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LOCAL MULTILATERALISM TAKES THE STAGE



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The Eighth Session of the World Summit of Local and Regional Leaders and UCLG World Congress officially opens today with one eye on the mandate that is ending and another one on the political cycle that begins in Tangier. Before the Official Opening Ceremony brings the Congress into public view this evening, UCLG's governing bodies will meet in the Hybrid Tent for a day of institutional transition.

The Executive Bureau will open the statutory programme in the morning. Its agenda includes institutional affairs, policy highlights and strategic priorities, but one item will carry particular political weight: the dialogue on local public service provision and the launch of the Global Framework Agreement between UCLG and Public Services International.

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That discussion goes to the heart of the Congress theme. A new generation of universal local public services cannot be built only through declarations. It depends on funding, public workers, social dialogue and the capacity of local institutions to respond to daily needs.

The General Assembly will take over in the afternoon. Its first task will be to review the Presidency Report for 2022–2026, closing the cycle that began in Daejeon with the Pact for the Future of Humanity and its three axes: People, Planet and Government. Under a rotating leadership model, UCLG has spent the past mandate advancing work on peace, care, feminist municipalism, climate justice, democratic resilience and renewed multilateralism.

The report also records several political openings for local and regional governments in the international system: Action 55(e) of the United Nations Pact for the Future, the UN Secretary-General's Advisory Group on Local and Regional Governments, and the development of the Local Social Covenant that will frame much of the Tangier Congress.

But the afternoon will not only look back. The first strategic debate, Local Multilateralism for Peace, will ask how the municipal movement should position itself in the post-2030 era. The session starts from a difficult premise: the values of the 2030 Agenda remain essential, but the multilateral system has not delivered them at the scale people need.

For UCLG, the answer is not less multilateralism. It is a different kind of multilateralism, rooted in proximity, public services, local democracy and territorial cooperation.

The debate will also bring forward We the Cities, a decalogue for the structural engagement of local and regional governments in the multilateral system. The objective is to move beyond occasional consultation and towards more permanent, differentiated and organised participation of local governments in global decision-making.

Peace will be treated not only as diplomacy or security, but as something built in territories: through dialogue, inclusion, rights, prevention, care and public services that hold communities together.

A second strategic debate, Coalitions for Local Innovation, will turn from political positioning to delivery. The discussion will explore how partnerships can help local and regional governments move from isolated experiments to implementation at scale. It will include the launch of the Global ScaleX Alliance for Cities between UCLG and UNIDO, alongside discussions linked to Cities Countdown to 2030, the Guangzhou International Award for Urban Innovation, the World Observatory on Subnational Government Finance and Investment, and contributions from the Town Halls on local finance and food systems.

The question behind the session is practical: if local governments are expected to respond to housing pressures, care needs, climate disruption, technological change and declining trust, what coalitions can help them deliver?

By the end of the day, the General Assembly will also address institutional affairs, including the electoral process and the appointment of the UCLG World Council for 2026–2029.

That gives the first official day of the Congress its shape. The morning starts with public services and the people who make them possible. The afternoon reviews the mandate born in Daejeon and opens the debate on peace, multilateralism and innovation after 2030. The evening places the Local Social Covenant in front of the full Congress.

Tangier begins where Daejeon left off, but the world has changed. The voice of the local and regional leaders is needed more than ever. Silence is not an option; neither is noise without direction. Tangier represents perhaps the most ambitious attempt in a decade to move local multilateralism to action, at a particularly challenging moment.



CELEBRATING THOSE HOLDING THE FORT

Public service workers are essential for a just society



There could be no better way to start the official meetings of the UCLG Congress than by celebrating those who are at the center of its shared political vision for the next four years and beyond 2030.

The theme of the Congress, “A new generation of local public services”, is both a call and a commitment, as UCLG Secretary-General Emilia Saiz expressed in her welcome to participants in the Municipal Times Outlook, for local and regional government leaders to ensure quality, accessible and rights-based service provision to citizens.

