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TOGETHER TOWARDS THE SUMMIT OF THE FUTURE



The Global Taskforce Day, the second day of the 2024 UCLG Retreat, focused on the main multilateral milestones in 2024, particularly on the work of the UN Secretary-General Advisory Group on Local and Regional Governments and the Summit of the Future.

Since its inception in 2013, the Global Taskforce has gathered the organised constituency of local and regional governments and has worked as one to enhance its political representation in the international sphere, developing joint policy products and reinforcing in-depth policy dialogues in UN processes. This path towards alignment has been consolidated since Habitat III, particularly in the past five years, by securing spaces for local and regional governments in critical processes such as the High-Level Political Forum, the two SDG Summits and through convening the World Assembly of Local

and Regional Governments, the critical review and follow-up mechanism of the New Urban Agenda. It is also worth mentioning the crucial achievements in acknowledging and recognising the local and regional governments' work in the Climate Change Agreements and the increased momentum of the localisation strategy within the UN sphere.

With the UN Summit of the Future as the 2024 political and policy target, the Global Taskforce focused on the work carried out by the United Nations Secretary-General Advisory Group on Local and Regional Governments, highlighting the progress made towards the United Nations' Pact for the Future and other important milestones. Representatives of the UNSG Advisory Group gathered in the meeting of the Global Taskforce to discuss the strategy towards the Summit and share the work done in the past months.

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Emilia Saiz, the Secretary-General of UCLG, introduced the day emphasising the importance of strategic input for the upcoming UN Summit of the Future, stressing the need for explicit reference to local governments and localisation in policy drafts. While the Zero Draft of the outcome document does not include the suggested references from the Advisory Group, there are still opportunities for influence, including engagement with the mayor group at the UN and direct input through stakeholder meetings.

Fatimetou Abdel Malick, President of Nouakchott & UCLG, Co-President and co-chair of the UNSG Advisory Group, reported on the work of the Advisory Group. She underscored the need for a formal mechanism to ensure continuous representation of Local and Regional Governments (LRGs) beyond the Summit of the Future. In addition, she introduced the three proposed mechanisms for LRGs to access the UN System directly.

The first proposed option is to strengthen the advisory committee/group of the LRGs to the UN Secretary-General. The second option is to establish an LRG Mechanism - coordinating space to ensure the LRG Mechanism stays independent and self-organised. This will allow the LRGs to advise the General Assembly, ECOSOC, and the UN Secretariat. The last option involves establishing the LRG Committee – a subsidiary organ of ECOSOC. This is inspired by the Committee of Regions of the EU and would allow the institutionalisation of the LRG within the UN.

Reaffirming the idea of having a formal, permanent space for local governments within the UN system, **Paola Pabón**, the Prefect of Pichincha, Vice President of UCLG for the Forum of Regions and member of the UNSG Advisory Group, stressed the importance of defining the characteristics of this space to protect and advance the interests of local governments on the global stage.

The Governor of Kisumu and member of the UNSG Advisory group, **Peter Anyang' Nyong'o**, called for a concerted effort to develop effective strategies. He stressed that “we do not need to convince ourselves any more that we need representation at the UN” and further highlighted the pivotal role of local governments as representatives of the people. The Governor further emphasised the need for a pressure group in New York to advocate for their interests.

Echoing the statement made by previous speakers, **Arnaud Ngatcha**, Deputy Mayor of the City of Paris, stressed the need for collaborative work. He further noted that “Nobody gives us the power. We have to go and get it... We must find our place in the Summit of the Future and follow our clear agenda.”

Gino Van Begin, Secretary-General of ICLEI, urged attendees to seize the opportunity presented by the UN Secretary-General's interest in enhancing partnerships with local governments. He emphasised the importance of showcasing the value of local government initiatives as local governments are “the best self-organised UN Constituency; this is our strength.” He further advocated for a dedicated mechanism linking LRGs to the UN General Assembly.

The importance of broad regional representation and advocated focusing on regional balance in UN discussions was underscored by **Carles Llorens**,

the Secretary-General of ORU Fogar. He emphasised the need for strong advocacy to ensure adequate recognition and resources for regional governments. Moreover, he also stressed the importance of solid regional governments with a specific budget and territorial equilibrium.

Fabiana Goyeneche, Director of International Relations of the Municipality of Montevideo, emphasised the value of flexibility and strategic planning in advancing the agenda of local governments within the UN. She called for coordinated efforts to identify allies and establish a roadmap for future engagements.

