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# Editorial

The 100 Days of Local Multilateralism come to an end on 30 July 2026. This collective journey has connected a series of milestones that, taken individually, might have appeared as separate events. Taken as a whole, however, they reveal one of the defining contradictions of contemporary governance: at a time when many of humanity's greatest challenges are experienced and addressed locally, the institutions closest to citizens continue to occupy a secondary place in the architecture of global decision-making.

Long before housing, climate resilience, care, public services or democratic trust became central themes of international debates, cities, towns and regions were already responding to them alongside their communities, translating global aspirations into local realities.

For well over a century, the international municipal movement has organised itself to deepen cooperation among cities and territories, defend local self-government and demonstrate that global commitments are realised through local action.

From the earliest associations of municipalities to today's United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments, the international municipal movement has helped move concepts such as localisation, multilevel governance and territorial approaches from the margins of policy discussions to the centre of global agendas.

Today, few international processes can be discussed without recognising the role of local and regional governments. Recognition, however, has yet to translate into equivalent political visibility. Media narratives, institutional practices and many decision-making processes continue to portray multilateralism as a conversation among states, overlooking the level of government where policies gain legitimacy, adapt to diverse realities and become part of everyday life.

Conceived as an institutional cycle rather than a calendar of meetings, the 100 Days of Local Multilateralism brought this paradox into focus. From the International Day of Creativity and Innovation through the World Urban Forum in Baku to its political centre at the UCLG World Congress and World Summit of Local and Regional Leaders in Tangier, the initiative highlighted connections between processes that are too often understood in isolation.

Tangier renewed the movement's leadership, adopted the Local Social Covenant and set the political direction for the years ahead. July concluded this cycle through the High-Level Political Forum, the review of Sustainable Development Goal 11, the Local and Regional Government Forum and Day, and the High-Level Meeting on the Review of the New Urban Agenda.

The *Municipal Times* has accompanied this process with the same conviction that inspired its creation. Local politics deserve sustained journalistic attention. Despite their growing relevance, the work of local and regional governments still receives fragmented coverage, often confined to specialised institutional reporting. Housing policies are ultimately judged by whether families can afford a home. Climate commitments acquire meaning through resilient neighbourhoods, safer infrastructure and better local planning. Care becomes public policy when it reaches households, schools and communities. This is where international agendas cease to be global aspirations and become lived realities.

If the *Municipal Times Outlook* looked ahead to Tangier, this edition looks beyond it. The pages that follow are not a report on the past hundred days, but an exploration of what these months tell us about the future of multilateralism. They draw on the debates and commitments of Tangier, the discussions in New York, and the reflections of the local and regional leaders who continue arguing that multilevel governance should evolve from an aspiration expressed in declarations into an organising principle of global governance.

The end of the 100 Days of Local Multilateralism is therefore another milestone in a much longer journey. The international community is already looking beyond 2030, while the review of the New Urban Agenda opens the path towards Habitat IV. The conversations held in Baku, Tangier and New York belong to that broader political trajectory.

As the international community begins to shape the agendas beyond 2030, localisation can no longer be understood simply as a technical exercise in implementing global commitments. It is a democratic principle—one that recognises that the legitimacy, sustainability and effectiveness of international agreements ultimately depend on the institutions that citizens know best and trust most.

# Local Leadership for a Shared Global Future

*Uğur İbrahim Altay, Mayor of  
Konya and President of UCLG  
for the 2026–2029 mandate*

Being entrusted as the President of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) is, for me, both a profound honour and a historic responsibility. This expression of confidence reflects the trust that local and regional leaders around the world have placed in our shared vision for the future.

Our cities are far more than places where global crises unfold; they are the primary spaces where solutions are conceived, tested, and transformed into lasting public policies. In the face of increasingly complex challenges—from the climate crisis and geopolitical instability to socio-economic inequalities and rapid technological change—no global agenda can succeed without placing local leadership at its core.

My engagements across different regions of the world have also demonstrated that local and regional leaders are responding to remarkably similar societal expectations. Across borders and cultures, people share a universal aspiration for justice, security, prosperity, sustainability, and the ability to shape their own future.

This is precisely where the strategic value of local and regional governments becomes evident. As the level of government closest to citizens, they are best positioned to understand people's needs and respond with speed and effectiveness. By delivering tangible outcomes through public policies, local governments provide the strongest response to these global expectations.

International agendas are often developed through a top-down approach. Yet meaningful and lasting change follows a different path. It begins in our neighbourhoods, municipalities, and regions. This is where leaders are closest to people's daily lives



and where public policies are translated into tangible outcomes. For this reason, local governments can no longer be seen merely as implementing institutions. They are policy innovators, drivers of innovation, catalysts for international cooperation, and leading actors that inspire change on a global scale.

As UCLG, our greatest strength lies in our ability to bring this extraordinary diversity together through an inclusive vision. Our greatest advantage is our capacity to unite thousands of cities and regions—with different histories, priorities, and experiences—around a shared purpose. Within this network, cooperation is more than a strategic choice; it is an essential condition for addressing today's global challenges and shaping our common future.

Being entrusted as the President has further strengthened my commitment to advancing this shared journey. At the same time, it carries with it the responsibility to ensure that the voices of local and regional governments are more visible, more influential, and more impactful in global decision-making processes.

The priorities for the years ahead are clear. We must deepen cooperation among our members, strengthen solidarity across regions, and enhance the role of cities in shaping international policymaking. From climate action and sustainable development to digital transformation, social inclusion, and peacebuilding, the knowledge, experience, and innovative capacity of local governments must be more effectively reflected in global action.

The future of the multilateral system will depend on the extent to which this vision is embraced. Cities and regions can no longer be regarded as mere implementers operating on the margins of international processes. On the contrary, they are essential partners in designing, delivering, and continuously improving shared solutions. Multilateral governance will be stronger through the meaningful participation of local and regional governments, enabling it to respond more effectively to the needs and aspirations of our communities.

To me, leadership means listening with openness, uniting diverse perspectives around a common purpose, and transforming diversity into our greatest strength. This is the

guiding principle that will shape all my work throughout my Presidency of UCLG.

While the challenges before us are significant, the culture of solidarity, spirit of innovation, and problem-solving capacity demonstrated by local governments give us every reason to look to the future with confidence. Every city that embraces inclusive policies, every municipality that strengthens climate resilience, and every region that advances democratic participation contributes not only to the well-being of its own community but also to shaping our shared future. For the path to a stronger, more just, and more sustainable world undoubtedly begins with strong local and regional governments.

