

## LOCAL DIPLOMACY READY FOR 2023

THE GLOBAL TASKFORCE ALIGN EFFORTS FOR A KEY YEAR  
IN THE MULTILATERAL SYSTEM



The third day of the UCLG retreat was fully dedicated to the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Government (GTF). Their members gathered together in an annual meeting to discuss the achievements of the past year and to define the messaging and the strategy for the coming year, including the participation of the GTF in major international events as well as other opportunities for the group to push for the seat of the local and regional governments at the table with decision-makers.

All speakers have highlighted the importance of this year since some global agendas, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, are approaching the middle point. The Mid-term reviews provide an important opportunity to look at the work done and identify the gaps where more efforts are needed. Besides, this year will see key events, including the 67th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (6-17 March 2023), UN Water Conference (23-24 March 2023), the UN-Habitat Assembly (5-9 June 2023), the High-level Political Forum 2023 (10-19 June 2023), SDG Summit 2023 (September 2023), COP28 (30 November -12 December 2023), the Global Refugee Forum (13-15 December 2023).

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The High-Level Political Forum in July will review progress of several SDGs, among them, the SDG11. During the SDG Summit in September, an special edition of the Annual Secretary-General Report on the SDG Implementation Progress and the Global Sustainable Development Report will be published.

The G7 and the G20 meetings will also be part of the local multilateralism efforts through the Urban7 and Urban 20 meetings in Japan and India, respectively.

The GTF participation to these specific events was reviewed during the Retreat with inputs from institutions and partners organizing them and supporting the active and meaningful participation of local and regional governments.

In 2023, the GTF will convene the World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments within the framework of the UN-Habitat Assembly in June and the SDGs Summit in September 2023. The sixth edition of the Local and Regional Governments Forum will also take place in the HLPF in July 2023.

The period 2023-2026 is a crucial one to influence the global agendas, specially "Our Common Agenda" and the Summit of the Future in 2024 with mechanisms such as the Secretary-General Advisory Group on Local and Regional Governments.

The mapping exercise for events for 2023 as well as the ideas, messages and priorities discussed by GTF participants in the meeting can be consulted here: <https://bit.ly/3ETfIOD>

## A UNITED VOICE TO INCREASE RECOGNITION

Representatives from all the members of the Global Taskforce and partners took the floor to stress the opportunities to advance on the local multilateralism ensuring a future for humanity from the local sphere, that guarantees public services and brings transformation from the communities.

Carolina Cosse, President of UCLG and Mayor of Montevideo, highlighted the need to take collective action without leaving anyone behind.

Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Executive Director of UN-Habitat, said that the pressure on cities is higher than ever in the crises people seek shelter in urban areas. She further noted that the challenges are known, but the goal is to find solutions that many can apply. UN-Habitat have provided a platform for mayors to speak, as their testimonies are powerful and show work on the ground.

Lucy Slack, Secretary-General of CLGF, highlighted the need for the local and regional governments to get into the room of national decision-makers since many are unaware of what the cities and regional authorities are doing.

Gino Van Begin, Secretary-General of ICLEI, stressed that while much progress was made in the past ten years and many global agendas were included in the frameworks of the local governments, there is still work to be done to become an active part of the decision-making. He further underlined that the strength and value of the GTF are in its members and each organization with a specific focus.

Natalia Uribe, Secretary-General of Regions4, emphasized the need to use the momentum of the historical United Nations Biodiversity Conference (COP15) in Montreal to elevate the topic of biodiversity to climate change.

The importance of the voices of the local authorities for the global agendas was highlighted by Carles Llorens Vila, Secretary-General of ORU Fogar. He further noted that at the same time a, anti-global agenda narratives, the narratives against SDGs are gaining space in mass media. This means there should be more media presence, and local and regional governments need to focus more on messaging and communication.

Casimir Legrand, Climate Politics, Intelligence and Diplomacy Manager, C40, shared the experience of C40 members making much progress in reducing emissions, which is sometimes even better than the national level. This year, the organization will promote renewable energy, addressing the injustice triggered by climate change, climate finance, and participation in the Urban 20 (U20).



# ENABLING THE POWER OF WE



The first two days of the UCLG Retreat were focused on “The Power of We” and the commitments around the Pact for the Future of Humanity. Four enablers for the Pact’s implementation were discussed: the commons, finance, trust, and governance architecture.

The concept of **commons** and the Care Revolution will shift what means to live together. It concentrates on questions such as: who provides local services or who are the care-givers? UCLG hopes that this kind of work will be maintained in public hands and proposed a shift of power, where the public can take up a more central position and diversity is celebrated. “However, there is also a boldness in recognising that we do not always know yet how to get there fully”, Emilia Saiz, UCLG Secretary-General, acknowledged. There must be priorities and transformative partnerships to facilitate implementation and turn the power of ME into the power of WE. Lorena Zarate, from the Global Platform for the Right to the City, emphasised that commons are at the core of life. Sustainability, human rights, democracy, air, water, land, forests, housing, education, safe public spaces, and others are key examples in this respect. While many cities have already advanced in the right direction by delegating the management of facilities of the commons to the public

and community sector, UCLG can foster and set in motion a larger transformation.