And public workers, more than 400 million worldwide, with ILO estimates indicating that around 47% are women globally and 57% in OECD countries, and that just over one-tenth (11 per cent) of the world’s employment is in the public sector, are key to the future of local public service provision. They play vital roles as firefighters, teachers, care workers, transport workers, sanitation workers, social workers, as well as municipal staff in city halls. Their work touches every part of citizens’ daily lives.

The UCLG Executive Bureau will have the opportunity to celebrate the International Day of Public Service with a dialogue between local and regional government leaders and representatives of public service workers to explore how to strengthen collaboration. It will also be a great setting for the launch of the Public Services International (PSI) and UCLG Global Framework Agreement on Social Dialogue and Cooperation, reinforcing their commitment to public services and decent work.

Public service is defined as the broad range of services provided by government agencies and public institutions. These services exist to benefit the general public rather than generate a private profit, and they are funded primarily through taxes and government budgets. The public sector plays a central role in the provision of essential goods and services as well as in

promoting growth, social cohesion, and communal well-being. It relies on its diverse workforce spread across economic activities and occupations.

Still, even after a global pandemic, when the role of key workers providing essential goods and services gained visibility, and with 25 per cent of key workers employed in the public sector in high-income countries, the proportion of public sector employment declined between 2014 and 2024 in 58 out of 94 countries with available data. Among the 34 countries where the share of public sector employment increased, the median rise was a mere 1.3 percentage points.

It was at the Barcelona UCLG retreat in February 2026 that the first technical meeting between UCLG and PSI took place, making clear that improving public services requires direct dialogue with those who deliver them. In Tangier, before the launch of the agreement, and as one of the multilateral coalitions working sessions that took place yesterday, a discussion on the operationalisation of the mechanism for structured dialogue, capacity and learning exchange took place.

Public service funding, water management and governance, AI and digitalisation, decent work, occupational safety and health, as well as the negative narrative around public sector workers, were some of the priorities discussed behind closed doors.

Concrete advocacy proposals for the last quarter of 2026 and for 2027 were also identified, with the intersections between climate, migration, gender equality, persons with disabilities and Indigenous Peoples more than present in the conversation.

As a Congress participant, take a moment today to think of the friends, family members, colleagues and staff who work in public service — and celebrate their work!



THE TOWN HALL AS A LASTING LEGACY

Since the 2019 UCLG World Congress in Durban, the Town Hall process has become one of the distinctive features of the municipal movement, creating a space where civil society partners, local and regional governments, and international actors can jointly shape political priorities. In Daejeon, in 2022, the Town Hall process culminated in the presentation of Policy Papers that informed the Pact for the Future.

In Tangier, the Town Hall represents the culmination of months of structured dialogue around the Local Social Covenant. A set of letters, policy dialogues and peer-to-peer exchanges have made contributions and specific proposals around eight thematic: Housing, Transformative Local Finance, Public Health, Food Systems, Local Conflict Prevention, Climate Justice, Culture, and New Essentials.

Strategically positioned at the start of the Congress week, the Town Hall day provided the opportunity to work on collective evaluation of the process and the Tangier outcome document, the specific proposals arising from letters and the main challenges and mechanisms of implementation for the Local Social Covenant.

The Town Halls will be in session throughout the week and dialogue with local and regional leaders, contributing to the process of co-creation and meaningful partnership.

THE PERIPHERY: *a driver of urban development*

As part of the Multilateral Coalition sessions held yesterday, a dialogue organized by the Forum of Local Authorities of the Periphery (FALP) took place, bringing together representatives from metropolitan territories to examine the place of the periphery in more just, inclusive and sustainable urban regions. The session addressed issues such as territorial inequalities, social cohesion, climate action, migration, and equitable development, highlighting the role of metropolitan local governments in promoting solidarity and democratic governance.

Participants argued that urbanisation has concentrated both opportunities and inequalities in metropolitan regions. Fernando Javier Gray, mayor of Esteban Echeverría, warned that governance models often overlook communities living on the urban fringe, while Raphaël Adam, mayor of Nanterre, noted that cities across continents face similar challenges related to housing, exclusion and territorial imbalance.