The determination that will shape our shared future is embodied in the dynamism of our cities, the experience of our local governments, and our collective commitment to working together. As UCLG, we will continue to strengthen this shared resolve, reinforce the rightful place of local and regional governments in global governance, and work tirelessly to deliver solutions that serve the common good of humanity.



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# From Tangier to the Next Chapter of Multilateralism

*Emilia Sáiz, Secretary-General of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)*

The international community is entering a decisive moment. As the 2030 Agenda approaches its final stretch and discussions on what comes next begin to take shape, multilateralism faces a fundamental challenge: not simply how to respond to increasingly complex global crises, but how to rebuild trust, strengthen cooperation and deliver meaningful change across every level of governance.

The UCLG World Congress and World Summit of Local and Regional Leaders in Tangier marked an important moment in that conversation. More than another international gathering, it represented the culmination of an unprecedented political process that brought together local and regional governments, civil society and international partners around a common ambition: to place territories at the centre of global governance.

The question was no longer whether local governments should contribute to multilateralism, but how the multilateral system itself should evolve to better reflect the realities of implementation.

The Tangier Outcome Document offers a clear answer. It presents a renewed vision of local multilateralism in which cities and regions are recognised not simply as implementers of global agendas, but as political partners in shaping them. It calls for stronger multilevel governance, renewed democratic institutions, and a new generation of universal, accessible and non-discriminatory local public services as the foundations of sustainable development, equality, peace and resilience.

At a time when trust in institutions is under pressure across many parts of the world, the Tangier Outcome Document builds on our Local Social Covenant by recognising that the



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major global transitions—climate, demographic, technological and economic—must ultimately be managed where people live, through local institutions capable of integrating housing, care, food systems, public health, local finance, culture and climate action into coherent public policies.

These outcomes reflect a broader shift taking place across the multilateral landscape. The challenges facing the international community are increasingly interconnected, while the institutions created to address them often remain fragmented. Delivering the Sustainable Development Goals, implementing the Pact for the Future and designing the post-2030 development framework will require governance systems that are more collaborative, more accountable and better connected across all levels of government.

The real test, however, begins now. Political momentum is valuable only if it leads to lasting institutional change. The commitments emerging from Tangier invite governments and international organisations alike to strengthen the role of local and regional governments within global decision-making, expand support for localisation and subnational reporting, invest in universal local public services, and ensure that future international agreements are designed with implementation—not only ambition—in mind.

As discussions on the post-2030 agenda gather pace, and with the 100 days of local multilateralism behind us, our Summit provided a political compass for the next generation of multilateralism: one that is more inclusive, more grounded in communities, and better equipped to deliver meaningful change. If this vision is carried forward, the legacy of Tangier will not simply be another declaration, but the consolidation of a multilateral system that finally recognises that global transformation begins locally.

# What Tangier Leaves Behind

When the 8th UCLG World Congress opened in Tangier on 23 June 2026, it did so with one eye on an ending and another on a beginning. Delegates arrived to close the mandate that began in Daejeon in 2022, and to define the political and organisational direction that will run to 2029.

Over four days, the Congress brought together UCLG's governing bodies, members, regional sections, civil society partners and international institutions through four interconnected tracks: the Statutory Track, the Assembly Track, the Town Hall Track and the Local4Action Track. They combined institutional decision-making with political debate, co-creation and the exchange of local experiences.

The result was a connected set of outcomes: renewed political leadership, a new political framework, a strengthened Local Social Covenant and a series of organisational mechanisms intended to carry the commitments made in Tangier into the work of the World Organisation.

## A political framework for the next mandate

At the centre of the Congress outcomes stands the **Tangier Outcome Document: A New Generation of Universal Local Public Services.**

The document responds to a global context marked by geopolitical confrontation, democratic backsliding, deepening inequalities, climate disruption, technological transformation and declining trust in public institutions. It argues that these crises are experienced concretely in territories through housing exclusion, food insecurity, unequal access to care, precarious work, environmental injustice, displacement and gaps in essential services.

Its central proposition is that universal local public services constitute the everyday infrastructure through which rights, equality, democracy and peace are made tangible.

Building on the political mandate adopted in Daejeon, the UCLG Pact for the Future, Tangier marks a shift from defining a shared horizon to setting out how that horizon can be translated into territorial action.



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## A renewed social agenda

The Congress also endorsed the **Local Social Covenant** for collective action and shared responsibility.

The Covenant emerged from a structured process of dialogue between locally elected leaders, organised civil society and partners. Through the UCLG Policy Councils, the Town Hall and the Letters from the Local Social Covenant, participants identified shared priorities across housing, local finance, food systems, public health, climate justice, cultural rights, local conflict prevention and the new everyday essentials.

Care, anti-racism and youth co-leadership cut across this agenda. Rather than treating these priorities as separate policy sectors, the Covenant connects them through a common commitment to dignity, equality, democratic participation and universal access to quality public services. It is intended to guide UCLG's strategic alignment and collective action while contributing a territorial perspective to the next global development agenda.

## From commitments to organisational action

Tangier also established a set of mechanisms designed to connect the Outcome Document with UCLG's work programme.

These include the **New Global Charter-Agenda for Human Rights in the City**, the **Housing Justice Academy**, the **Global Framework Agreement on Social Dialogue with local public service workers**, the **Intergenerational Council for Future Generations**, the **International Public-Community Council on Everyday Essentials**, the **Global Facility for Innovation in Local Public Services**, the **Women's Council for Equality** and the **Board on Decentralised Cooperation**.

Their functions differ, but they share a common purpose: to turn commitments into spaces for cooperation, learning, accountability and delivery.

Collectively, they address issues ranging from rights-based local governance and housing justice to decent work, feminist municipalism, public-community partnerships, innovation, youth leadership and territorial cooperation.

## A renewed political leadership

The Congress elected **Uğur İbrahim Altay**, Mayor of Konya, as President of UCLG for the 2026–2029 mandate and renewed the composition of the Presidency, the World Council and the Executive Bureau.

The new governing bodies will be responsible for guiding the Organisation's priorities and ensuring that the commitments adopted in Tangier are reflected in its programme of work over the coming years.

