of our era.

### **III. Become a recognized partner and of the United Nations System**

24. We request full participation of local governments in all significant processes of international decision making and call for a more inclusive and cohesive global governance structure that involves non-state actors in decision making;
25. We request that the international bodies consider local and regional authorities as a sphere of government and a full partner. We ask that the United Nations accord our Organization observer status within the General Assembly to increase our contribution to all policies of the United Nations system. We encourage ECOSOC to follow its inclusive reform process that allows Major Groups and sub-national governments to play a full role;
26. We suggest that the *Third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development "Habitat III"* in 2016 be an inclusive process engaging all stakeholders and building on the recommendation of the II World Assembly of Cities and Local Authorities;
27. We commit to actively contributing to the preparation of Habitat III by ensuring the consultation of constituencies led by local and regional authority organizations through the *Global Task Force of Local and Regional Authorities for Post 2015 and towards Habitat III*.

### **IV. Build one single Global Agenda for Sustainable Development Post-2015**

28. We call for one single Global Agenda for Sustainable Development Post 2015, bringing together the objectives of eliminating extreme poverty and contributing to prosperity and sustainable development;
29. We consider the reduction of inequalities, the improvement of cohesion and cooperation between territories, and the promotion of governance and local democracy are key elements of this agenda. The right to the city, inclusion, equality, access to essential services, decent work, adequate housing, culture, and a balanced environment are essential elements in the sustainable future for all;
30. The new agenda should furthermore include specific goals for Sustainable Urban Development. We assert that in order to increase the possibility of success, the Post 2015 Development Agenda should further advance in the "localisation" of its goals, targets and indicators, and provide the necessary means to ensure their implementation;
31. We, local and regional authorities the world over, undersign this declaration with renewed ambitions for the work that our movement must promote for the next 100 years and starting now in the streets of our villages, cities and towns.

**Rabat, 4 October 2013**