

## CARE, TRUST, IMPACT

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS APPROVE TO ACTION THE UNFOLDING OF THE PACT FOR THE FUTURE



The municipal movement is gaining momentum as it enters a new cycle of opportunities, aiming to consolidate an official seat at the table as a significant global actor in redefining social, economic and governance systems. The SDG Summit in September 2023 will serve as the mid-term review of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and will mark the initial step for United Nations Member States to commence negotiations for the Summit of the Future in 2024. Additionally, the World Social Summit in 2025 will address key issues such as universal social protection, universal health coverage, housing, decent work, and education, while also forging a new social contract.

Led by UCLG, the world's largest association of local and regional governments, the municipal movement finds itself at a pivotal moment in terms of strengthening effective multilateralism. A concrete work plan has been developed to unfold the vision and mission approved in the Pact for

the Future of Humanity, which was adopted at UCLG's World Congress in October 2022 in Daejeon.

The Brussels Urban Summit has provided UCLG members with a fresh opportunity to gather just before the intense period between September 2023 and September 2025. The Executive Bureau has approved a working plan based on four strategic priorities: reclaiming the commons, redefining finance and the economy, regaining trust, and rebuilding governance architecture. To achieve these goals, two essential tools are being utilized: high-impact partnerships for transformation and future envisioning exercises.

At the heart of this strategy lies an impactful agenda that prioritizes people and fosters a caring system. Trust, equality, solidarity, feminism, and freedom are integral elements of "Our Common Agenda," driving the municipal movement towards a future moved by positive change.

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## “CLAIMING THE COMMONS AND REDEFINING FINANCE AND THE ECONOMY”

BY **CLAUDIA LÓPEZ**, MAYOR OF BOGOTÁ

The advance of environmental degradation, coupled with the global trends that oppress, segregate and harm our communities, puts us in front of the fundamental reflection that permeates the Pact for the Future: it is no longer just about expanding the public sector, but about restructuring it. Restructuring the public suggests placing the common goods, especially those essential for life, at the centre. Recognition by all that the commons that unite all people is the backbone of our societies, the opposite of appropriation, and what does not belong to a single person.

Putting the common goods at the center implies the need to rethink growth, development and progress from the points of view of redistribution, decentralization, the recovery of common essentials and the redefinition of care. There is a necessity to review and repair imbalanced power relations and empower communities, as well as adopt an appropriate financing and investment architecture, which can enable communities to access the resources and investments necessary to build their capacity to manage and protect common assets in a sustainable way.

To move towards a society that cares for us, we must change the way we see ourselves, and how we relate to each other and the planet. We need to understand our economic relationship not just in terms of GDP, but also by finding ways to connect sustainability, the finite nature of planetary resources, and the way to meet people's needs.

The governance of the commons must be fundamentally different from how we govern ourselves today. We must co-create policies that protect and care for all populations. We need to understand how to provide social protection for all populations, including those who provide care, who are often women living and working informally. The common agenda, the protection of common goods, involves incorporating a feminist perspective into the way of governing them

and governing ourselves. Where we find a place for care and for protecting our caregivers in our future decision-making processes will determine how we thrive as a global community.

This new way of governing ourselves involves being inclusive in decision-making, at all levels. We must include people, and local communities in the conversation about the dimensions of everyday life. This means co-creating and co-governing health, water, housing, care and social protection, together with the people whom these affect directly. We talk about attending to the specific needs and having the knowledge of the elderly, the young, and the indigenous populations. This implies rejecting the idea that certain elements, such as water, land, etc., are resources that can be used to obtain income and, therefore, exploited. It is a bold step that must be taken in relation to common goods.

Local governments cannot defend the commons on their own, and this is a reality we recognize. We need, more than ever, alliances between all spheres of government and with all actors to transform the decision-making process in a way that includes all people.

