



**UCLG
CGLU**

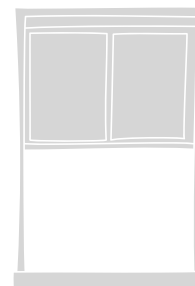
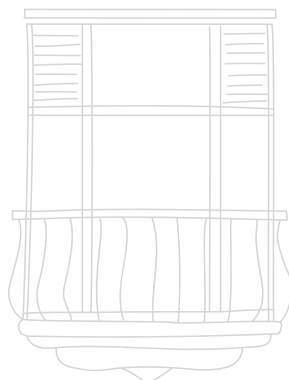
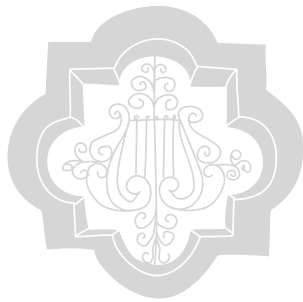


**RETREAT
& CAMPUS
REPORT 2021**

UCLGmeets



A GLOBAL COMMUNITY THAT CARES



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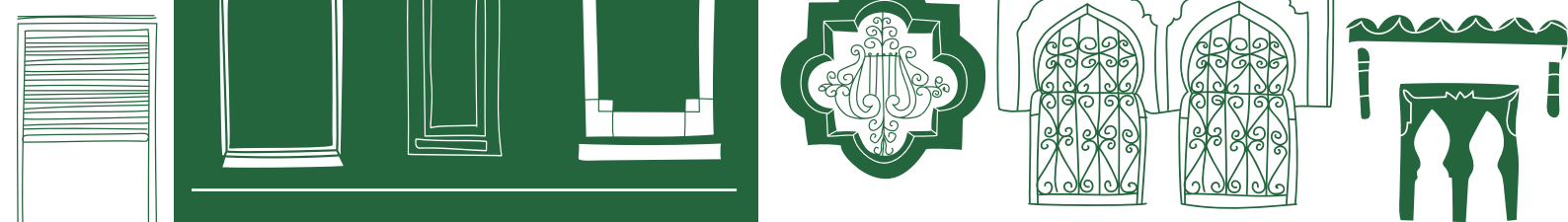
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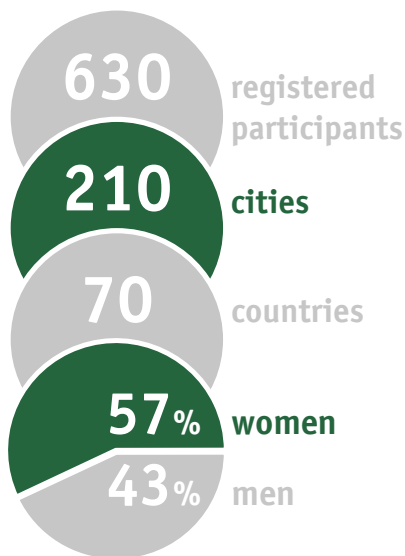
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Outcomes of the 2021 UCLG Retreat

The UCLG Annual Retreat is a week-long gathering that provides an opportunity for the keynotes of the organization and partners to define synergies and develop actions in line with the work plans set out by the governing bodies. This year was truly a first, in many ways.

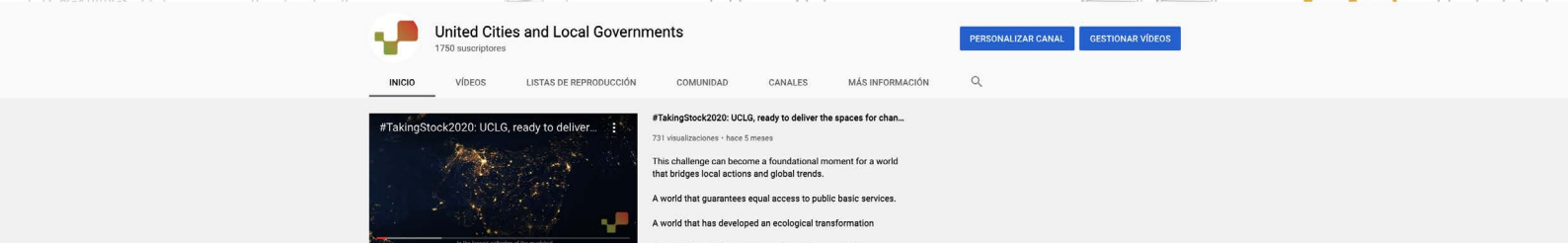
Following the Year of Synchronization, and the 2020 Retreat which paved the way for the alignment of the Network, the 2021 Retreat worked **to incorporate the dimension of care within its gatherings**. Under the banner “UCLG, a global community that cares”, the UCLG Retreat took the form of an entire week of virtual meetings unlike any meeting carried out since the beginning of the pandemic. The 2021 iteration aimed to open the windows of the World Secretariat, to bring each other close and make participants feel like they were sitting side by side. The care agenda was envisioned by the Secretariat, and with solidarity at the core of the efforts, the World Organization laid out the goal to become a Platform of Platforms, to think about the next generation of trainings that could be used by other networks and producing.