The Mayor of Heidelberg, **Eckart Würzner**, underscored and affirmed the importance of working with partners at all levels, especially on urgent agendas such as climate change. He called on showing national governments why LRGs are part of the conversation by setting up their agenda as cities through networks such as the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Local Governments for Sustainability.

Henry Hall, Principal Policy Officer of the Greater London Authority, stressed that, despite the limitation in their competencies, city regions and local governments are often leading the way beyond national government standards. He also encouraged continued engagement towards the Summit of the Future and sharing experience and expertise between cities.

The discussion underscored the determination of local and regional government representatives to secure a formal and influential role within the UN System. While challenges lie ahead, the consensus among attendees was clear: local governments must continue to advocate for their interests and leverage their unique contributions to global sustainability and development.



LOCAL HIGH-IMPACT COALITIONS AS THE GLOBAL SDG RESCUE PLAN

The 2023 UCLG Retreat occurred just a few days after the devastating earthquake in Türkiye and Syria. Significant human loss and damage to infrastructure and cultural heritage continue to have repercussions in the countries. UCLG President and Mayor of Konya, **Uğur İbrahim Altay**, pointed out: “Do not forget that cities have centuries of history, but many of them have been damaged in recent years due to disasters. Ensuring the resilience of cities is critical to minimise the impact of disasters and ensure that our cities are places where people shelter, work and live.”

The time is ticking to meet the SDGs, which means creating more resilience and inclusive, sustainable development in cities. After the SDG Summit in September 2023, the United Nations set up an SDG Rescue Plan, which relies on multi-stakeholder localisation commitments and high-impact coalitions. These will bring significant benefits to cities and help minimise the impact of disasters, from earthquakes to the effects of climate change.

As the largest global organisation representing local and regional governments and the worldwide population, UCLG is well-placed to raise awareness and mobilise the international community. **Pablo Fernández Marmissolle-Daguerre**, Assistant Secretary-General for Partnerships at UCLG, shared perspectives on accelerating SDG localisation to put them back on track. “The way forward is not in doing things alone and in silos, but instead, we should focus on high-impact coalitions. UCLG represents more than half of the world’s population.” Later this year, many SDGs will be reviewed at the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), with a high-impact leadership commitment for the goals in review being critical to organise efforts around localisation.

In the session, local and regional leaders issued the calls from the local and regional government constituency to achieve goals 1, 2, 13, 16, and 17, as they are the ones that will be reviewed later in the year during the HLPF:

CALLS TO ACTION



UCLG Commitment: *Uğur İbrahim Altay, UCLG President.* “As the largest network of local and regional governments, UCLG wishes to reinstate our commitment to continue strengthening the Global Taskforce, to ensure that our efforts to bolster the role of local and regional governments in global tables are fruitful.”



SDG 1 (No Poverty): *Philippe Rio, Mayor of Grigny,* called for specific and pragmatic initiatives led by local communities that tackle poverty and guarantee everyone’s right to the city.



SDG 2 (No Hunger): *Mohamed Sefiani, Mayor of Chefchaouen,* drew attention to the recently increased food safety and hunger worldwide and called for the localisation of this SDG.



SDG 13 (Climate Action): *Sharon Dijksma, Mayor of Utrecht,* drew attention to CHAMP, the coalition for high-ambition multilevel partnerships to help the government design new and ambitious climate action.



SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions): *Jan Van Zanen, Mayor of The Hague,* addressed the rise in deadly victims and violent confrontations in 2023, emphasizing why identifying and solving the root causes of conflicts matters. To this end, municipalities foster community cohesion and peaceful coexistence.



SDG 17 (Partnerships for the goals): *Paola Pabón, Mayor of Pichincha,* underlined the importance of solidarity for sustainable development, boosting all the voices and finding authentic, efficient ways of collaborating.

FOSTERING ECOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATION: ACTIONING SDG13



SDG13 calls for Climate Action, one of the top priorities of the local and regional government constituency. “The world is not in a perfect shape regarding environmental sustainability. We are not on track in various dimensions, from oceans and water quality, nature and biodiversity to land use or climate and air quality. At the same time, we have advanced a lot regarding local and regional representations and our offerings since the Global Taskforce was created,” **Gino Van Begin**, Secretary General of ICLEI, explained.