### UCLG Presidency

#### President

**Uğur İbrahim Altay**,  
*Mayor of Konya*

#### Co-Presidents

**Fatimetou Abdel Malick**  
*President of the Standing Committee on Gender Equality, President of the Nouakchott Region*

**Aysen Nikolaev**  
*Head of the Sakha Republic*

**Bheke Stofile**  
*President of the South African Local Government Association (SALGA)*

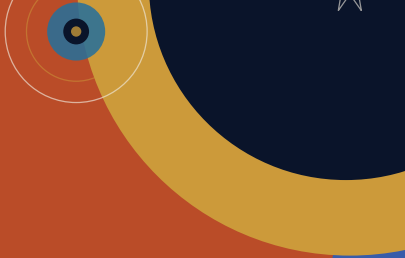
**Jan van Zanen**  
*Mayor of The Hague*

**Berry Vrbancic**  
*Mayor of Kitchener*

**Cristian Zamora**  
*Mayor of Cuenca*

#### Treasurer

**Fatiha El Moudni**  
*Mayor of Rabat*



# Tangier

## *at a Glance*

2,400+  
*delegates*

60  
*sessions*

90+  
*countries*

250+  
*speakers*

- ✧ New Presidency elected
  - ✧ First Women's Assembly
  - ✧ New Human Rights Charter-Agenda
  - ✧ Local Social Covenant endorsed
  - ✧ New cooperation mechanisms launched
- 

# Voices from Tangier

**"Women in local politics are not guests, we are architects."**

Rohey Malick Lowe, *Mayor of Banjul*

**"When we are united, no one stops us."**

Gil Milena Grueso Romero, *Mayor of Guapi*

**"The feminist municipal movement is an antidote to misogyny."**

Clare Hart, *Vice-President of Montpellier Méditerranée Métropole*

**"Representation without transformation is visibility without power."**

Chioniso Michelle Murinda, *Chegutu District Council, Zimbabwe*

**"Power must be shared."**

Sanjolli Padhy, *The YP Foundation*

**"Let us stop asking for space. Let us govern now."**

Milka Areba, *REFELA Kenya*

**"Women with disabilities must stop being asked permission to exist; our experience is political."**

Patricia Morla, *City Councillor, Villa Carlos Paz*

**"Care is not only a value. It is a practice that must shape how we govern our cities and how we relate to one another across generations."**

Kelsey Paul Shantz, *Stanley Center for Peace and Security*

**"There cannot be quality local public services without adequate, safe, and decent working conditions for those providing the services."**

Daria Cibrario, *Public Services International*

# Delivering the Local Social Covenant

*Lorena Zárate, coordinator of the Global Platform for the Right to the City*

**The Congress marks an important milestone for the Local Social Covenant. From your perspective, what is its greatest achievement, and what should happen next?**

The Congress can be seen both as a point of arrival and a point of departure; a key moment to showcase diversity and ongoing initiatives, together with a political commitment on a shared agenda for the years to come. The Local Social Covenant provides a powerful framework for joint action between UCLG members and partners, opening avenues for strengthening the internal and external work through existing and new alliances. Four key features of the 2026 Congress are worth highlighting in that regard: the growing mobilisation and contributions from the Women's Assembly and the feminist municipalism; the inclusion of strong voices from Indigenous Peoples; the institutionalised engagement of public service workers; and the structured dialogues between civil society and local and regional governments.

**The Covenant calls for a renewed social contract built through stronger partnerships between local governments and civil society. Where do you see the most promising areas for joint action?**

We firmly believe that public-community partnerships are the way forward. Multiple experiences from around the world show the power of different types of collaborations between local and regional governments and civil society organisations to guarantee universal and affordable public services, while



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protecting the commons and advancing social justice and climate action. Formalised agreements, legal frameworks and public procurement instruments are key to provide continuity and support the role of the social and solidarity economy and the care economy sustaining our cities and territories.

**How can local governments and civil society maintain meaningful engagement beyond the Congress? What mechanisms or spaces for collaboration would you like to see strengthened or shared more widely after Tangier?**

Spaces for structured dialogue and mechanisms for collaboration between local and regional governments and civil society organisations should be considered crucial for UCLG everyday work. Permanent and stronger participation of grassroots, NGOs, professionals and academics within UCLG thematic commissions, regional bodies and policy councils seem like an organic pathway to keep exploring. Formalised civil society engagement at the Global Task Force could also be considered in the near future. Within the new mechanisms envisioned by the Local Social Covenant, the new International Public-Community Council on Everyday Essentials has the potential to become a fruitful place for combining municipal experimentation and collective learning with global mobilisation and advocacy at multilateral arenas.

## **What contribution can your organisation bring in implementing the Local Social Covenant over the coming years?**

The Global Platform for the Right to the City (GPR2C) is an open space for collaboration and joint action between multiple actors and across regions. As a flexible organisation, the GPR2C combines thematic and sectorial contributions with an integral vision and shared commitments towards socio-spatial justice, local democracy and the collective management of the commons. Through research, capacity building, communication, policy recommendations and advocacy, GPR2C members and allies promote local transformation and influence global agendas. We are now close to a two-decades-long partnership with UCLG and can contribute with that shared institutional memory in moving forward.

## **When we meet again at the next UCLG World Congress, what would you hope to have achieved through the Local Social Covenant? What would success look like?**

We hope that the Local Social Covenant can become a political-practical framework for connecting and transforming cities and territories, strengthening local voices in defense of peace, care, dignity and the planet. An instrument for expanding the horizon of possibilities, promoting and documenting collaborative initiatives across its thematic areas and new mechanisms. Of particular relevance in that regard is the New Charter-Agenda for Human Rights in the City, as an innovative and crucial roadmap able to bridge and push forward the commitments and recommendations included in the 2030 Agenda, the New Urban Agenda (2016-2036) and the upcoming IPCC report on cities (2027). Success would look like renewed trust in each other; in the institutions we create and our ability to do things together. Success would look like permanent dialogue, self-reflection and accountability. Success would look like hope in collective wisdom and ancestral intelligence.

**Our  
Multilateralism  
is Local.  
Our  
Cooperation is  
Decentralized.  
Our Action  
is Rooted  
in Rights.**

**We choose  
Care over  
Transaction.  
Rights before  
Profit.  
Public Good  
over Exclusion.**

**Without  
Universal  
Local Public  
Services,  
there is  
no Equality,  
no Democracy,  
no Peace.**

# Localisation at a Turning Point

The High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) represented the final major milestone of the **100 Days of Local Multilateralism**, closing the coordinated process that, over more than three months, connected the principal global milestones of the international municipal movement.

The discussions in New York, bridging the Tangier outcomes, revolved around a question that felt more relevant than ever: how can the momentum generated throughout the 100 Days translate into lasting institutional change that embeds local and regional governments as structural actors within the multilateral system?

The **9th Local and Regional Governments Forum**, the principal dialogue between local and regional governments, Member States and the United Nations, took stock of a decade of localisation while exploring how territories can move beyond implementing global agendas to helping shape them. As **Emilia Sáiz**, Secretary-General of UCLG, noted, the Forum is now formally recognised within the HLPF architecture, the result of a decade of sustained advocacy led by local and regional governments in partnership with the United Nations.