The numbers speak for themselves: More than 630 registered participants came together to give life to the largest Retreat Experience to date. The World Organization achieved the objective of being in the balconies and windows of all of the sections that represent UCLG.



With a TV set to ensure high quality production, a permanently staffed Help Desk giving members and partners the kind of personalized attention typically given just a click away, as well as new ways to display the participants, the Retreat wasn't just simply about attending, but spending a week together as a shared experience where everyone was asked to open their own windows and share what their ideal communities of caring look like.



In addition, new and existing videos were displayed through our [UCLG TV](#), harnessing all of our knowledge and learning materials in thematic playlists to support each of the themes of the Retreat. The first ever interactive programme was launched via the [UCLGMeets platform](#), creating a one stop shop for all you needed to know for the Retreat, such as links, concept notes, background documents.

Without a physical space to meet and drink coffee, the Retreat offered instead a virtual gathering space for bilateral meetings called Wonder, that allowed participants to wander and mingle digitally, and wonder at the seamless integration of bilateral conversations in the digital space. Beverages had to be brought at home, however.

What does our retreat sound like? Sister Sledge’s “We are Family” became the motto of the gatherings, but that was not all. Culture has been an antidote during the pandemic, and music has been very much a comfort for all in this time. Through a questionnaire to the participants, we managed to include a soundtrack of 300+ songs gathered from across the network, bringing personal stories to our ears.

The week’s themes were structured around the three axes of the Pact for the Future -people, planet, and government. Last, but certainly not least, the week kicked off with, for the very first time, an all-UCLG meeting of the Secretariats and their staff. Throughout the week, the different thematic sessions allowed us to share various priorities, such as the #CitiesAreListening Experience, an integral element of the People axis of the UCLG Pact for the Future, by building on the lessons learned in the experiences and highlighting the importance of rethinking just how we relate to each other in order to truly develop a world that cares.

The UCLG Retreat further explored what is next for our waves of action, with inputs from all of our networks, and integrating them with the axis of the Pact for Planet; and, by addressing the digital revolution of the movement, the Retreat also allowed for exploring the relationship between municipalism and governments.

Building on the Assembly Track of our Durban World Summit of Local and Regional Leaders, the Sections presented their priorities for the year, aligning them with the process to renew our strategic priorities as we move towards the 2022 World Congress in Daejeon.

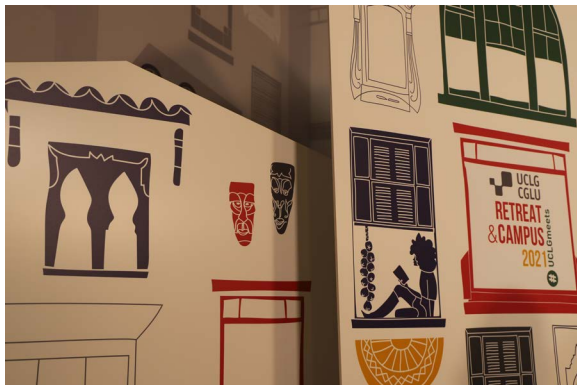
The following report presents a summary of the discussions of the week.



UCLG, a window of opportunity

The 2021 Retreat opened the windows of the Global Home to all of the Network. Under the theme “A global community that cares”, the 2021 retreat truly brought to light the human strength of UCLG, showcasing the care that makes UCLG the global home that it truly is.

The first day of the UCLG Retreat, “Window of Opportunity”, allowed for the gathering of the first-ever Team Meeting of the entire network of UCLG. The digital format helped the World Organization transform the expectations of a Retreat, allowing to bring everyone on board from the different sections, and to feel closer than they have since our last in-person meeting. Representatives from each of the regional sections shared what UCLG meant to them, and what they understood by “a global community that cares”.



“Our Retreat opens our windows to a year that is complex but thrilling. It will allow us to further the debates on the Pact for the Future that our World Organization has been mandated to implement. A new social contract for the people, for the planet and for government.”