It is key to transform the current governance architecture into one that defends the commons, both in its local and global dimensions. We need to link different spheres of government and civil society to create alliances and ensure participation. We must recognize the co-responsibility between the public and private sectors to ensure equal participation in this process, paying special attention to bridging the gender, race, class, ability and age gaps that cross the current power dynamics. Only in this way can we create a fairer, more egalitarian world, where people are at its center and not profit.

## THE UCLG EXECUTIVE BUREAU ADOPTS ITS NEXT STEPS

The last afternoon of the Brussels Urban Summit was fully dedicated to the fruitful work of the United Cities and Local Government (UCLG) Executive Bureau meeting. Dozens of UCLG members gathered in Brussels to discuss and adopt key documents that would determine the work of the organization in the next months.

Carolina Cosse, mayor of Montevideo and President of UCLG, said in her opening remarks that UCLG's mandate is clear: now that the Pact for the Future is integrated into the work plan and now it is essential to deploy all three axes and transform commitments into realities.

The special guest of the meeting, Marlene Holzner, head of the Unit for International Partnerships, European Commission, highlighted the special relationship between UCLG and the European Commission (EC), which will be celebrating 10 years of partnership next year. She highlighted the commitment of the EC to this partnership and stressed that "the EC is completely behind the Pact for the Future of Humanity."

Thembisile Nkadimeng, minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs of South Africa, committed to continuing the training for female mayors in Africa and supporting them to make sure they are not just mayors but can also "potentially become presidents in future".

The Executive Bureau had the opportunity to listen to and adopt the reports of the Committee on Statutory Affairs as well as the report of the Financial Management Committee.

With the adoption of the Pact for the Future of Humanity, there was a shift in the work areas, and subsequently, the names of the UCLG Policy Councils had to be changed to reflect the new priorities and pillars of the Pact. At the Executive Bureau meeting, the new names for the Policy Councils were adopted as follows:

1. Right to the City and Inclusive Territories would become **Right to the City: Reclaiming the Commons.**
2. Opportunities for All, Culture and City Diplomacy: Keys to Sustainable Development and Peace would become **Opportunities for All: Redefining Finance and Economies for Equality.**
3. Territorial Multilevel Governance and Sustainable Financing would become **Multilevel Governance: Regaining Trust.**

4. Safer, Resilient and Sustainable Cities, Capable of Facing Crisis would become **Resilient and Regenerative Territories: Renaturing.**

5. Implementation of the New Urban Agenda would become **Local Multilateralism and City Diplomacy: Linking the Local to the Global.**

During the meeting, the key topics and priorities were listed, among them are migration and the implementation of the Lampedusa charter, human and digital rights, universal health coverage, feminist municipal movement with care at the centre of activities and culture as the motor of the movement, water, proximities, ensuring food systems, Voluntary National Reviews and Voluntary Local Reviews, and participatory democracy.

The session highlighted that the Pact for the Future is not only a revolution of what the network is bringing but also a revolution for the kind of policies members need to work on with each other.

The Executive Bureau meeting also featured the intervention made by partners, including the United Nations Population Fund, UN-Habitat and the Coalition for the UN WE NEED, UN OHCHR, and Cities Alliance. The Media for Cities debate with prominent journalists also took place as part of the high-impact partnership segment of the meeting.

Anne Hidalgo, mayor of Paris, who is also an ambassador of climate questions, raised the increasing frequency of catastrophes. She also spotlighted the issue of land and stressed that "our cities are too artificial" and that "we see the negative impact of this when there is a lot of rain". Finally, another key concern raised by Hidalgo was the lack of access to funding for local authorities.

Finally, the Executive Bureau meeting has identified continued partnerships with international bodies as key to the development, which will, in turn, become a push for people, local democracy and human rights agenda. As the final message and food for thought, Emilia Saiz, Secretary General of UCLG, has stressed: "We need to acknowledge local and regional governments as the government sphere defending and advancing democracy."

## MEDIA forCITIES BRUSSELS

A debate among journalists, communicators and local governments' representatives, which was part of the Media for Cities campaign, took place in Brussels within the framework of the UCLG Executive Bureau and the Brussels Urban Summit.