Kobie Brand, ICLEI’s Global Coordinator for Biodiversity and ICLEI Deputy Secretary General explained that the UN Convention on Biological Diversity is a success story with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework from 2022 at the apex. She outlined important events and networks, such as Cities with Nature and Regions with Nature, the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, COP28, the Plastics Treaty, the World Water Forum and the Convention on Desertification, all of which are being

supported by an unprecedented number of cities and municipalities around the world. These examples also show how multilateral local governments can work well with the UN on specific issues.

Next, **Benjamin Jance** from the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy pointed out the importance of championing multi-level governance, for example, through CHAMP, to deliver on the NDCs and urban and climate adaptation plans. With the upcoming IPCC special report on climate change in cities, informing the process and elevating the local knowledge necessary for sustainable development is essential.

Similarly, **Alvaro Soldevila**, Lead, Programs and Resilient Practice, representing Lauren Sorkin from the Resilient Cities Network, stressed the importance of championing climate change: “We have morphed from managing risk to climate adaptation work, supporting energy, water and community resilience for our partners.”

Catherine Gall, Executive Director of the Entrepreneurship Territory Innovation Chair from the Global Observatory of Sustainable Proximities, introduced the work of her institution, which is inspired by Professor Carlos Moreno’s idea of the 15-minute city and the 30-minute territory. She explained that many cities are considering and embracing this notion of urban proximities to give their residents easy access to essential needs. Access to health services, equitable housing and other critical essential services are crucial areas for knowledge production within the Observatory.

“Building resilience with people and nature must be a priority,” **Natalia Uribe**, Secretary General of Regions 4, emphasised, explaining that the greatest threats to humanity are all environmental and that during this critical decade of action, every year counts. Some examples of actions came from Laurène Yard, Project Officer on Political Initiatives at the World Water Council, working towards the 2024 World Water Forum in Bali, and from **André Viola**, Departmental Council of Aude, who explained how, with the support of UCLG, his constituency was able to make crucial water management decisions.

Lastly, **Yunus Arikan**, Head of Global Policy and Advocacy at ICLEI, gave an overview of the achievement of last year’s COP in Dubai as well as an outlook for the coming years. “Climate change and climate action is a topic so huge on its own that it is on par with the discussion about the SDGs,” he said, calling for an end to the dichotomy between the SDG world and the climate world. At the COP28 in Dubai last December, ambitious, inclusive, multilevel agreements and events created an essential bridge between the local and subnational levels. He expressed his hope that this will inform the way towards COP30 in Belém, Brazil, in 2025, which will also be more inclusive of young people. Before closing the event, the importance of CHAMP was underlined once more.

LOCAL PUBLIC SERVICE PROVISION AT THE CENTRE: ACTIONING SDG1 AND SDG2



The imperative to accelerate the implementation of policies and actions to enhance equality, acknowledge care and its importance, and become more inclusive and adaptive has never been more pressing.

Greg Munro, Director of Cities Alliance, highlighted that while the world is rapidly urbanising, the situation with poverty, primary access to sanitation and safe drinking water should improve, as data show that progress has stopped. For him, the reasons for this fallback are “the mismanagement of public funds at the local level” and “bad political commitment.” To address this scenario, he encouraged leaders to translate the UCLG Pact for the Future into tangible policies and actions.

Ana Moreno, Technical Secretary of the Global Alliance for Care, also highlighted the need to transform the existing recognition of care into “policies, budgets and national regulations.” She stressed that “care is undervalued and unrecognised, but care is central to life” and needs to be included in a transversal way in global and local agendas.

Another critical topic raised at the session was food security, sovereignty, and the sustainability of our food systems. **Saul Morris**, representing the Urban Food Systems Coalition, highlighted that food prices are rising worldwide, especially in urban areas, and this trend is affecting the people most vulnerable. “Food is one of the cornerstones

of our culture,”- highlighted Mr Morris, and local governments have several tools to regulate reasonable prices and ensure food security for their residents, including licensing, zoning, or public procurement.

Jordi Vaquer, Secretary-General of Metropolis, suggested thinking differently about metropolises in the current context, encouraging embracing the notion of “metropolitan governance”. He emphasised the need for “connecting the city to its systems: migration, nature, energy, water, food, and not pretending there are two realities: cities vs the rest of the world.” To bring attention to these concepts, Metropolis proposes celebrating World Metropolitan Day on 14 October as an Official UN Day.

Clara Keller-Skupieñ, City Diplomacy Manager of the Mayors Migration, stressed the need to continue building on successful collaboration with cities to “go beyond the normal discussion about migration and refugees.” She also introduced the Global Cities Fund of Migrants, which allows cities to access funding to help migrants, refugees, and internally displaced persons.