Several speakers stressed that peripheral territories are no longer marginal spaces but central actors in urban development. Abdoulaye Thimbo, mayor of Pikine, called for greater recognition of the realities faced by communities outside city centres, while Philippe Rio, mayor of Grigny, linked the debate to human rights and the need to combat discrimination and inequality.

The discussion concluded with a call for stronger investment in infrastructure,

basic services and democratic participation, particularly as climate change and economic pressures continue to deepen territorial disparities. Sol Tischnick, Chief of Staff of the municipality of Lomas de Zamora (Argentina), argued that inequalities are being felt with increasing intensity across territories and warned that the dehumanisation of public policies tends to affect the most vulnerable populations first. Participants agreed that the voices of peripheral communities must play a greater role in shaping the future of metropolitan governance.

ADAPTING LOCAL COOPERATION

The Capacity and Institution Building (CIB) Annual Meeting took place yesterday as part of the Multilateral Coalition sessions of UCLG Congress.

Participants reflected on a reality that is affecting cooperation actors across the world. Development budgets are under pressure, political priorities are shifting, and international partnerships are increasingly shaped by broader geopolitical, economic, migration and security considerations. The question raised in Tangier was therefore not whether local government cooperation remains relevant, but how it must evolve.

The discussion built on the UCLG-CIB Action Paper, which has guided exchanges within the network over the past year. A common conclusion emerged from those conversations: business as usual is no longer sufficient. Local government development cooperation must demonstrate its value through stronger partnerships, more flexible approaches and closer connections between local priorities and global agendas.

Rather than focusing solely on challenges, participants explored practical responses already emerging in different regions. These included new forms of peer learning, partnerships between local government associations and municipalities, innovative financing approaches, and efforts to strengthen collective advocacy around the role of local governments in international cooperation.

The debate also highlighted the comparative advantage of local governments. At a time when trust in institutions is under strain, municipalities remain the level of government closest to communities and often the first to respond to everyday challenges. Development cooperation between local governments therefore offers more than technical exchange: it provides opportunities to share practical solutions rooted in experience and proximity.



MUSEUM NIGHT IN TANGIER

Explore the city's museums and cultural spaces for free on 23 June, from 17:00 until midnight

تحت الرعاية السامية لصاحب الجلالة الملك محمد السادس نصره الله
SOUS LE HAUT PATRONAGE DE SA MAJESTÉ LE ROI MOHAMMED VI, QUE DIEU L'ASSISTE
UNDER THE HIGH PATRONAGE OF HIS MAJESTY KING MOHAMMED VI, MAY GOD ASSIST HIM



After a long conference day, the best thing to do is to go for a walk and explore the host city. And you are in luck: today, Tuesday 23 June, marks the fifth edition of La Nuit des Musées et des Espaces Culturels, Morocco's Long Night of Museums and Cultural Venues. In the entire country, including in Tangier, museums, galleries, and cultural venues will be open free of charge from 17:00 until midnight.

This year's edition is dedicated to photography as a nod to the bicentenary of the invention of the medium. The day also coincides with the inauguration of the Casablanca Museum of Photography and Visual Arts, set to open today in the city's old medina.

Here in Tangier, these are some of the recommended landmarks that will open their doors to you tonight:

DAR NIABA, MUSÉE DES ARTISTES VOYAGEURS

Tangier's Museum of Travelling Artists, in the heart of the medina, shows a permanent exhibition on Tangier's diplomatic history and 19th-century art that exemplifies the cultural diversity of Morocco. It is also hosting a temporary exhibition on the Catalan painter Mariano Fortuny i Marsal.

📍 Address: 41 Rue Siaghine, Tangier
@museedarniaba

GALERÍA CERVANTES

Dedicated to supporting the artistic connections between Morocco, Spain, and beyond, Galería Cervantes is presenting Somos Agua, a photography exhibition that invites visitors to ponder the connection between human beings and water as an essential resource.