Media, responsible for reporting on urban issues, is entangled with informing the public about sustainable development and explaining concepts such as the commons or local finance. By nature, media concerned with urban issues must use a wide lens, covering societal, social and political issues from the global to the local scale. Yet media, particularly journalism itself, is embattled, both by polarizing forces and lack of trust, as well as existential threats to journalists and journalism, both in terms of bodily harm but also sustained professional existence.

**"We, as journalists and communicators, try to achieve an informed society. Because that is what we need to generate consensus and popular awareness, and thus citizens participate in democratic processes."**

@jessicabridger

**"People want to understand the issues that are relevant to them. When I tell the story I want to make people understand what is driving change in their lives and what are the issues that are changing our societies. People need insight rather than negativity".**

@tracymetznc, director of @JohnAdamsNL



**"Editors are very reluctant to cover stories about well-functioning societies, but citizens want to know when something works, for this they are very interested in what their mayors are doing."**

**"It is necessary to communicate from a more human level, not only for greater understanding but also to preserve trust in the #media."**

@aitorehm, @politico

**"Right now, many cities are information deserts or news monopolies. Only in the largest markets are the truly future-proof business models for local journalism. And that is bad for public trust and democracy."**

**"Action gains trust. If you do something right, instantly you gain trust. Be transparent, own your mistakes".**

@tim\_weber @EdelmanUK

The *Media for Cities* campaign aims to bring urban journalism and city-related topics to newsrooms globally by advocating within the media sector for research and elaboration of the most Influential urban policies and strategies. It also seeks to promote and strengthen media presence in dialogues on sustainable urban development. In these ways, *Media for Cities* seeks to both inform and strengthen sustainable urban development strategies, moving the topic into the spotlight in networking meetings and public debates with influential media representatives, international organizations, and local authorities. The campaign will also develop partnership agreements with media worldwide to increase the coverage of sustainable urban development issues.

## THE SUMMIT CONCLUDES BY PRAISING UNITY AND COLLABORATION IN URBAN SOLUTIONS



Representatives of cities and local governments shared a space for reflection during the final day of the Brussels Urban Summit on 15 June, to summarize the discussions held over these three days.

Greg Clark, urban planner and the moderator of the daily plenary sessions, posed the initial concluding question: what urban initiatives have been identified to address the challenges we are facing, which have been central to the week's dialogue? The primary realization when cities convene, as highlighted by Carolina Cosse, Mayor of Montevideo and President of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), is that, to a greater or lesser extent, we all encounter the same problems. We share a common challenge that compels local governments to devise day-to-day strategies and resolve daily issues. "Each city has its own unique challenges, but there are points of convergence. Cities are the defenders of democracy, and we all play a crucial role in them."

Dagur B. Eggerstsson, the Mayor of Reykjavik, argued that this gathering of interdisciplinary actors had fostered a new level of energy. "As a collective of mayors, we aspire to champion freedom," working on similar solutions and sharing knowledge and best practices. Eggerstsson also emphasized housing as one of the most critical issues of our time, contingent on effective management that ensures both accessibility and quality to provide favorable living conditions.

Acknowledging that this Brussels Summit is the first of its kind, Pascal Smet, Secretary of State for Urbanism and European and International Relations in Brussels, highlighted the unprecedented interconnection established among participants: "This historic summit has brought together, for the first time, the world's largest networks of cities,

facilitating unique connections and crossroads between cities globally." The main challenges, such as migration, social and economic inequalities, lack of opportunities, and climate change, are commonly shared. "It is crucial to unite around these issues, exchanging perspectives, and collaborating with countries currently undergoing expansion or urbanization, as is the case in Africa."