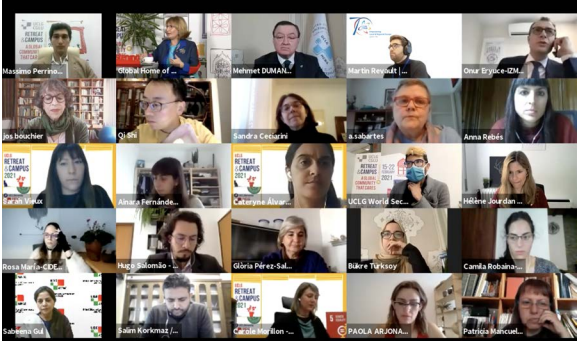
Mohamed Boudra,

UCLG President, Mayor of Al-Hoceima, President of the AMPC

Secretary General **Emilia Saiz** underscored the novelty of the 2021 Retreat by highlighting it as “an experience” that could offer participants different spaces and a glimpse of the UCLG Work Plan. The “Window of Opportunity” segment introduced glimpses of what was to come. The World Secretariat provided brief introductions of what **learning, advocating, and researching** with UCLG had been during the year. The Learning work area introduced learning tools developed in collaboration with

the Barcelona Provincial Council, and explored how they were looking for a new space in Learning through the evolution of the Learning Forum. Each session was accompanied by video content, also known as our UCLGTV experience, combining both new and existing content in order to underscore the discussions.

The **UCLG Policy Team** provided a brief overview of the Policy priorities for the year: Working towards a new social contract for the People, the Planet, and Government and strengthening the policy making efforts from the World Organization were highlighted as critical to develop a stronger advocacy momentum. Building linkages and enhancing between our policymaking mechanisms, the UCLG Committees, and our policy and advocacy agenda was underscored as a critical priority moving forward: with the Durban legacy as a starting point, and the Pact for the Future as an end goal.



The **UCLG Research team** offered a brief glimpse into the GOLD VI process: with the aim of leaving no one behind, and acknowledging the intersections of the different

vulnerabilities, the Report will strive at reframing inequality, placing equality and justice at the core of the global agendas and recognize the agency of local and regional governments.



The political leadership of UCLG took the stage during the opening session, with Mayor of Kitchener **Berry Urbanovic** highlighted the importance of making national governments realize what an important player local and regional governments (LRG) are, and all that we bring to the table. LRGs are at the forefront of serving citizens.



Mayor of Soria and UCLG Envoy for the Urban Agenda on behalf of the Presidency **Carlos Martinez** argued that the pandemic has shown the need for local governments to have a seat at the decision-making table. We must keep pushing, he argued, so as to not take steps backwards. Multilateralism is key to be able to solve the needs of citizens, and it is critical to include local and regional governments in the decision-making processes.

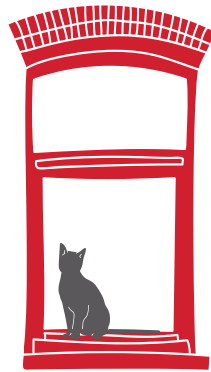
Our first gathering of the staff of the UCLG Secretariats was a clear sign of how much

UCLG has truly become a community for all of its members: one that cares, that brings us all together no matter the distance.

Two principle questions framed the exchange: “What does UCLG mean to you?” and “What do you understand by a “global community that cares”? Representatives from the secretariats from all over the world came together to define what UCLG meant to them.



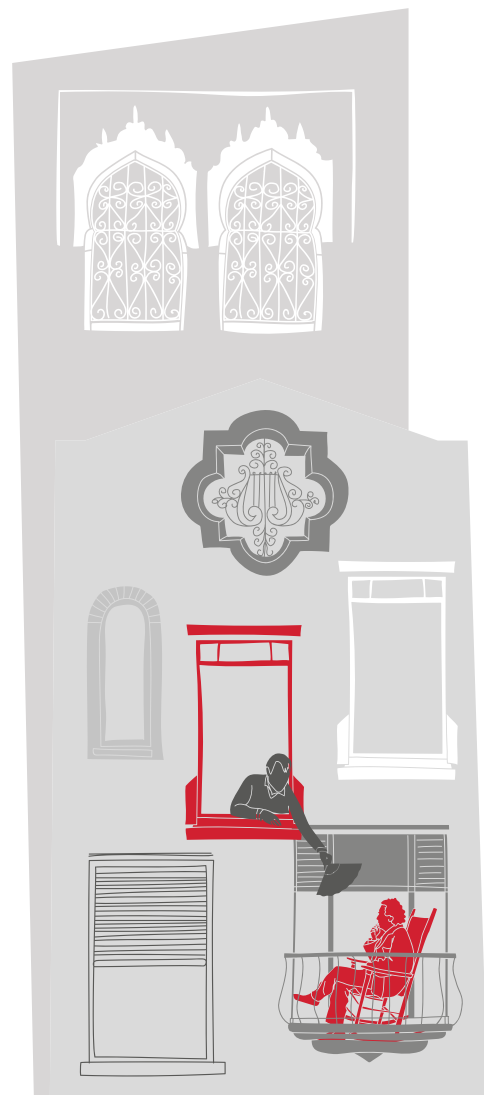
“We have very important local government challenges in all countries. We value UCLG for its ability to connect Scottish and European initiatives with our peers all over the world. Furthermore, UCLG membership and the partnerships we develop help us stand taller in our own domestic negotiations, knowing that there is a worldwide family of peers that is behind us.”