Sophie van Haasen, Coordinator of the Mayor’s Mechanism of the Global Forum for Migration and Development, echoed the need for cities to access funds to support refugees directly and addressed the Call to Action for Migrants and Refugees, which has, over the past

years gathered over 200 local commitments to localise the Global Compacts for Migrants and Refugees.

Elizeu Chaves, Executive Coordinator of ICPD30 Secretariat, UNFPA, stressed that “cities are engines for social change and prosperity.” However, cities and the world must adapt to another population profile – the ageing population. The world is ageing rapidly; by 2050, 12.3 per cent of the global population will be 60 or older. How cities will adapt to this trend is a pertinent question. The localisation of ICPD30, the agreement between UCLG and UNFPA, is critical to fulfil the promises made to current and future populations.

Katherine Kline, Co-chair of the GAP Older Persons Group, presented the Cities for All Global Initiative and Campaign. She stressed the need to have representation of older persons as a significant group in international organisations. She called for governments and other partners to look at ageing not as “a liability, look at the older persons as contributors to the economy and the society.” Including this group and persons with disabilities is critical to achieving equality.

As we navigate the complex social challenges of our time, it is evident that prioritising human rights, care, and equality in local governance is not just an option but an urgent imperative. By recognising the importance of inclusivity, acknowledging care and the necessity of adapting to the constantly changing context within cities, we can move toward more equitable, resilient communities for all.



SAN JOSÉ, COSTA RICA, TO HOST UCLG EXECUTIVE BUREAU 2024

The UCLG Executive Bureau 2024 is set to convene in San José, Costa Rica, from 17 to 19 April 2024, as presented by Mayor Johnny Araya, Co-president of UCLG. The announcement highlighted the importance of the meeting for the city and the international community as it would be an essential milestone in the year’s calendar, just before the HLPF meeting in July 2024 and the Summit of the Future in September 2024.

The theme of the UCLG Executive Bureau will be “The Power of the People,” building on the theme of unity shared in the Retreat. It aims to amplify the role of local and regional government leadership in shaping a more inclusive and sustainable future, as well as an opportunity to unite people and support local communities. This special year is reinforced with San José celebrating its 200th anniversary as the capital of Costa Rica in 2023 and holding the Ibero-American Capital of Cultures title in 2023.



PEACEBUILDING FROM THE BOTTOM-UP: ACTIONING SDG16

In his remarks on 2024 priorities to the General Assembly, António Guterres, UN Secretary-General, highlighted to member states that “peace can achieve wonders that wars never will.” The role of local and regional governments has become more relevant than ever in promoting peace and stability.

Carles Llorens, Secretary General of ORU Fogar, highlighted the vital work carried out by the Association of European Border Regions over the past fifty years in different parts of the world, including Latin America, where they have faced border conflicts and contributed to peace processes.

The perspective on the need to integrate culture into global development processes was emphasised by **Stephen Wyber**, Director of Policy and Advocacy at the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, who pointed out that development requires a behaviour change and that culture plays a crucial role in how we understand and respect each other.

On the other hand, **Ernestine Ronai**, head of the Observatory of Violence against Women from the Seine-Saint-Denis department, addressed the importance of including violence against women on the international agenda, highlighting its impact on democracy, social justice and women’s participation in decision-making.

Representing UNCDF in the Málaga Coalition for Municipal Finance, **David Jackson** stressed the importance of promoting local and regional government finances as part of development financing. Jackson underscored the need for collaboration between local and regional governments and international organisations to ensure equitable and sustainable development.

José Manuel Ribeiro, Mayor of Valongo and President of the International Observatory of Participatory Democracy highlighted the role of participatory democracy in building peaceful and inclusive societies, emphasising the importance of citizen participation mechanisms in combating populism and misinformation.

In the view of **Francisco Toajas**, Deputy of the Provincial Council of Seville, Co-Chair of the UCLG Committee on Local Economic and Social Development and Vice President of FAMSÍ, the relationship between local economic development and peace is fundamental. He emphasised the importance of strengthening local and regional governments to ensure the success of the 2030 Agenda and combat protectionism and setbacks in the ecological transition agenda.

Mauricio Rodas, former Mayor of Quito during the Habitat III Conference, presented the Global Commission for Urban SDG Finance, composed of mayors, finance and urban experts, and scholars. He highlighted the financial challenges facing cities in the current context, emphasising the need for reforms in the global financial architecture to ensure that cities have the necessary resources to address 21st-century challenges.