While much work lies ahead, Greg Clark concluded the Brussels Urban Summit with a final question on what to expect and prioritise in the upcoming year. Burkhard Jung, the mayor of Leipzig and newly elected president of Eurocities, advocated partnerships, prioritizing the defense and promotion of European values, particularly democracy, in confronting both short- and long-term challenges and implementing measures that ensure good governance. "Cooperation is indispensable in finding urban solutions. Empowered cities can tackle today's challenges, and policy-making at the European Union level cannot be effective without the active participation of cities".

Carolina Cosse stressed the financial challenge faced by most cities in making long-term investments within the current financial system. Eggerstsson also addressed financing, focusing on economic collaboration at various levels of government and the involvement of the public-private sector. Furthermore, good urbanization can create wealth and opportunities.

In conclusion, it is important to maintain the interconnection forged through the Brussels Urban Summit to address the myriad issues deliberated during these three days of intense debate. Above all, collaboration between organizations and stakeholders is crucial. To impact change, cooperation is paramount. Let us harness our collective power and recognize the potential we possess when we work together.

## THE PERPETUATION OF INEQUALITIES, A GLOBAL FAILURE

Tackling the roots of inequalities and their relationship with the economic system, governance models, territorial and urban development, as well as restructuring global financial systems to respond to the needs of local communities, were at the centre of the 'Addressing inequalities and informalities: rethinking financing and the role of local and regional governments' session, co-organized by United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and Cities Alliance in the afternoon of 14 June 2023.

Since the adoption of the SDGs, progress in their implementation has fallen short. The world faces a polycrisis context that impedes the advancement of global agendas at the expected and urgent pace. Access to finance and the international finance architecture remain inadequate, hindering collective efforts from local and regional governments.

To truly make a difference, addressing inequalities and informalities, ensuring a just transition to the climate crisis, and reevaluating the financial structure are priorities. Leaving no one behind and no place behind is not only a vision for 2030 but also current day-to-day strive. The establishment of clear connections between the global commons, global public goods, and the needs of people and local communities within the global financial systems are a starting point for the urgent transformation required.

Local and regional governments can contribute to advancing mechanisms and legislative changes towards a system that promotes local and territorial equality. A feminist and care-based approach to economic local budgets or the compensation of unfunded mandates of local governments should be properly addressed in the redefinition of the financial structure. Shifts are needed to transform economic models and achieve a more inclusive financial ecosystem to channel funding for services and solutions at the local level.

Adopting a caring approach for investment screening, grounding financial decisions on people's needs, prioritizing sustainability and the protection of commons, increasing public engagement mechanisms, strengthening the capacity of local and regional institutions, and managing finance and the economy based on human development and well-being were some of the proposals put forward by the panelists.

As **Greg Munro**, Director of Cities Alliance, said, "To respond to inequality at a local level, we need one integrated approach with the citizen as the beneficiary. We can't afford to have separate sectoral responses." **Emilia Saiz**, Secretary General of UCLG, also reinforced that message at the closing of the session: "The current system accepts inequalities. To address this, justice and trust must be guaranteed for all. Local and regional governments are working on the frontlines to ensure communities access local public services. Only in this way can we ensure that inequalities are addressed."



**Jean Pierre Elong Mbassi**

*Secretary-General of UCLG Africa*

You cannot combat, or fight inequalities with you being acquainted with inequalities because all that you will be adding is more inequality as the system is being under inequalities. So, you need to turn your lens differently, looking at equality from a perspective. Equality means two things: the dignity of every human being and the avoidance of any discrimination.



**Bernadia Irawati Tjandradewi**

*Secretary-General of UCLG ASPAC*

For the Asia-Pacific, it is very important to reduce inequalities, we need a very good enabling environment for cities and local governments. This includes financial options, legislation, decentralization, and of course, capacity-building development for local governments. Another thing we should stress is the speed of preservation and protecting nature as well as the speed of sustainable development should be faster than the speed of destroying everything. We need more actions, and we need to have more campaigns on inequalities. There are already solutions everywhere in the world, including in the Asia-Pacific, but how these sporadic solutions can be upscaled to the international level for a greater impact and better results?