Serafín Pazos-Vidal
COSLA



Participants identified UCLG as a space in which they could share visions, participate and coordinate dialogue; a platform for learning and a medium, as one participant named it, of “ideas, opportunities, friendship”. Secretary General **Emilia Saiz** underscored that UCLG needs to deepen this sense of community by becoming a true platform of platforms.



The Sections in the driver's seat: Aligning our work towards the renewal of our Strategic Priorities

Our UCLG World Council in 2020, hosted by Guangzhou, paved the way for the renewal of our strategic priorities leading up to our World Congress in 2022. With the Pact for the Future as an end-goal, the UCLG Sections presented their priorities for the upcoming years, and their political leadership presented some of the actions adopted at the local level in each world region during the pandemic, and how these had allowed them to shape their priorities for the coming year. Building on the synchronization work initiated by our Assembly Track in our World Congress in Durban, the UCLG sections showcased how their priorities built into the overall renewal of UCLG's strategic priorities.



Under this umbrella, the sections each had dedicated sessions to outline their priorities, share their latest updates, and make the most of the Windows of Opportunity the 2021 Retreat was offering. These sessions too enjoyed the intimate setting and environment

of the full Retreat experience, allowing them to gather their members in a unique and fruitful manner.

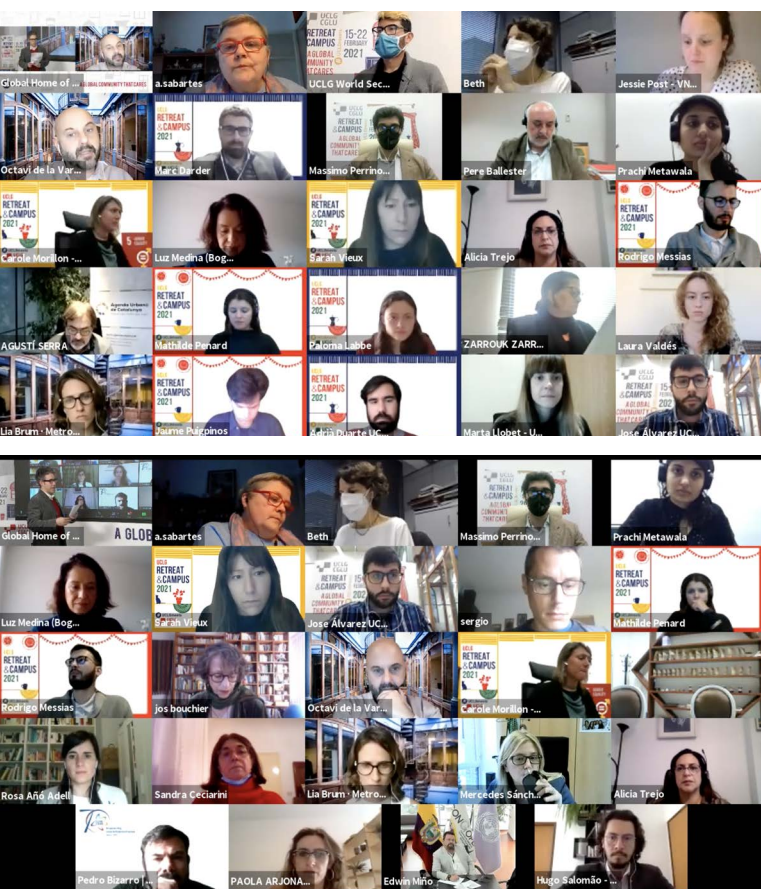
Metropolis and the Forum of Regions

The first of these sessions was led by Metropolis and the Forum of Regions. Metropolis introduced how the pandemic had deepened inequalities, which led to the launch of the Call to Rethink Metropolitan Spaces, in line with the UCLG Decalogue for the COVID era. During the session, they further addressed the adoption of their Strategic Action Plan 2021-2023, which included the opportunities and challenges of metropolises for the coming year.