With only four years remaining until 2030 and discussions on the post-2030 framework already emerging, the Forum looked beyond reviewing progress to consider how local and regional governments can assume a more structural role in the years ahead.

The urgency of that discussion was reinforced by the latest assessment of the Sustainable Development Goals. ECOSOC President **Lok Bahadur Thapa** reminded participants that only a minority of SDG targets remain on track, while many continue to progress too slowly or have stalled altogether. Against this backdrop, he argued that the growing number of local reviews demonstrates how implementation is increasingly taking shape in territories, where global commitments become tangible through public action. He stressed that the Sustainable Development Goals are “negotiated globally, adopted nationally and implemented locally”, while United Nations Deputy Secretary-General **Amina Mohammed** argued that by the 2027 SDG Summit local and regional governments should “no longer have to ask to be heard”, but instead be structurally embedded in the way the United Nations plans, finances and reviews sustainable development.

**Bheke Stofile**, President of the South African Local Government Association and co-chair of the Forum, linked this institutional debate to the broader geopolitical context. Development, he argued, cannot be separated from peace and stability: when conflicts or climate disasters strike, local governments are invariably the first responders, often without



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the mandates or resources needed to act effectively. Strengthening decentralisation and giving local and regional governments a permanent place within the multilateral architecture therefore becomes not only a governance question, but also one of resilience and democratic stability.

The Forum's first working session turned from political ambition to practical experience. National governments, local authorities and international organisations shared examples of how localisation is reshaping public policy, showing that delivering the Sustainable Development Goals requires more than institutional commitment. Spain highlighted governance, financing and accountability as the foundations of effective localisation, Mozambique described two decades of decentralisation that have enabled local SDG reporting, and local leaders from New York, Heidelberg, Geneva, Bilbao, Hoboken and Canelones illustrated how climate resilience, participation, housing and mobility are addressed through integrated territorial strategies rather than isolated sectoral policies.

One of the strongest interventions came from **Dario Liguti**, representing the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and the Local2030 Coalition. Challenging the traditional understanding of localisation, he argued that it "shouldn't be understood as the last mile of implementation but as the mechanism connecting global commitments to results from day one." He pointed to the growing number of international "road to" processes leading towards Financing for Development, the World Summit for Social Development, COP30 and the World Urban Forum as evidence that territorial perspectives are increasingly informing global negotiations before decisions are taken, rather than simply contributing to their implementation afterwards.

**Kamal Kishore**, the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Representative for Disaster Risk Reduction, added another dimension to the discussion, arguing that governments continue to address disasters, climate change and inequality through separate institutional responses despite communities experiencing them simultaneously. He called for adaptation and resilience financing that rewards prevention rather than recovery, while strengthening the links between local evidence and national planning.

The following sessions highlighted the growing interdependence of the Sustainable Development Goals under review—water, energy, infrastructure, sustainable cities and partnerships—and the governance reforms needed to deliver them. Whether



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discussing drought, housing affordability, climate adaptation or metropolitan transport, speakers argued that local governments are increasingly expected to respond through integrated approaches while continuing to operate within fragmented financing systems. As Germany's Parliamentary State Secretary **Bärbel Kofler** observed, "Local action means little without stronger municipal mandates, capacity and funding."

Housing became one of the dominant themes of the debate. United Nations Special Rapporteur **Koldo Casla** argued that local and regional governments should not simply be regarded as stakeholders in international debates but as duty-bearers responsible for guaranteeing the right to adequate housing and resisting speculative pressures that exclude communities from their own neighbourhoods. Metropolitan authorities, including Barcelona Metropolitan Area, also called for greater recognition of their responsibilities in delivering transport, housing, water and energy services, warning that responsibilities continue to expand faster than access to financial resources.

The Forum's third session shifted attention from implementation to governance. Experiences from Italy, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Belgium, Ecuador and other territories demonstrated that localisation has matured considerably over the past decade.

Among the clearest proposals came from **Wim Dries**, President of the Association of Belgian Cities and Municipalities, who called for the Local and Regional Governments Forum to become more firmly integrated into the HLPF architecture, for local evidence to play a stronger role in global accountability mechanisms, and for UN commitments to be assessed through a territorial implementation lens before they are adopted. “The SDGs will be local, or they will be nothing,” he concluded, echoing a message that resonated throughout the day.

Closing the Forum, **Anacláudia Rossbach**, Executive Director of UN-Habitat, argued that local governments should never have been treated as the “last mile” of implementation, but rather as the level where funding and policy coherence have too often fallen short. Drawing on the latest global monitoring of SDG 11, she pointed to progress in access to public transport and national urban policies, while warning that housing and access to basic services remain among the greatest global challenges.

UNDESA Assistant Secretary-General **Navid Hanif** reinforced this message, arguing that localisation has moved from the margins to the centre of the 2030 Agenda and that multilateralism itself increasingly depends on stronger collaboration across all levels of government. He argued that today’s development challenges no longer respect administrative boundaries, making collaboration between institutions not simply desirable but an essential form of public infrastructure for the future of sustainable development.

On the following day, the **Local and Regional Governments Day** shifted the focus from political dialogue to practical action. Discussions examined how Voluntary Local and Subnational Reviews (VLRs and VSRs), territorial data, local public services and multilevel partnerships are strengthening delivery of the SDGs while generating evidence that can inform national and international decision-making.

More than 15 local and regional leaders and elected officials from across the world, as well as local and regional government networks that are members of the Global Taskforce, including ICLEI, UCLG MEWA, UCLG ASPAC, CEMR-CCRE, UCLG Africa, UCLG Eurasia, Cités Unies France and the AIMF; allies such as the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities; partner organisations including Habitat for Humanity International, the Global Alliance for Care and the Peace in Our Cities Network; representatives from the United

Nations, UNDESA, the UN Foundation, the UN Youth Office and the Local2030 Coalition; as well as representatives of national governments.

Beyond exchanging experiences, participants argued that the final years of the 2030 Agenda should not become a simple countdown but an opportunity to renew multilateralism by recognising territories as spaces of democratic innovation, implementation and transformation. They also stressed that the post-2030 agenda should be grounded in territorial realities, human rights, caring societies and universal access to essential public services, while calling for local and regional governments to be recognised as political partners in shaping future global frameworks.

The week concluded with the adoption of the **Joint Statement of the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments**, reaffirming that the achievement of the SDGs depends on empowered local and regional governments, adequate financing, multilevel governance and structured participation in global decision-making. It called on the HLPF to help move local and regional governments from political recognition to institutional transformation, embedding their participation more firmly within the United Nations system and recognising localisation not only as a means of implementation, but as an accelerator capable of renewing sustainable development governance from territories.