**Neila Akrimi-Kemperman**

*Head of Strategies and Networks at VNG<sup>1</sup>*

*International Founder and CEO of VNG*

*International Center of Innovative Local*

*Governance Chair UCLG-CIB*

Inequality exists everywhere and is pressuring with challenges that the world is witnessing now: the crises all over the world, be it after the COVID-19 pandemic, economic, social, or climate, are making us as people very vulnerable. Inequalities are getting wider, deeper, and more present. The urban solutions to those crises are inspiring, but there is an urgent need to rethink financing, narratives, collaborations, and partnerships. We cannot continue doing things the same way. The collective effort should be transformed into collective responsibility."

<sup>1</sup> VNG International is the Agency of International Cooperation of the Association of Netherlands municipalities

## CITIES TAKE BOLD ACTION AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE

Cities provide us with opportunities to improve access to resources and services, as well as options in socio-economic, cultural, and environmental fields. However, the urgent need to address climate breakdown and water scarcity has brought the issue of climate change to the forefront of discussions during the final day of the Brussels Urban Summit. Mayors from prominent cities such as Athens, Ghent, Montevideo, Paris, and Stockholm gathered to share measures and radical solutions they are implementing to combat climate change in their respective urban areas.

Leo Van Broeck, president of the Climate Expert Committee of the Brussels Region, emphasized that good urbanization is the most crucial step cities can take. Contrary to common misconceptions, cities provide safety and resilience. During the COVID-19 pandemic, rural areas experienced up to 90% higher incidence rates compared to cities. Recognizing this, cities are stepping up to lead the charge against climate change.

Anne Hidalgo, mayor of Paris shared how the city is leveraging the upcoming Olympic Games as a catalyst for transforming the urban landscape. Paris has presented its candidacy with a clear goal of utilizing the games as a tool for social transformation. Priorities include revitalizing the Seine River and improving the impoverished northern district of Saint-Denis. Paris has even granted the Seine River a legal status to protect it from future harm and ensure quick recovery from potential contamination.

Karin Wanngård, mayor of Stockholm, presented steps taken by Stockholm to combat climate change. The city has been integrating climate change solutions into the fabric of the city. Efforts to eliminate fossil fuels and transition to electric transportation are well underway. Furthermore, the city is implementing carbon capture and storage techniques to offset its emissions and achieve carbon neutrality by 2030.



Coming from Athens, Mayor Kostas Bakoyannis spoke passionately about the city's ongoing efforts to reduce car dependency and create more liveable spaces. Athens is dedicated to expanding green areas, ensuring sufficient water supply, and monitoring the impact of climate change through the appointment of a Chief Heat Officer.

The Summit's second panel featured best practices of radical solutions to address the impact of climate change. Mayor Carolina Cosse of Montevideo highlighted the city's initiatives to clean and reclaim river borders, creating more public space for its residents. Similarly, Mayor Mathias De Clercq of Ghent emphasized the importance of recycling, presenting an innovative brick made from 63% recycled municipal waste aggregates—a shining example of the circular economy in action.

By taking decisive action and implementing transformative measures, cities are leading the charge in combating climate change.

## CLOSING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE



Digitization has become an integral part of our daily lives. The Living-in.EU Mayors Digital Assembly dedicated its discussion within the framework of the Brussels Urban Summit to exploring how local and regional governments are leveraging digital tools and what specific work has been done by municipalities to make the digital transformation more inclusive.

The session was inaugurated by Renate Nikolay, Deputy Director-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology, who emphasized the crucial role of local and regional governments as leaders in the digitization process. Nikolay stressed that “involving cities and regions is indispensable if we want to move to the fully digital world.”

Seppo Määttä, mayor of Oulu, echoed Nikolay’s call for collaboration, emphasizing the need for greater engagement among all levels of governance and the public to guide the communities through the digital transformation process. The city of Oulu can serve as the best practice of successful collaboration on digital technology, as “every day, three billion people use the technology that is developed in Oulu.” Such achievements were made possible through the establishment of co-creation spaces.