Some of the critical issues underlined during the session were the need to address care, health, and the use of metropolitan spaces. The Strategic Action Plan, they argued, builds on the processes developed in 2020, and upon the need to co-create metropolitan governance among all stakeholders. The three action lines for Metropolis were brought forward by the Secretary General, namely:

- Metropolitan diplomacy; building a metropolitan narrative to enrich other debates
- Capacity building; providing reference frameworks to adapt to the reality and share it with other members
- Joint spaces of debate; discussing challenges among the Metropolitan Network as well as all the regional sections

The Forum of Regions underlined how the pandemic has exacerbated the fragilities of urban territories, and that it is critical to cooperate among spheres of government to build social cohesion as a means to truly ensure a symbiosis between the rural and urban spheres. Members of the Forum of Region



underscored the territorial asymmetries of our territories, how the pandemic has highlighted our fragilities in the territory. Cooperation between the different levels of government has become a priority.

“Empowered cities need prosperous territories” was one of the key conclusions of the session, with participants arguing that regions applied fundamental policies to guarantee the right to the city. There is a critical need to bring the regional perspective to the floor through a roadmap based on the value of regions.

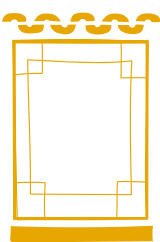
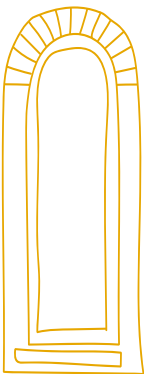


“We need to tackle metropolitan areas that need to include caring, health, the uses of metropolitan spaces. This action plan takes from these processes developed last year and is not only about endorsing declarations but to work and think together how to reshape metropolitan territories”

Octavi de la Varga
Secretary General of Metropolis

“We have a difficult road ahead of us but a “symbiosis” could be a good line to start this work of cooperation between the regions of the world and levels of government present in UCLG.”

Antònia Sabartés
coordinator of the Forum on Regions





Africa

The African Session allowed UCLG-Africa to lay out their priorities for the year, showcasing their trajectory towards Africities and the renewal of their strategic priorities, with the goal of making UCLG-Africa a “one-stop shop” for Local Africa in 2021-2030. The year 2021, argued participants, marks the end of a Strategy and the beginning of another one.

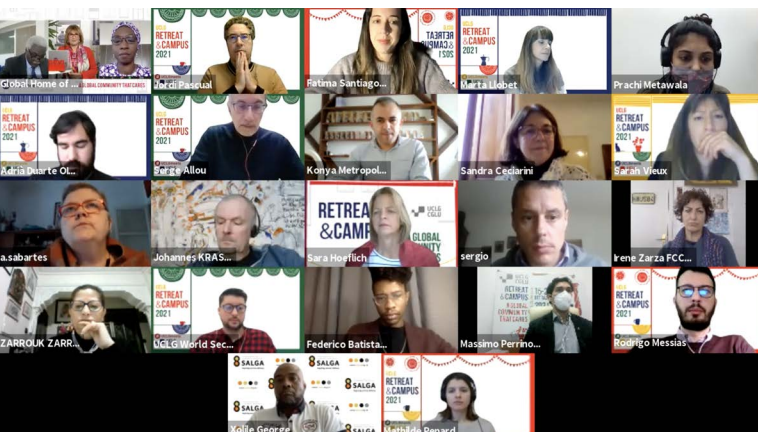
Participants highlighted mobilization and advocacy pillars as integral for this strategy, and emphasized the need to build capacity



and enhance the knowledge of local African governments. The priority themes that cut across the strategy were the urban and climate agenda, the need of UCLG Africa’s members, gender and youth, local economy, migration, culture, peace, and basic services.

Participants from the floor emphasized the importance of strengthening accountability through peer-reviewing local and regional governments, strengthening ties with other UCLG regional sections, and developing participatory approaches to budgeting and ensuring local African governments had access to finance.

Participatory approaches to budgeting in local and regional governments are an integral part of the UCLG-Africa strategy, with budgeting being a lever for participatory and inclusive governance, and ensuring transparency in the management to public funds, allowing for communities to become stakeholders.



“In Africa we emphasize the long-term perspective, and we want all of our actions to be forward looking, to align ourselves with the Pact for the Future, and always in line with the principle of proximity and putting national associations at the core of our actions.”