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## Voluntary Local and Subnational Reviews as Transformative Tools

When Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) and Voluntary Subnational Reviews (VSRs) first emerged, they were primarily seen as reporting tools, allowing cities to assess their contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals.

As the international community enters the final years of the 2030 Agenda, however, that view has evolved. Localisation is recognised as a means of delivering the SDGs, but also as a governance approach capable of shaping how sustainable development is planned, monitored and discussed at every level.

This shift is at the heart of the **10th Report of the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments (GTF) to the High-Level Political Forum, Towards the Localisation of the SDGs**. Presented during the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in New York, the report tells the story of a movement that has grown far beyond its original purpose. More than 500 VLRs have now been completed by 274 cities in 87 countries, representing almost 1.8 billion people. What began as an exercise in measuring progress has become a way of changing how cities plan, govern and work with national governments.

Against this backdrop, the fifth edition of the **VLR–VSR Days**, held online on 8 and 9 July and co-organised by UCLG, brought together local and regional governments, United Nations agencies, researchers and practitioners to reflect on the next stage of the localisation journey.

Several speakers described how local reviews have become part of the machinery of government. They inform strategic plans, shape municipal budgets, strengthen cooperation across departments, improve the quality of local data and create a common language that connects global ambitions with local priorities. In many cases, they have also transformed relationships with citizens by embedding consultation and participation throughout the review process.

Examples illustrated how deeply these reviews are becoming embedded in public administration. In Strasbourg, the updated VLR showed measurable progress in implementing Agenda 2030. In Malé, the review supported a more integrated model of urban development, while Bilbao used the process to strengthen long-term planning, citizen engagement and evidence-based decision-making. Yokohama has incorporated its VLR into its



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medium-term planning framework, and Ramallah reported that the exercise transformed how municipal departments understand their contribution to multiple Sustainable Development Goals simultaneously.

The relationship between local and national reporting is also evolving. While VLRs were initially conceived as complements to Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), several countries are now integrating local evidence into national reporting. Türkiye's Voluntary Subnational Review drew on more than 600 consultations with municipalities, South Africa now channels local reviews through its national statistics system, and Germany's latest VNR incorporates contributions from several cities, illustrating how regular dialogue is gradually reshaping national reporting itself.

Discussions nevertheless recognised that significant challenges remain. Funding, political commitment, institutional capacity and data availability continue to limit implementation in many contexts. Yet participants argued that these constraints reinforce the case for stronger localisation: better evidence enables governments to identify priorities more clearly, allocate resources more strategically and strengthen cooperation across institutions.

### More information

*10th Report Towards the Localisation of the SDGs: Local and Regional Governments Report to the 2026 HLPF*  
<https://gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/uploaded/HLPF2026.pdf>

# Towards Habitat IV:

## *The Next Decade of the New Urban Agenda*

Ten years after governments adopted the New Urban Agenda in Quito, they returned to United Nations Headquarters to measure its progress. The High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Midterm Review, held under the theme “Delivering Sustainable Urbanisation for All”, was conceived as a stocktaking exercise: an opportunity to assess how far the international community had advanced towards the vision agreed in 2016 and what remained to be done before 2036.

There was little sense that the vision itself had become outdated. If anything, the discussions suggested the opposite. Cities have become even more central to the world’s most pressing challenges than they were a decade ago. Climate change, demographic shifts, housing shortages, migration, public health, inequality and economic transformation are increasingly experienced through an urban lens. As delegates moved from one session to another, one question repeatedly came to the fore: the next decade of the New Urban Agenda will be defined by how governments answer a political question: who governs implementation?

Looking back to Habitat III, **Anacláudia Rossbach**, Executive Director of UN-Habitat, recalled the optimism that surrounded the conference in Quito. Held in 2016, it became one of the largest United Nations conferences ever organised and brought together an unprecedented number of mayors, governors and local leaders alongside Member States. Its negotiations were, in her words, “one of the most participatory and inclusive processes of the United Nations”, helping establish local and regional governments as indispensable partners in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. But the world of 2026, she argued, is no longer the world of 2016. Cities now absorb climate shocks, widening inequality, armed conflict, displacement and an



unprecedented housing crisis simultaneously — pressures that have made the Agenda more necessary, not less. Her assessment was candid: more people now have access to electricity, water, sanitation and transport, yet more than one billion still live in informal settlements. “Urbanisation remains a powerful force for inclusion,” she told delegates, “but its benefits are still distributed too unevenly.”

That sense of urgency was echoed by **Amina Mohammed**, United Nations Deputy Secretary-General, speaking on behalf of Secretary-General António Guterres. She reframed urbanisation as the place where global crises become local realities: families displaced by war arrive in cities, extreme weather destroys homes, and the rising cost of living is felt most acutely in neighbourhoods and communities. Her intervention offered perhaps the clearest expression of why the New Urban Agenda still matters. “The Sustainable Development Goals will be delivered at the local level, or they’ll not be delivered at all,” she said. With nearly 70 per cent of humanity expected to live in urban areas by 2050, the question is no longer whether cities matter, but whether they are empowered to deliver — “city by city, community by community”.

President of the General Assembly **Annalena Baerbock** placed the debate in equally direct terms. “Our future will be shaped mainly in cities,” she observed, while warning that the international community has yet to match the ambitions of the New Urban Agenda with the investment and implementation they require. Nearly three billion people still lack safe, adequate and affordable housing, and more than one billion continue to live in informal settlements.

That diagnosis was perhaps best summarised by **Jan Szyszko**, Poland's Secretary of State for Development Funds and Regional Policy. The central challenge today, he argued, is no longer the absence of a shared vision for cities, but the "persistent and widening implementation gaps" preventing that vision from becoming reality.

Ecuador's Minister of Economy and Finance, **Sariha Moya**, speaking on behalf of the country that hosted Habitat III, brought that discussion down to the practical realities of implementation. The next decade, she argued, must become "a decade of implementation and of results". Ecuador's experience in restoring predictable transfers to municipalities and mobilising nearly US\$500 million in blended finance for affordable housing illustrated a broader point running throughout the meeting: ambitious urban agendas ultimately depend on functioning local institutions and reliable municipal finance. "The New Urban Agenda was adopted in Quito," she concluded. "Its legacy can be seen in implementation — dignity in the home, security in one's neighbourhood and reliable services."

Taken together, these interventions pointed towards a common conclusion. The first decade of the New Urban Agenda has been remarkably successful in building consensus around integrated urban planning, affordable housing, climate resilience, gender-responsive cities, nature-based solutions and participatory governance. Few speakers questioned those priorities. Instead, intervention after intervention acknowledged

a more uncomfortable reality: despite unprecedented political agreement, implementation continues to lag behind ambition.