Another good practice was presented by Matteo Lepore, mayor of Bologna. The city is creating its digital twin in collaboration with the city of Barcelona and other partners. This collaborative approach allows local governments to avoid duplicating efforts and instead scale up solutions collectively.

*But how does digital transformation translate into policies and citizen participation?*

Lepore highlighted that new technology and data in informing policies and helping citizens better understand the future of their cities. Elaborating on this idea, Felix Sproll, city councillor of Munich, argued that coupling the concept of a twin city with 3D modelling enables enhanced citizen

engagement through immersive virtual reality technology. Local administrations can also test various policy scenarios using data that feeds into these models.

Tiit Terik, deputy mayor of Tallinn, underscored the need for increased digitization to streamline the work of local administrators. He said that with the introduction of e-signatures and digitization of services, Tallinn “saves a pile of paper as high as Eiffel Tower weekly.”

*While digitization brings numerous benefits, it also poses challenges, such as the digital divide. How can inclusivity be ensured so that no one is left behind?*

Municipalities employ various approaches to address this common issue. Delphine Jamet, deputy mayor of Bordeaux Metropole, advocates for a holistic approach to bridging the digital divide. She believes that all digital services should be useful, user-friendly, and actively utilized. Similarly, Constance Nebbula, vice-president of the Pays de la Loire regional council and Angers Loire Metropole, also echoed the need to include individuals who are not yet digitally mature. Angers Loire ensures that all services are available online while still accommodating citizens who prefer traditional human interactions.

Another pressing challenge in the tech industry is gender imbalance. Lluïsa Moret Sabidó, mayor of Sant Boi de Llobregat, emphasized the necessity for platforms and knowledge centres to “adapt and adopt gender perspective”. Inclusion of women in the digital space will support “gender parity, which is key in the decision-making bodies or the people who are not digital natives.”

Markku Markkula, President of the Helsinki Region, and member of the European Committee of the Regions unveiled LORDIMAS – a free tool designed for local and regional governments. Officially to be launched on 2 October 2023, LORDIMAS provides tailored policy recommendations based on real-time results and grants access to best practices from participating municipalities.

## TURKISH MAYORS SHARE INSIGHTS ON POST-EARTHQUAKE LEADERSHIP

In the last day of the Brussels Urban Summit, an enlightening conversation took place, featuring Turkish mayors who shared their experiences in leading their cities in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake last month of February. The dialogue revolved around ideas and strategies for effective response and recovery in the wake of natural disasters.

Considered one of the most severe natural disasters in over a century, the earthquake resulted in a tragic loss of over 4,000 lives and left nearly 16,000 people injured. The catastrophe created an urgent need for basic necessities such as shelter, food, clean water, and sanitation, affecting millions of individuals.

The conversation was introduced by Yücel Yılmaz, mayor of Balıkesir, President of the Union of Municipalities of Türkiye and Ambassador of the Pact for the Future of Humanity. Yılmaz expressed gratitude to the international community and the international association of mayors, including UCLG MEWA, Metropolis, and Eurocities, for their incredible support and significant mobilization of resources.

Tunç Soyer, mayor of İzmir, the city most profoundly impacted by the earthquake, emphasized the importance of training and preparedness to effectively handle such crises. Continuous training is crucial to develop the capacity to respond promptly and efficiently. Drawing lessons from past experiences is paramount in ensuring readiness for future disasters.

Uğur İbrahim Altay, mayor of Konya, highlighted that their primary focus after the earthquake was to ensure the provision of clean drinking water, considering the destruction of vital infrastructure. Cansel Tuncer, Secretary General of Antalya Metropolitan Municipality, emphasized the urgent need to provide shelter for thousands of displaced individuals due to the destruction of approximately 300,000 buildings.

The deputy mayor of Kilis, Mustafa Tohumcu, explained that although the city did not suffer significant damage from the earthquake, it experienced a surge in the population of 40% due to migration, placing immense pressure on urban services.