Jean-Pierre Elong Mbassi
UCLG-Africa Secretary General





Asia-Pacific

The UCLG-ASPAC session allowed for the presentation of their Manifesto 2021-2025, strengthening the linkages between the recovery and SDG localization. Participants of the session addressed the importance of health, and showcased the Climate Resilient and Inclusive Cities, a project led by UCLG-ASPAC that is a unique collaboration to advance climate resilience strategies through integrated planning. Gender equality, migration in the region, and strengthening joint collaboration between regional sections -such as Metropolis- was identified as a critical priority.



The session highlighted their Manifesto 2021-2025, which aims at strengthening the linkages between the recovery and SDG localization. The manifesto is based on:

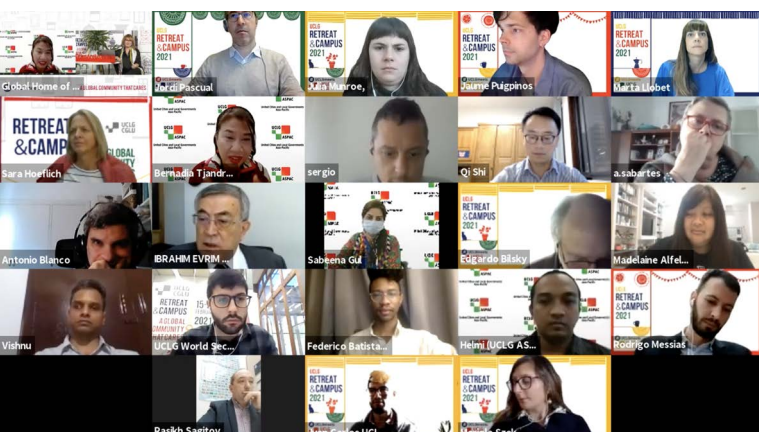
- promoting effective democratic self-governance
- equal and adequate public service to improve quality of life
- localization of the SDGs and the universal development agendas
- aggregate, elevate, and empower local voices
- strengthen performance in service delivery



“Our manifesto 2021-2025 continues our work around democratic self-governance, and emphasizes the importance of service provision and localization as critical to ace global agendas. We also understand the importance of mainstreaming gender equality and participatory budgeting.”

Bernadia Irawati

Secretary-General of UCLG-ASPAC



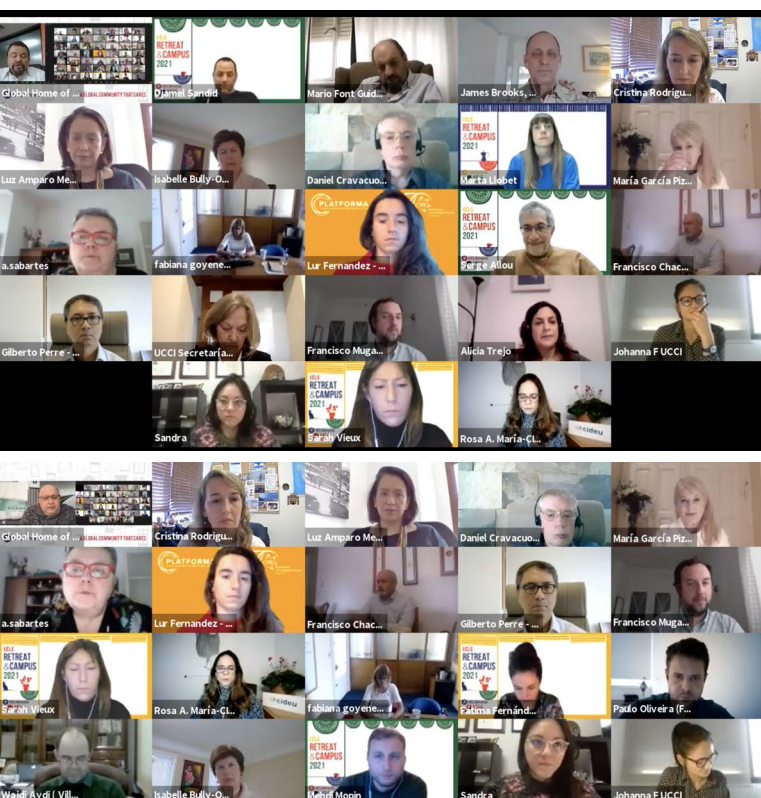
Participants from the floor argued for the need to involve the youth in decision-making as a means to ensure a future for communities,

and participants emphasized, as well, the importance of promoting regional solidarity and exchanges to benefit people, the planet, and the future.



The Americas

The session in which the Americas presented their priorities offered a space for all of the nodes of the American Sections to participate. Representatives from all of our Networks in the Americas argued for the need to enhance coordination among the section, to share lessons learned and to contribute, from the Latin American municipal movement, to the wider municipal movement.