Often, trust-building work is directly related to **financing** the work of local governments. More funds also mean expanded capacities of local governance, enabling municipal officers to work on topics such as resilience, human rights, and culture. While the tools to finance a more commons-oriented approach exist, which would allow financing the commons, implementation is often lacking. We need to convene experiences, create gender-equal economies, and modernise where necessary. Carlos de Freitas, FMDV – Global Fund for Cities Development co-director, stressed the lack of institutional space to discuss local finance and economy.

Another challenge facing local governments is a lack of **trust**, often exacerbated by “the powers in the shadow”. Ranging from corruption to private companies who do not want to pay taxes, the question here is how to work together and how to support smaller cities and communities in particular in rising to the challenge of building trust. Part of that work happens at the UCLG Retreat, where speakers called for boldness. “Discuss the ideas we do not agree on”

was one of the recurring themes. “You cannot achieve the Pact by just talking to your friends” was another one. Katy Rubin, who works on homelessness in Greater Manchester, UK, practices a method called legislative theatre, where the community comes together around a local problem and shares stories. This turns into a play for a diverse target group, which leads to discussions and policy testing on stage. A shared understanding of the experience of living in the city for different people increases empathy, understanding, and trust.

The challenge for local governments to be listened to, especially during a humanitarian crisis, was much discussed. How can we make sure that local and regional governments can meet their functions and fulfil necessary services even in particularly challenging circumstances? Participants agreed that both local action and collective action, which is what UCLG focuses on as a network, are key. The Pact for the Future shows how it is possible to include everyone and pursue the future we deserve. While there will be some changes made to the Pact during the Retreat, it still serves as the uniting and guiding framework for UCLG.

In addition, local government practitioners need to focus on empathy and inclusion to turn suggestions and words into actions. Maria Fernanda Espinosa, former minister of Ecuador, raised the need for a shift in our value system. This will include closing the gap between government and power, fostering trust, and governing the commons. By avoiding governance in silos and forming Open Government Partnerships, it will be possible to implement the Pact based on a shared understanding the world as single ecosystem with shared power.

Participants agreed that the scope of UCLG’s work is well beyond the organisation. It means that we must **convene and catalyse**, causing other stakeholders to take action in order to achieve visions of the Pact, as William (Billy) Cobbett, former Director of the Cities Alliance put it. This means that UCLG must articulate very clearly what it stands for and put forward a positive vision of the Pact for the Future, which in turn will contribute to building trust and showcasing the Pact’s three pillars: People, Planet and Governance.



## THE QUIZ

Aromar Revi, the founding Director of the Indian Institute for Human Settlements (IHHS) and UCLG Ubuntu Advisor, participated in the UCLG Retreat in the afternoon session on Tuesday, 21 February. He proposed three key transformations for fulfilling the revolution of care: solidarity, compassion, and sharing embedded in the UCLG Pact for the Future. The transformation of the nature of power, the nature of resources and money, and the mobilization of citizens were his reflections on how to elevate the role and relevance of the local and regional governments at the global level.

Revi asked the audience to participate in a quiz to exemplify the importance of understanding the complexity of transforming a 20th-century financing and governing model into a 21st-century one. The questions he posed are given below. We challenge you to do the quiz (answers will be given in tomorrow’s *Municipal Times Journal*).

1. What is the size of the global economy (in USD)?
2. What is the yearly added value of the global economy (in percentage)?
3. How much of that yearly added value is produced by local governments?
4. Where does that added value go?

## “WE WANT TO SEE REACTIONS FROM THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE DEVELOPMENT FINANCING ORGANISATIONS TO BETTER MATCH THE NEEDS OF THE AFFECTED MUNICIPALITIES”

**CEMAL BAS** IS FROM GIRESUN CITY AND WORKS AS A LOCAL POLITICIAN IN ANKARA.

### How did your municipalities respond to the recent earthquake disaster?

As you know, on the 6th of February, we had a big earthquake in Türkiye. Since then, there have been more than 7,000 aftershocks. We lost approximately 40,000 citizens. We worked on two major lines, the Turkish Union of Municipalities, and the municipalities in the field. Since the first day, the Turkish government has a disaster fund in place. We tried to mobilise all municipalities to rescue victims. We called nearly 1,300 mayors of the Turkish Union of Municipalities, and they were already on their way to reach the earthquake area, while taking gadgets, cars, and trucks. Unfortunately, we had a coordination problem because we did not know who was going where, and it was unclear at the central level who was needed where.