Increasingly, speakers suggested that implementation depends as much on governance as on policy. The issue surfaced in discussions on housing, where planning alone was considered insufficient without predictable financing and stronger local institutions. It appeared in conversations on climate resilience, where municipal capacity was presented as decisive for adaptation. It returned in debates on disaster risk reduction, public transport and public services. Different themes led repeatedly to the same conclusion: empowering the institutions closest to citizens has become one of the defining challenges of sustainable urbanisation.

This evolution was particularly visible in the interventions from local and regional governments themselves. Habitat III marked an important political breakthrough by recognising multilevel governance as a cornerstone of the New Urban Agenda and by acknowledging the World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments as the representative mechanism through which local government associations would continue contributing to the follow-up and review of the Agenda. It reflected an understanding that implementation would require a permanent political dialogue between Member States and the organised constituency of local and regional governments.

Few interventions illustrated that shift more clearly than that of **Koldo Casla**, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the



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right to adequate housing. Local authorities, he argued, should not be understood simply as another stakeholder participating in urban policy. They are part of the State and duty bearers responsible for guaranteeing rights. It was a subtle but important distinction, moving the discussion beyond participation towards public authority.

**Fatimetou Abdel Malick**, President of UCLG Africa and President of the Nouakchott Regional Council, approached the same question from another perspective. Local and regional governments, she argued, are the institutions that remain closest to citizens before, during and after crises, yet they continue to operate with limited fiscal autonomy and insufficient access to decision-making. Delivering global agendas requires more than assigning responsibilities; it requires equipping local authorities with the resources, capacities and political recognition necessary to fulfil them.

The Political Declaration adopted at the conclusion of the meeting reflected both the progress achieved over the past decade and the limits of the current political moment. Approved by 148 votes to two, it renews governments' commitment to accelerating implementation of the New Urban Agenda, recognises the contribution of local and regional authorities, encourages stronger institutional engagement with them and reaffirms the importance of mechanisms such as the High-Level

Political Forum, the Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group on Adequate Housing for All and the World Urban Forum.

Those commitments are significant. They reaffirm the role of local and regional authorities in implementing the New Urban Agenda and strengthen existing spaces for dialogue within the United Nations system. Yet the comparison with Quito is revealing. While the New Urban Agenda explicitly recognised the World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments within its follow-up architecture, the Midterm Review Declaration makes no reference to that mechanism. Its language speaks of engagement, consultation and contribution, but stops short of advancing the governance architecture established in 2016. Rather than opening a new institutional chapter, it largely consolidates the arrangements already in place.

In many respects, that tension may become the defining legacy of the Midterm Review. The first decade of the New Urban Agenda succeeded in building an unprecedented global consensus around the importance of sustainable urbanisation. The second will almost certainly be judged on something different: whether governments are prepared to adapt the institutions of multilateral cooperation to the realities of implementation. Whether the institutions closest to citizens are given the authority, resources and political space to do it.

# The Municipal Movement Demands Beyond the 100 Days

If the 100 Days of Local Multilateralism demonstrated anything, it is that the international municipal movement is unified, strong, resilient and bold. Across the World Congress in Tangier, the High-Level Political Forum and the High-Level Meeting on the New Urban Agenda, local and regional governments consistently reaffirmed their role and contribution to global agendas. They are ready to ensure that multilateral institutions evolve to reflect the reality that sustainable development is increasingly delivered—and shaped—in territories.

Five demands are at the centre of the common and joint advocacy:

## A permanent place in global decision-making

Local and regional governments are seeking a stronger and more permanent standing within the coordination of the Sustainable Development Goals and the United Nations system—not only as implementers or providers of data, but as partners in shaping global priorities. The call for stronger multilevel governance, greater institutional recognition and a more structured political dialogue ran through every major milestone of the 100 Days, reflecting a shared ambition to move from consultation to co-governance.

## Financing that matches the mandate

Subnational governments account for around 55 per cent of global public investment, yet continue to operate within financial systems that were not designed for the responsibilities they now carry. The demand is not simply for more funding, but for financing mechanisms that reach territories directly, strengthen local fiscal capacity and recognise municipalities and regions as strategic partners in delivering global commitments.

## Public services, care and decent work as democratic infrastructure

The Global Framework Agreement on Social Dialogue and Cooperation signed by UCLG and Public Services International reinforced a message that resonated throughout the political cycle: quality public services depend on quality jobs. Social dialogue, fair working conditions and investment in the public workforce are not labour issues alone—they are fundamental conditions for resilient institutions, effective local governance and democratic trust. Care should be recognised as essential social infrastructure and as a public responsibility requiring investment, governance and stronger integration into global development agendas.

## Rights and equality with accountability

The Global Charter-Agenda for Human Rights in the City, the outcomes of the Women's Assembly and the growing attention to political violence against women in local leadership all argued for stronger accountability mechanisms, dedicated financing and institutional guarantees capable of turning political commitments into measurable progress.

## Culture and youth built in, not bolted on

Calls for a standalone Culture Goal ahead of the 2027 SDG Summit and the creation of an Intergenerational Council for Future Generations reflect a broader ambition: to integrate culture and future generations into global governance, rather than treating them as complementary themes.

# After 2030? The Conversation Already Underway

The High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) has always looked in two directions at once. It reviews progress on the Sustainable Development Goals while asking what more is needed to achieve them. This year, however, another layer of discussion became increasingly visible. Alongside the official programme, governments, scientists, universities, think tanks and international organisations began exploring a related question: how should the international community prepare for the world beyond 2030?

Although Member States have not launched negotiations on a successor to the 2030 Agenda, the Pact for the Future, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2024, explicitly identifies 2027 as an important milestone. Action 12(b) invites the High-Level Political Forum, meeting under the auspices of the General Assembly, “to consider in September 2027 how we will advance sustainable development by 2030 and beyond, as a priority and at the centre of our work.” The wording is carefully balanced. It neither reopens the 2030 Agenda nor predetermines a future framework. Instead, it acknowledges that preparing for the years beyond 2030 must begin before the current Agenda reaches its conclusion.

One of the most important processes underpinning this reflection is the preparation of the **Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR) 2027**, the United Nations’ flagship scientific assessment on sustainable development. Published every four years, the report has progressively become the principal science-policy interface informing discussions at the High-Level Political Forum and the SDG Summits.