Local and Regional governments play a crucial role in promoting peace, stability, and sustainable development at both local and global levels, and their collaboration with international organisations, together with their commitment to citizen participation, is essential to addressing the challenges of the current world to build a safer and more prosperous future for all.



HIGHLIGHT OF THE DAY

*“So-so-so-solidarité, ensemble avec
les femmes du monde entier”*

One of the most significant moments of the day occurred during the intervention by Ernestine Ronai, Head of the Observatory of Violence against Women in the Seine-Saint-Denis department. Ernestine is not only a historical figure in French feminist activism but also a pioneer in the fight against femicides in France.

Ernestine delivered a powerful message, emphasising that “democracy and social justice cannot exist if we deny women access to decision-making.” She then rallied all participants to join her in a unified chant.

What's on Today?

21 FEBRUARY 2024

Factory of the Future

The third day of the UCLG Annual Retreat is dedicated to showcasing, sharing and interacting between the ecosystem of local and regional governments and their partners. It will serve as a platform to showcase, share and engage with contributions to the Pact for the Future.

From 9 to 10:30 a.m., the Lampedusa Charter Policy Lab takes place. Under the leadership of the Municipality of Lampedusa, the first Human Mobility Policy Lab brings together actors from various levels of government, civil society, international organisations, academia and migrant associations to discuss concrete strategies to address the challenges faced by migrants and their families.

The Marketplace is deployed from 10:45 a.m. to 1 p.m., offering a dynamic presentation of the network components and partner initiatives aligned with the Pact for the Future. This interactive session facilitates “speed dating” style exchanges, encouraging the sharing of practices, initiatives and tools that contribute to implementing the Pact for the Future.

The afternoon session, from 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m., will focus on localisation trends, emphasising their role in achieving the SDGs. From fighting informality and protecting nature to emerging trends such as care, artificial intelligence and sustainable urban planning, the discussion aims to integrate these trends into UCLG's collective advocacy and work.

From 3:30 p.m. to 5 p.m., the Retreat will look at how to Localize the New Agenda for Peace, building on the Future Envisioning Exercise held in January 2024, which gathered peacebuilding networks and partners, The crucial role of local and regional governments in implementing the key features of this global framework for peace will be highlighted.

Finally, the day concludes with the Stocktaking Plenary session from 5 p.m. to 5:30 p.m., which will provide an opportunity to reflect on the ideas, discussions and results obtained throughout the various sessions of the day.

X SAYS

#LISTEN2CITIES: SHAPING THE FUTURE AT UCLG RETREAT


The second day of the @uclg_org Retreat moves to X, transforming into a hub for sharing initiatives and learning with the @GlobalTaskforce in the spotlight.

In a space that brings together local and regional elected leaders worldwide, #Listen2Cities is more than a hashtag; it's an imperative. Cities are voicing their needs, and our responsibility is to heed their call, recognising that the path to a sustainable world begins with local efforts. Cities are at the forefront of the transformation and play a key role in achieving the SDGs, highlighting the need for intensified dialogue at various levels.

This is the opportunity to set priorities for the year, review the SDG Rescue Plan and promote governance based on democracy, solidarity, care for our natural resources and commitment to future generations.

The Summit of the Future is a crucial milestone in our collective journey toward a more sustainable and equitable world. As we eagerly await its arrival, the urgency of fostering collaboration becomes more apparent. Our ability to address the challenges outlined in the 2030 Agenda depends on our shared commitment to work together. In an interconnected world (and not just through social networks), where challenges transcend borders, partnerships are not just a smart strategy but a necessity.

Through this spirit of collaboration, we can unlock the potential for breakthrough innovations, execute well-coordinated actions, and ultimately produce tangible results in realising our aspirations for sustainable cities.

The core message remains unwavering: united, we overcome obstacles, leaving an indelible impact on sustainable and urban development trajectories. 

Emojis add a touch of dynamism, but the essence remains clear: through collaboration, we overcome barriers and achieve lasting goals for sustainable urban development.

FILL IN THE SURVEY!

Climate change and sustainable development both depend on localisation. Fill in the UCLG survey on the role of local and regional governments and their associations for the 2030 agenda!

The survey aims to help local and regional governments, their associations, and their networks, both regional and global, develop and present the joint report “Towards the localisation of the SDGs” to the United Nations in the forthcoming HLPF in July 2024.

THE LOCALIZATION OF THE SDGs AND THE 2030 AGENDA

Survey on the role of local and regional governments and their associations (2024 edition)

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



 <https://survey.uclg.org/>