Seyma Döğücü, mayor of Sancaktepe, underscored the importance of solidarity and collaborative efforts when responding to such disasters, emphasizing the strength derived from working together.

The insightful conversation among the Turkish mayors shed light on effective post-earthquake leadership strategies. The shared experiences and lessons learned will undoubtedly contribute to enhancing disaster response and recovery efforts in the future, ensuring better preparation and support for affected communities worldwide.



## IN BRUSSELS ▶▶▶

### THE EUROPEAN QUARTER

#### FROM A BUBBLE TOWARDS A VIBRANT, MIXED-USE NEIGHBOURHOOD

The political heart of Brussels, the European Quarter, houses impressive buildings such as the European Commission, the European Parliament, and the House of European History. But in terms of liveability and sustainability, there is room for improvement. Currently, the large Rue de la Loi slices through the quarter, hindering its walkability and prioritising motorised traffic.

In May 2022, *perspective.brussels*, a regional agency, set about changing this through a series of participatory workshops. Together with locals and employees of the European Union, the organisation looked into ways of transforming the European Quarter into a more sustainable neighbourhood. A key component of this goal will be housing: Currently, only 3% of the European Quarter's area is dedicated to housing. Considering the shift towards remote work and the many offices that have been empty since the pandemic, *perspective.brussels* thinks that the percentage of housing could be increased to up to 50%, including local amenities.

Already, local streets in the European Quarter are being turned into more vibrant places for residents and workers. Parklets, pocket parks, benches, and pedestrianised side streets make the area around the European Commission much more attractive. At the same time, a reduction in densification and street space dedicated to cars will create urban blocks that are climate resilient, for example, by providing cooler spaces and sponge city elements which, in the case of heavy rains, can absorb rainwater quickly and efficiently.

Another goal of *perspective.brussels* is to radically reduce the carbon footprint of the building stock by stimulating renovation and transformation in the European Quarter. So far, the focus has been more on demolition and reconstruction. However, in the spirit of the circular economy, the organisation proposes to reuse the existing buildings and turn them into housing and local amenities, thereby avoiding further CO2 emissions.



One more challenge is the isolation of the European Quarter, which is due to the nature of diplomacy work, but also to large streets such as Schumann Boulevard. Strengthening connection with neighbouring areas through an East-West green corridor, more liveable and inviting streets, attractive amenities, and natural landscape features could be the way to go.

The Brussels Regional Government supports these plans. Together with the organisation, it published a "Shared Vision" with nine principles, aiming to transform the EU Quarter into a vibrant and mixed neighbourhood in the next 10 to 20 years. More housing, more facilities, and greener public spaces will shape the area and avoid the "bubble effect" that has characterised the European Quarter since the first pre-EU institutions moved there in 1958 onwards. The homogenous neighbourhood will undergo urban upgrading with a similar density, lower building heights and more courtyards. Ground floors will be activated to create an interaction with public space. A diverse housing supply, office buildings with commercial and service functions on the ground floors, the temporary use of vacant buildings, reduced traffic, and greener streets are all parts of the plan.

It now remains to be seen whether the European Quarter can really turn into an accessible, attractive, and liveable neighbourhood that adapts to a post-COVID reality. The first steps, including pocket parks and investments in walkability, are already visible and promise change.

## BEHIND CLOSED DOORS



**Brussels Blueprint for Affordable Cities and Housing for All** was endorsed at the sixth meeting of the OECD Champion Mayors for Inclusive Growth. The document outlines a commitment to “alleviate short-term pressures on the cost of living and scale up long-term change in housing.”

The Blueprint states that housing costs have become increasingly unaffordable over the last two decades, especially for low-income households. Mayors have committed to developing targeted solutions to provide access to affordable and quality housing to vulnerable populations. Mayors announced that they will continue working on improving the quality of

housing and housing policies across different levels of government.