The 2027 edition carries particular significance. It will provide the scientific evidence for the first global reflection envisaged in the Pact for the Future on advancing sustainable development “by 2030 and beyond”, making it much more than a stocktaking exercise. As the international community approaches the final years of the 2030 Agenda amid accelerating geopolitical tensions, technological disruption, demographic shifts and climate impacts, the report is expected to help identify the transformations that will shape the next phase of sustainable development.

The way the report is being prepared is equally significant. During February and March 2026, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) launched an open global call for stakeholder inputs, inviting governments, local and regional authorities, academia, civil society, Indigenous Peoples, youth organisations, practitioners and the private sector to contribute evidence, practical experience and recommendations. More than **340 submissions from 78 countries** were received, making this one of the broadest participatory exercises ever undertaken in the preparation of a GSDR. Rather than commenting on a completed draft, contributors were invited to help shape the report itself from the outset.

The summary of those contributions offers an illuminating snapshot of where international thinking is heading. Across regions and sectors, contributors called for stronger science-policy-society interfaces, greater policy coherence, better integration of climate, biodiversity, food, water and health agendas, more responsible governance of digital technologies, and renewed attention to inequality, resilience and institutional trust. Many also emphasised the importance of local action, territorial approaches and community-led transformation, recognising that global ambitions ultimately succeed—or fail—through implementation in places. Taken together, the submissions point towards a growing shift from addressing the Sustainable Development Goals as separate objectives towards understanding sustainable development as a series of interconnected social, economic, environmental and institutional transformations.

The **Independent Group of Scientists**, appointed by Secretary-General António Guterres in September 2025 following an extensive global consultation, reinforces that message. The fifteen members represent every region of the world and bring together expertise spanning economics, climate urbanism, inclusive development, digital innovation, governance, international law, water diplomacy, forestry, business, comparative law and Pacific studies. Among them are urban governance expert **Vanesa Castán Broto** (Spain),

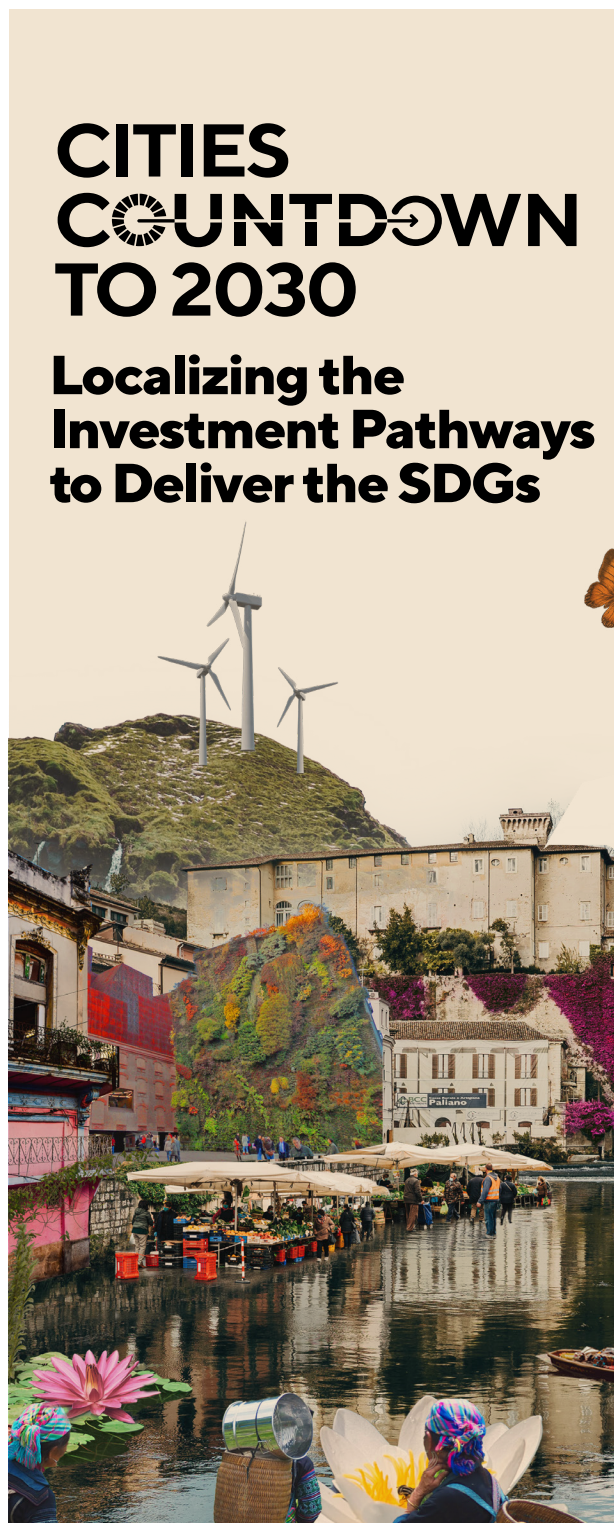
inclusive development specialist **Fabio Veras Soares** (Brazil), digital transformation expert **Mmaki Jantjies** (South Africa), and governance scholar **Steven Ratuva** (Fiji).

If the GSDR asks what knowledge should guide the next phase of sustainable development, the **Beyond GDP** initiative asks a different question: how should progress itself be measured? Published in May 2026, *Counting What Counts: A Compass of Progress for People and Planet* argues that while Gross Domestic Product remains an essential measure of economic activity, it is no longer sufficient on its own to capture the realities shaping people's lives. Wellbeing, resilience, inclusion, environmental sustainability and institutional trust all need to become part of the picture. The report has already moved beyond the expert stage.

During HLPF 2026, Member States launched an intergovernmental process—co-facilitated by Spain and Guyana—to consider how its recommendations could inform future international practice. In many respects, the initiative complements the GSDR: one seeks to strengthen the evidence base for sustainable development, while the other challenges the way progress is measured and valued.

For local and regional governments, this evolving debate is more than an opportunity to contribute ideas. As preparations for the 2027 GSDR continue and discussions on measuring progress evolve, local experiences, data and policy innovations will become increasingly valuable. Demonstrating the impact of local action, strengthening evidence on what works, building partnerships across sectors and levels of government, and scaling collaborative initiatives such as Catalonia's 2030 Alliance are likely to become as important as implementing the Goals themselves. As **David Perejil** noted during HLPF, the transition beyond 2030 should not begin with a new global framework, but with stronger ecosystems of collaboration capable of connecting governments, academia, civil society and communities around shared evidence and shared action.

Perhaps that is the most important lesson from HLPF 2026. The post-2030 agenda is not yet being negotiated. But the ideas, evidence and partnerships that will eventually shape it are already taking form. Long before governments decide what the next global framework should look like, they are beginning to redefine the questions it will need to answer.