Therefore, the Union of Turkish Municipalities created service groupings. For example, a city from the west of Türkiye was in charge of municipal services in the disaster region. The local municipalities tried their best, but they are also victims and some of the employees lost family members or they themselves did not survive this catastrophe. As a result, local municipalities had very limited opportunities to serve victims and operate at the same time.

Last week, I went to the affected area and I saw that the municipalities were very quick to act. You can clearly sense that the mayor of each region knows exactly what they are in charge of now. For example, in a few minutes, district mayors organised and distributed tasks. Someone said, “I will do the garbage for this area” and left the meeting, someone announced they would take care of the food, someone took care of the toilets, and everyone focused on what they do best. After ten minutes, the meeting was over and everybody executed their task, communicating what they needed.



I have seen an example from Kocaeli, a region bordering Istanbul, where they created shifts for employees from Kocaeli Metropolitan Municipality and its district municipalities to support the efforts. However, no one wanted to leave the area and thus Kocaeli created a support system on their own, hoping to be able to count on assistance to help people. It was ad hoc, but quick and responsive. While they were delivering services on the ground, the Turkish Union of Municipalities tried to keep communications running with the central government.

Sadly, the crisis not only affected this one region. One municipality that was not directly affected by the earthquake called me asking for food, meat, and bread. I told them I need to prioritise the affected regions first, but they told me everything from the earthquake region moved to their town as a safe zone, so they ran out of stock. Then I realised that the crisis expands to other cities too, not only in the affected region, but also in the places that people moved to. We had strong international support, from so many international organisations like UCLG and others, from all over the world. We see that many municipalities that border Türkiye directly sent health trucks, in terms of local diplomacy, this was very promising.

## How can local governance be preserved in humanitarian crises? What are your recommendations?

What I consider first is that we need to have a broader scope of support for mayors. In my mayor's resilience plan, if a disaster happens in my city, the neighbouring mayors will come and help me. In this crisis, everybody in the help plan was affected by the crisis. So there needs to be a wider plan, for regional crises as well, we need bigger plans and other partners.

We also need to take into account the victim psychology. For example, one mayor said to me, "Look, in our plan, we go down with the municipality truck if the crisis happens, we gather in one place, coordinate, and react. But what happened during this crisis, the earthquake, everybody in my city had to go from suburb X to suburb Y to check on family members. At five in the morning, we had so much traffic in the city, we could not move with our trucks, buses, or ambulances." We had not considered that. Victim psychology is important to take into account, how the public will react in a crisis, how to organise crowd victim crises.

## What can the Pact do in this kind of situation? What are your expectations?

The first expectation, the reason we are here with members from UCLG MEWA, because it also happened in Syria, which is also a UCLG member, is that we realised the importance of working with international organisations as project and municipal experts. We realised that there will be needs, one



year later, two years later, and changing needs. We will need to reboot local economies, plan cities in a more disaster-resilient way. This requires financing, developing funds, credits, etc. The main aim of the UCLG Retreat for us is to cover our need in the short-, mid-, and long-term, thinking ahead to the next five years. We are also trying to coordinate the missing supplies that would contribute to supporting the needs of the municipalities in the region. The Retreat is a great opportunity in this regard as it convenes everybody. We have many quick and responsive meetings with United Nations organisations, with partners and with counterparts and stakeholders.

## What are your expectations for the Retreat?

I want to develop strong proposals, talking with our partners. UCLG has always been a strong platform for the Turkish Union of Municipalities and for individual Turkish municipalities to talk with stakeholders. Our expectation from the Retreat is to develop proposals and concept notes for the region, to assist municipalities, and to bring recent developments at the global scale. We want to see reactions from the United Nations and the development financing organisations to better match the needs of the affected municipalities. We would like to bring that international knowledge in to the field. We keep having meeting after meeting and we will try to go back to the region with some solid proposals.



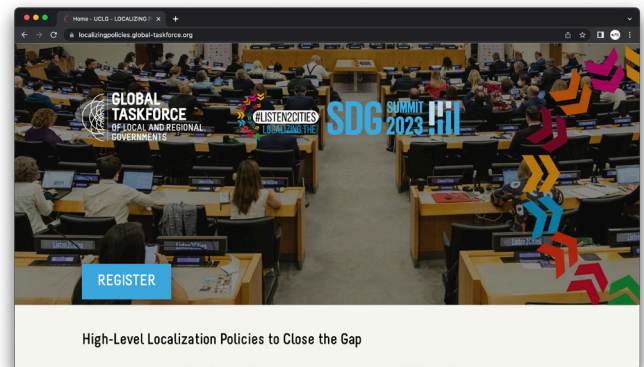
## A NEW PLATFORM SHOWCASING LOCALIZATION IMPACT AT THE SDG SUMMIT

UCLG launched the Platform on High-Impact for Localization Policies as a tool to collect localization initiatives and projects to be showcased at the United Nations SDG Summit in September 2023.