The OECD launched the Champion Mayors for Inclusive Growth Initiative in March 2016 as a response to the growing inequality. The Champion Mayors are leaders committed to tackling inequalities and promoting more inclusive economic growth in cities. This initiative supports governments by analyzing rising inequalities, monitoring material living standards and broader well-being, and designing policy packages that promote equity and growth. Throughout the years the initiative has brought together one hundred mayors.

## #BUS2023 PLENARIES SURVEYS

*During the plenary session on 15 June 2023, participants at the Brussels Urban Summit were asked two questions. Here are the results:*

### **What does “city climate leadership” mean to you?**

Responsibility, action, commitment, innovation, political will or take sustainable actions were the concepts mentioned most.

### **Which (radical) action would have the highest impact in your city?**

Participants mentioned several ideas:  
Energy efficiency for all buildings in 5 years.  
Campaign to reduce consumption in general.  
Radically reduce car use in the city.  
Prioritise public transport.  
Positive land use (restore and rewild more nature than what is used for building).  
Better use and storage of water.  
Prioritize public space.  
Feminist approach.

## WHAT'S NEXT?

### **MEDCOP Conference, Tangier, 22–23 June 2023.**

The Regional Council of Tangier Tetouan Al Hoceima, in collaboration with the Mediterranean Climate House Foundation (MCHF), is organising the third edition of the MEDCOP Conference. It aims to structure a cooperation framework in the Mediterranean region and accelerate the implementation of the Paris Agreement.

<https://www.medcop.ma/>

### **World Forum of Cities and Territories of Peace, Bogotá, 27–28 June 2023.**

The Forum, hosted by the city of Bogotá with UCLG acting as its permanent secretariat, will be the fourth edition in which the women's role in peace-making will have a special focus.

<https://www.ciudadesdepaz.com/en/inicio-english/>

### **Urban 20 Summit, Ahmedabad, 7–8 July 2023.**

The 2023 cycle of the U20 is chaired by the city of Ahmedabad. Six priority areas have been identified: encouraging environmentally responsible behaviours, ensuring water security, accelerating climate finance, championing local identity, reinventing frameworks for urban governance, and planning and catalysing digital urban futures. <https://www.urban20.org/u20summit/2023-ahmedabad/>

### **Local and Regional Governments' Forum and Local and Regional Governments' Days in the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), New York, 12–13 July 2023.**

The Local and Regional Governments' Forum, convened by the Global Task Force, aims to bring the perspective of LRGs to the HLPF and the SDGs in review. This year the HLPF will review the implementation of SDG11.

## TWITTER SAYS!

### **#BUS2023 #CitiesforPeople #OurCitiesOurFuture #UCLGMeets**

After four days of buzzing activity, #BUS2023 has come to an end. Twitter has been flooded with posts of various kinds, ranging from suggested #urbanwalks through the neighbourhoods of Brussels to the valuable insights shared by attending members and organizations at this Urban Summit in the Belgian capital.

The event featured award ceremonies, workshops, and debates, covering a diverse range of formats and topics that engaged the 600 cities represented at the congress. Discussions on climate change, digitalization, migration, housing accessibility, urban journalism, and human rights, among others, took place. However, the word "together" has perhaps been the most frequently mentioned, as the wave towards #sustainability and #equality unites us all, despite our different origins.

Notable conclusions from the Executive Bureau of @uclg\_org have been widely shared on Twitter. The bureau emphasized the importance of the #PactfortheFuture, which harks back to its inception in Daejeon. Though several months have passed since its approval, UCLG "remains committed to working for a renewed future, a future that builds bridges between communities and people, harmonizes our relationship with the world, and rebuilds trust with governments".

The Brussels Urban Summit has concluded, and we have already made our mark on this experience through online networks, whether as a space for reflection or a digital diary to capture memories. To quote some of the participants:

"The best way to conclude #BUS\_2023 is with a Field Trip, exploring how cultural players and the creative sector in #Ghent tackle urban challenges such as #migration, #diversity, and #sustainability during a musical boat trip." / @LuisaFerPinto