# What Comes Next?

The mandate agreed in Tangier runs until 2029. The global agenda it must help deliver runs until 2030. That single year between them shapes everything that follows.

## The UCLG Calendar

The movement's own diary now runs on a three-year rhythm, and the new mandate's first full year is 2027.

The **UCLG Annual Retreat** returns to Barcelona in **February 2027**, the week in which the network turns the Tangier Outcome Document into a work plan. It is the first test of the mechanisms agreed at the Tangier Congress: the **Housing Justice Academy**, the **Women's Council for Equality**, the **Intergenerational Council**, the **Board on Decentralised Cooperation**, and the **Global Facility for Innovation in Local Public Services**, all of which arrive in Barcelona needing budgets, governance, and a first year of work.

The **Executive Bureau** will meet in Niterói in spring 2027, while the **World Council** convenes in Johannesburg, Gauteng, that October alongside the **VII World Forum on Local Economic Development**.

Culture returns to the centre in 2027, when **Jeonju**, in the Republic of Korea, hosts the **7th UCLG Culture Summit**, following Bilbao, Jeju, Buenos Aires, Izmir, Barcelona and Dublin. The timing is not incidental. In Tangier, the session on the proposed standalone **Culture Goal** set itself the task of demonstrating, before the 2027 SDG Summit and the post-2030 negotiations, that culture is not only valuable but "goalable": capable of carrying targets, indicators and local implementation pathways. Jeonju is where that argument has to be won. By then, the **Culture 21 Award** will have honored its 2026 winners, Ramallah and São Paulo, in Mexico City on 7 and 8 October 2026.

Participatory democracy will also feature prominently on the movement's calendar. From 21 to 23 September 2026, Kraków will host the **International Observatory on Participatory Democracy (OIDP) Conference**.

## The United Nations Changes Hands

The most consequential date on the horizon is not a summit. On **1 January 2027**, a new **United Nations Secretary-General** takes office, ending António Guterres's decade in the post. Seven candidates remain in the field — **Michelle Bachelet**, **María Fernanda Espinosa**, **Rafael Grossi**, **Rebeca Grynspan**, **Macky Sall**, **Carolyn Rodrigues Birkett** and **Olara Otunnu**, who joined the race at the last minute. Four of them are women. In eighty years, no woman has held the position. After a series of public dialogues with candidates, including the first UN Town Hall in July, the process now moves into the Security Council's private deliberations. A recommendation is expected before the end of the year.

Whoever emerges inherits the **UN80 reform initiative** and the opening of negotiations on a post-2030 development agenda. For a movement that spent the Tangier week arguing that local and regional governments are political actors rather than implementers, the identity of the next Secretary-General is not a spectator question. It determines who is listening.

## Delivery Time

Then comes the accounting. The **SDG Summit** convenes in New York in **September 2027** — the third since 2019, the last before the deadline, and the one at which Heads of State negotiate a political declaration against the evidence of the **Global Sustainable Development Report 2027**, published days earlier.

The same year brings the **IPCC Special Report on Climate Change and Cities**: the first report the panel has devoted to a place-based scale, and the first to seat municipal practitioners alongside researchers as authors. It exists because the urban community asked for it. It will now measure how that community uses it.

**UNFCCC COP32** goes to **Addis Ababa** in 2027 under the African Group's presidency, following the Mediterranean debate opened in Antalya this November 2026. **COP33**, in 2028, still has no host: India withdrew its bid in April 2026, leaving the Asia-Pacific Group to renominate. The same year delivers the **second Global Stocktake** under the Paris Agreement.

Following the 2026 UN Ocean Conference in Nice, attention now turns to the **UN Water Conference** in Abu Dhabi in December, where governments and stakeholders will seek to accelerate action on water security, sanitation and resilience as discussions on the agenda beyond 2030 gather pace.

Also in 2027, the **UN-Habitat Assembly**, the highest global decision-making body on sustainable urbanisation, holds its third session in Nairobi. And in **2030**, SDG 11 falls due. The New Urban Agenda, by contrast, runs to **2036** — the only global urban framework that outlives the deadline.

In 2028, the international community will mark the **80th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, while preparations for the 72nd session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW72) will continue to advance the **global care agenda**, including the collective efforts of the Global Alliance for Care and reinforcing care as a human rights and gender equality priority.

## Where Cities Gather

The municipal calendar moves west. **World Urban Forum 14** convenes in **Mexico City in 2028** — coming back to Latin America after Medellín in 2014 and Habitat III in Quito. Bids for **WUF15 in 2030** close on **30 November 2026**, with the handover at WUF14. The **ICLEI World Congress** returns in 2027 on its triennial cycle, and **Metropolis** enters its 2027–2029 strategic period, with its Board of Directors elected in Tangier on the final morning.

Two world expos open in 2027, weeks apart. **GREEN×EXPO 2027** runs in **Yokohama from 19 March to 26 September**, under the theme “Scenery of the Future for Happiness”. It’s a hundred-hectare horticultural exposition built on a returned military communications base and explicitly framed as a model for society beyond 2030. **Expo 2027 Belgrade** runs from **15 May to 15 August**, the first world exposition held in the Western Balkans, themed “Play for Humanity”. The **World Expo** then travels to **Riyadh**, from 1 October 2030 to 31 March 2031, straddling the SDG deadline.

Cities also host the world’s largest events. The **Summer Olympics** return to **Los Angeles** in July 2028; the **Winter Games** go to the **French Alps** in February 2030, spread across Haute-Savoie, Savoie, Briançon and Nice, with roughly nine in ten venues existing or temporary. Both are, in the end, exercises in municipal delivery.

## Key Dates Ahead

- **8-22 September 2026**  
UN General Assembly  
New York City
- **19-21 September 2026**  
Urban 20  
New York City
- **1-31 October 2026**  
Urban October
- **5 October 2026**  
World Habitat Day
- **7-8 October 2026**  
UCLG Culture 21 Award Ceremony  
Mexico City
- **29 October 2026**  
International Day of Care and Support
- **31 October 2026**  
World Cities Day
- **9-20 November 2026**  
COP31  
Antalya
- **8-10 December 2026**  
UN Water Conference  
Abu Dhabi
- **February 2027**  
UCLG Retreat  
Barcelona

# Join the conversation

The High-Level Political Forum has concluded in New York and the 100 Days of Multilateralism have come to an end. But the debate that began has not ended.

Over the course of these 100 days, cities and regions have raised questions that no single forum can resolve on its own—and that do not end when the agenda concludes.

The Urban Journalism Institute, and the *Municipal Times* with it, will continue to be there to keep reporting on these issues.

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