📍 Address: 9 Rue Belgique, Tangier
@institutocervantestanger

FONDATION POUR LA PHOTOGRAPHIE

The city's photography foundation promotes contemporary photography in Morocco. Founded in 2018, it showcases both modern and older photographic art. The current exhibition, Tanger. Pourquoi Tanger?, delves into the streets of the host city with works of several artists.

📍 Address: 235 Route Sidi Masmoudi, La Vieille Montagne, Tangier
@fondationpourlaphotographie

GALERIE ARTINGIS

Next to the French Consulate General in Tangier, Galerie Artingis presents a photographic exhibition called Back to Morocco with original art showing the diversity of the Congress' host country, from villages and medinas to pre-Saharan landscapes, rites and ceremonies.

📍 Address: 41 Rue Khalid Ibn Oualid, Tangier
@galerieartingis



GALERIE DAR D'ART

This gallery, which celebrates contemporary works, presents the work of local photographer Rachid Ouettassi, who shows the many ways that Tangier has changed over the last decades.

📍 Address: 6 Rue Khalil Matrane, Tangier
@dardart_gallery

GALLERY KENT

The independent gallery shows *Advenir entre les rivages*, a compilation of the works of four female artists from the Arabic world, representing Algeria, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia. The artists explore contemporary photography as a medium of narration, transformation, and memory.

📍 Address: 19 Rue Jabha Watanya, Tangier
@gallerykent / www.gallerykent.com

KASBAH MUSEUM

Tangier's Kasbah hosts two museums at once, the Musée la Kasbah des Cultures Méditerranéennes and the Musée la Kasbah – Espace d'Art Contemporain. Both are participating in the Long Night. In the Museum of Mediterranean Cultures, there will be free guided tours through the ancient building. In the Contemporary Art Space, you can explore the works of a local sculptor in an exhibition called *Ne tenir qu'à un fil* (Hanging by a thread).

📍 Address: Dar Lmakhzen, Place Mechouar, Ancienne Médina, Tangier
@museelakasbah @museeack

VILLA HARRIS – MUSÉE DE TANGER

Built at the end of the 19th century as the residence of British journalist and adventurer Walter Burton, this villa is now a museum of Moroccan art. The permanent exhibition looks back at the evolution of the country's artistic scene, also showing the impressions European visitors had of Morocco's light, landscapes, and everyday scenes. The special exhibition *Regards des photographes marocains du monde* explores different perspectives on Morocco, including social transformation, displacement, and other contemporary challenges.

📍 Address: Villa Harris, Boulevard Mohammed VI, Malabata, Tangier
@museevillaharris

INSTITUT FRANÇAIS DE TANGER

Galerie Delacroix, part of the Institut Français de Tanger, presents *Le temps d'un battement de cil* by Daoud Aoulad-Syad, famous for his analogue photography. You will see rarely shown, unedited colour photographs.

📍 Address: Galerie Delacroix, Institut Français de Tanger, 86 Rue de la Liberté, Tangier
@ifmtanger



**FULL PROGRAMME
OF THE NIGHT OF THE
MUSEUMS 2026**

LOOK AT THE CORNERS!

For those who are not in Tangier in person for the UCLG World Congress, there are two new spaces at this Congress that were not present in Daejeon and that are a physical reflection of what these four years of the Pact for the Future have been.

When you enter the Conference venue, if you look to your right or to your left, you will find two busy corners. The one on your left, with a beautiful mosaic of doors representing the landscape of Tangier, is the **SDGs Corner** exhibition.

Compiled by UNDP and UCLG specifically for the Congress, it shows how cities and local governments are contributing to the Agenda 2030 through concrete local action and innovation in public service delivery. Each door represents a city and its innovation, and you can open that door through a QR code.

The doors also reflect the cultural diversity of the cities they represent. If you are lucky and you are in Tangier, take a picture there; the artists have done a great job!

The team of the Municipal Times Journal will open different doors for you over the coming days to explain some of the stories behind them, but you can also visit the exhibition virtually and click on each of the doors at: <https://sdglocalaction.org/sdg-corner-in-tangier/>



In the right hand corner, on the other side of the venue, you will find another space, the **Care Corner**. Co-organized by the Global Alliance for Care and UCLG, it is a space you can visit to better understand what care means, the transformative vision towards a caring society and why care is at the heart of local multilateralism.