Coordination and integration, participants argued, needs to involve consensus-building, engaging in regional dialogues. Only then will we be able to develop fairer societies that reduce inequalities as a means to co-create peaceful territories, investing in green innovation to ensure a resilient recovery, and fostering collaboration among associations of local and regional governments to strengthen continental cohesion.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) argued for the need to continually invest in mobility and green innovation to ensure a green and just recovery. Local leaders can contribute to this, which is why FCM is committed to advance the agenda to create more sustainable communities.

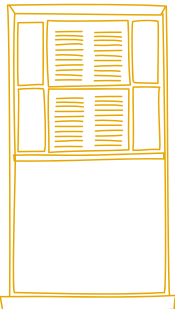
UCCI further highlighted the need to strengthen ties and a greater iberoamerican integration, through the promotion of cities

and international linkages. The territorial dimension was addressed by CONGOPE, who argued for the need to address urban development from a territorial perspective.

Representing the National League of Cities, from the USA, Clarence Anthony commended the work of UCLG in the representation of local authorities around the world, and highlighted their commitment to local democracy and cities all across the world.



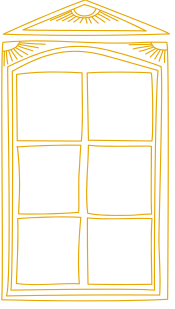
UCLG-MEWA



“We have to think about how we are going to recover, how we are going to get out, how we are going to contribute to the economic reactivation of our countries, of our cities. The contribution of our sections is important to define our priorities. Let’s shake hands through this shared space.”

Johnny Araya, Mayor of San José

UCLG Co-President



“It is important to work for more integration, to seek consensus, it is the only way that the regional dialogues promoted by UCLG will lead us to fairer, more inclusive and more solidarity societies, to agree on a common agenda.”

Marcela Petrantonio

Secretary of International Relations,
Tandil

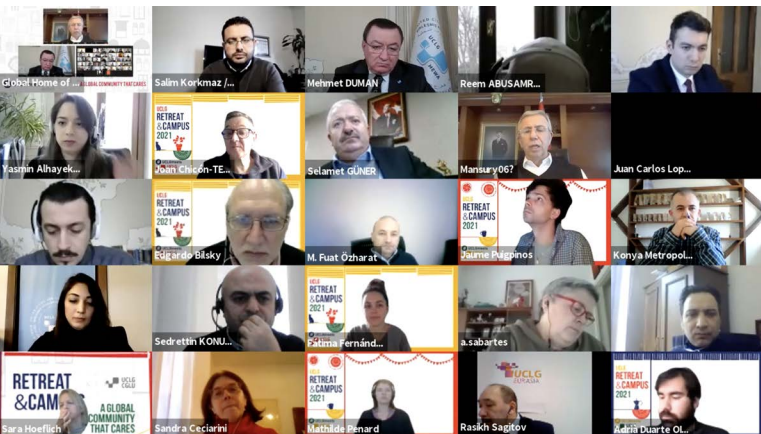


Our MEWA Section addressed their priorities for the 2020-2022 period, chief among them the importance of their migration and refugee agenda. The ecological transition is also an important priority for the MEWA region, who highlighted their work on regional partnerships around resilience, and addressed the challenges that the region will face in terms of water scarcity and facing climate change. Water scarcity in particular is already being considered as a priority, with MEWA developing tools to support local climate action.

Good governance and including communities in the decision-making processes were also highlighted as critical elements for the recovery. Many of the participants from the MEWA region emphasized to strengthen agricultural production and to contribute to transform the production and consumption patterns towards proximity.

The challenges and opportunities tied to migration were very much an important part

of the MEWA region, with refugees in cities such as Adana accounting for over 20% of the population. Participants called for the consideration of migrants as citizens, thus allowing local and regional governments to plan their cities with and for the communities that live within them.

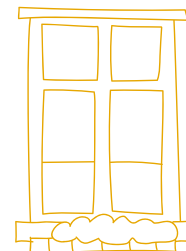


MEWA introduced their work in monitoring the implementation of gender equality commitments agreed upon by municipalities in the MEWA region, as well as raising awareness about violence prevention and supporting women working from home to safeguard their independence.

The President of the UCLG Forum on Intermediary Cities highlighted the importance of re-establishing the Intermediary Cities of the Future, an essential topic of the upcoming Second Forum on Intermediary Cities, set to take place in October. Climate migration and migration to and from intermediary cities will be a critical aspect in the upcoming negotiations towards the Forum, as will be the relationship with metropolises and the work

towards an integrated vision of cities and territories.