The platform will be a repository of high-impact policies that supports the localization of the 2030 Agenda and will serve as a blueprint to achieve the SDGs. The platform allows users to choose which SDG the entry is contributing to, but at the same, it is also linked to the commitments of UCLG's Pact for the Future. Users can choose if they are committing to the People, Planet or Government Pillar. In addition, the enablers of the Pact of the Future are also reflected; users can choose

one of the enablers – trust, commons, local finance, or governance architecture. UCLG calls on all the partners to support the initiative and register their initiatives to reach the SDG Summit with strong success stories and examples that showcase the perspective of the constituency.

[localizingpolicies.global-taskforce.org](http://localizingpolicies.global-taskforce.org)



## ACCESSIBILITY TOUR AT THE MONASTERY OF PEDRALBES

Access ramps, 3D tactile models, elevators for comfortable and fast accessibility or adapted guided tours are just some of the services offered by the Monastery of Pedralbes in Barcelona, in collaboration with the Municipal Institute for People with Disabilities (IMPD) and the Institute of Culture of Barcelona (ICUB).



This historic space of more than 700 years makes culture available to everyone, regardless of our needs, through raised orientation maps as well as brochures and models in Braille. It is a benchmark for communication and physical accessibility, among other things, due to the removal of architectural barriers and the design of its paths, which are wide enough to facilitate the mobility of people in wheelchairs. It also has a medieval orchard with traditional irrigation facilities and autochthonous species that are currently no longer planted. The orchard has been adapted for people with disabilities, becoming a natural, inclusive and accessible space. It has been reconstructed through archaeological studies and its products, fresh and organic, are brought to a soup kitchen.

The tour was part of the Retreat programme on Wednesday 22 February 2023, and was organized by UCLG and the Municipal Institute of Persons with Disabilities Barcelona to celebrate and promote the pillars of the Pact for the Future, particularly the recognition of the universal right to accessibility. The Monastery, with its actions, is a leading example of equally promoting targets 11.2 and 11.3 of the Agenda 2030, which Barcelona is doing at the city scale.

The Municipal Institute for People with Disabilities (IMPD) works together with the Barcelona City Council and other entities to extend the concepts of accessibility and inclusion. 64 routes are already adapted to persons with disabilities. The tours on these paths lead through the emblematic parks of the city of Barcelona, museums, beaches and children's play areas, bringing the right to the city to all people.

## 22@: THE INNOVATION DISTRICT OF BARCELONA

Most of the participants at the 2023 UCLG Retreat are residents of the Poblenou neighborhood this week. As was the case of the Palo Alto, other spaces in the area remind of the industrial past of the city.

In the year 2000, the Barcelona City Council decided to fully intervene in the almost 200 hectares of industrial land in Poblenou to preserve the productive nature of the area and transform it into an innovative district.

The aim was to favor knowledge activities; promote the installation of knowledge creation hubs such as universities and research centers; to follow a model of a compact and complex city, with a mix of uses that included housing, services for citizens and companies, green areas and facilities; implement an infrastructure plan with service networks, district heating, pneumatic waste collection and advanced mobility solutions; to preserve the architectural heritage of the industrial past of the district; and to create the conditions for the formation of an open innovation ecosystem.

The urban regeneration project was named 22@ district, connecting it to the identification for lots of industrial use, 22a, and adding the technological future of the area with the @.

Today, the district hosts more than 1.500 companies related to media, IT, energy, design and scientific research, sharing the space with an important number of citizens that were already living in the neighborhood or that moved to the new and modern area.



### TWITTER SAYS!

**#Accessibility, #Listen2Cities, #climatechange, #SDGSummit or #MunicipalTimes.** On Twitter, the third day of the UCLG Retreat features cities and local leaders.

Cities face many challenges, and the only way to address them is through strengthening multilateralism. This is how @MaimunahShariff expresses it: "only with strong cooperative, regional and local governance can we be more sustainable".

Yesterday there was talk of city diplomacy, migration, decentralized cooperation, democracy, climate change, citizen participation and achieving global agendas. Cities are the places where these actions are carried out. The people-centred approaches are already being applied here, and they are the ones promoting the #Agenda2030 and the #SDGs.

So, following the words of @berryonline, Mayor of Kitchener, we can say that "this is a unique moment, and we have to work as hard and collaboratively as we can to achieve the mandate of the SDGs."

Many things are said on Twitter, but under the #UCLGmeets hashtag, the words of @PefiKingi stand out, who, in a more poetic but not less powerful: quotes Epli Hau'fa to explain the philosophy with which we face these challenges:

"don't think about the smallness of our islands but about the greatness of our oceans".