There is a daily programme of activities in which members of the Alliance will present initiatives for advancing care systems at the local level. Some of the contributors to the 7th Global Report on Local Democracy and Decentralization (GOLD VII) on the Economies of Equality and Care will also give brief presentations on essential insights, tools and frameworks to advance cities and territories that care.

Over the coming days, the Municipal Times Journal team will bring you closer to the Care Corner, sharing some of the activities and the conversations taking place there.

For more information:

The Global Alliance for Care: www.globalallianceforcare.org
GOLD VII report: www.uclgmeets.org/processes/CoCreatingGold7/



What's on Today?

23 JUNE 2026

BEYOND THE STATUTORY TRACK

The first official day of the Congress will be marked by the **Executive Bureau**, the **General Assembly** and the **Official Opening Ceremony**. But much of the day's energy will also be found beyond the main statutory sessions.

Regional assemblies open the morning, with the **European** and **Asia-Pacific Assemblies** at 9:00, followed by the African Assembly at 13:00. These spaces will help set regional and territorial priorities for the Congress week.

One space to watch is the **UCLG Intermediary Cities Forum**, convened from **11:00 to 12:30 in Room B Atlantic**. The session will explore the role of intermediary cities in territorial cohesion, multilevel governance and more balanced development, building on the outcomes of the UCLG Forum of Intermediary Cities in Cuenca and paving the way for a 2026–2030 Roadmap after Tangier.

Care will also have a visible place in the programme. The **Care Corner** opens at 12:00, with a brief launch of this dedicated space for exploring care as a political and public policy agenda. Later, from 13:00 to 14:30, the roundtable **Caring Territories: Partnerships for Integrated Policies** will take place in Room B Atlantic, bringing together Mercociudades, UCLG, FAMSI, Sevilla Province, Catalonia Region, Barcelona Province and the Global Alliance for Care.

The **Local4Action Track** will offer several entry points into the political themes of the day: the MENA Urban Covenant at 9:00, violence prevention at 11:00, peace through local action at 12:45, youth climate action and decentralised cooperation at 13:00, and a series of afternoon dialogues on inclusive economic development, ecocide, human rights in the city and COP31.

The **Tangier-Morocco Track** and the **Networking Hub** will add further spaces for launches, exchanges and host-city perspectives throughout the day.

TRENDING NOW!

MEANWHILE, ON X...

It's been four years since we last used the hashtag #UCLGCongress. That changed yesterday, because the 8th UCLG Congress kicked off in Tangier and on X as well.

We jumped from Daejeon to Tangier, and just as easily, we've been switching between French, Spanish, and English as we followed the first day of the Congress on our phones. The timeline quickly filled up with a succession of "official moments": the signing of the MoU between @mercociudades and @OfApla, the launch of the SDG Corner by @uclg_org, the regional caucuses of @UCLGAfrica, @UCLGMEWAorg, @uclgspac, and @FLACMA_, and the constant activity in spaces like the Care Corner alongside @GAllianceCare.

What appears in the feed isn't exactly an open conversation; rather, it's a window into the Congress itself. Each account offers its own perspective, but taken together, they convey a fairly coherent picture of the direction the municipal movement aims to take in the coming years.

Perhaps that's why it's worth following the official hashtag these days. Beyond the formal sessions, X has become the place where the Congress documents its meetings, its priorities, and the messages it wants to convey to the outside world.

We encourage you to join the conversation using #UCLGCongress and to share your thoughts on the discussions taking place over the next few days. If you'd like to delve deeper into some of the topics that come up between posts, we at @ujinstitute will continue to share articles and analyses that allow you to linger a bit longer on debates that, in the fast-paced rhythm of the timeline, sometimes pass by too quickly.

The Congress has just begun. There are still many sessions, meetings, and decisions ahead. And if the first day has taught us anything, it's that part of that story will also be written in 280 characters.

CREDITS

(of all issues)

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