“In MEWA, we are promoting human rights and social justice to co-create solutions to President of our key challenges, such as supporting refugees during the health crisis.”



Mohamed Saadie

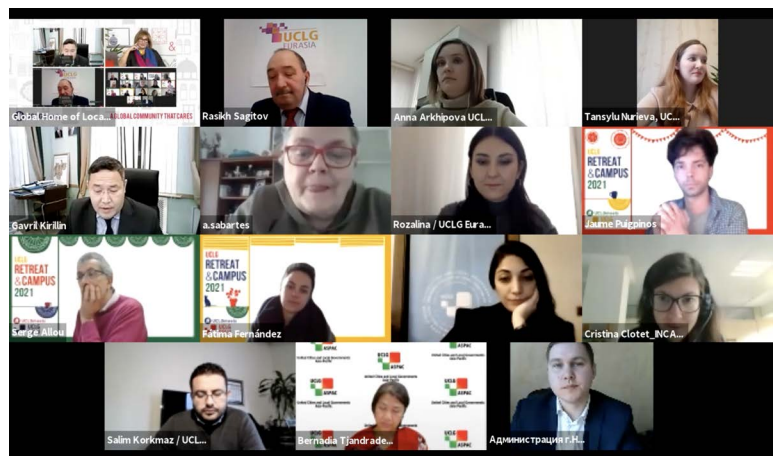
Copresident of UCLG MEWA, Vice President of UCLG



UCLG-Eurasia

UCLG-Eurasia addressed their priorities until 2022, chief among them was increasing membership, contributing to the global agenda, and embarking in partnerships between sections and with different stakeholders to further their agenda on decentralization.

Our Eurasia Section highlighted three key



priorities for the road towards the 2022 Congress, as follows:

- Increase membership through and incorporate their priorities
- take part in the global agenda during international events
- implementing global agendas, establish partnerships to establish more decentralized governments

The team of UCLG-Eurasia then showcased the priorities for the secretariat during 2021. Women's leadership and representation of women, which is still a challenge in many Eurasian cities, was highlighted as a critical issue.

The work on Heritage and Culture, which has been a priority for Eurasia for many years, was reinforced in the session, with Eurasia highlighting their consultation on the Rome Charter developed by the UCLG Committee on Culture, as well as their projects around heritage such as the Conference of Eurasia World Heritage Cities, to be held during 2021.



Europe-CEMR

Carola Gunnarsson, Vice President of UCLG for Europe, introduced the CEMR strategy, adopted during their Policy Committee in January, based on their 3 main goals:

- CEMR as a key interlocutor to convene European local and regional governments' messages and values
- CEMR should be positioned as key contribution within networks such as UCLG and the broader constituency
- CEMR should strengthen involvement through initiatives and programmes. About to continue our contribution to UCLG's work.

The session also addressed two critical milestones for the Section during the year: The 15th anniversary of European Charter for equality and how to communicate and implement it as a reference tool for LRGs on gender equality and provide visibility to actions on the ground; and the 70th anniversary of CEMR, the oldest local and regional government network in Europe.

CEMR also introduced their programme, based on an overarching objective of maintaining the leading role on representing local governments and their associations in Europe and the world for a resilient recovery, based on four specific objectives: lobbying; knowledge-sharing; visibility; and switching to a more sustainable organization.

AICCRES emphasized the importance of visibility, especially in relation to the situation



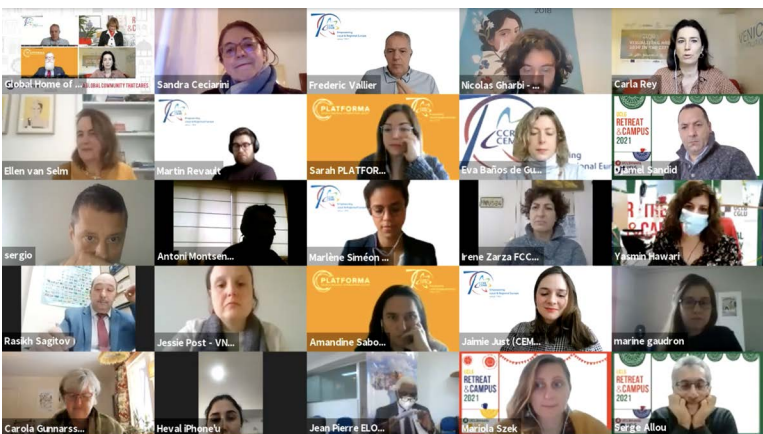
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"We would like to highlight that it is through strong solidarity that we will be able to maintain stable collaboration, continue sharing experiences and support each other."

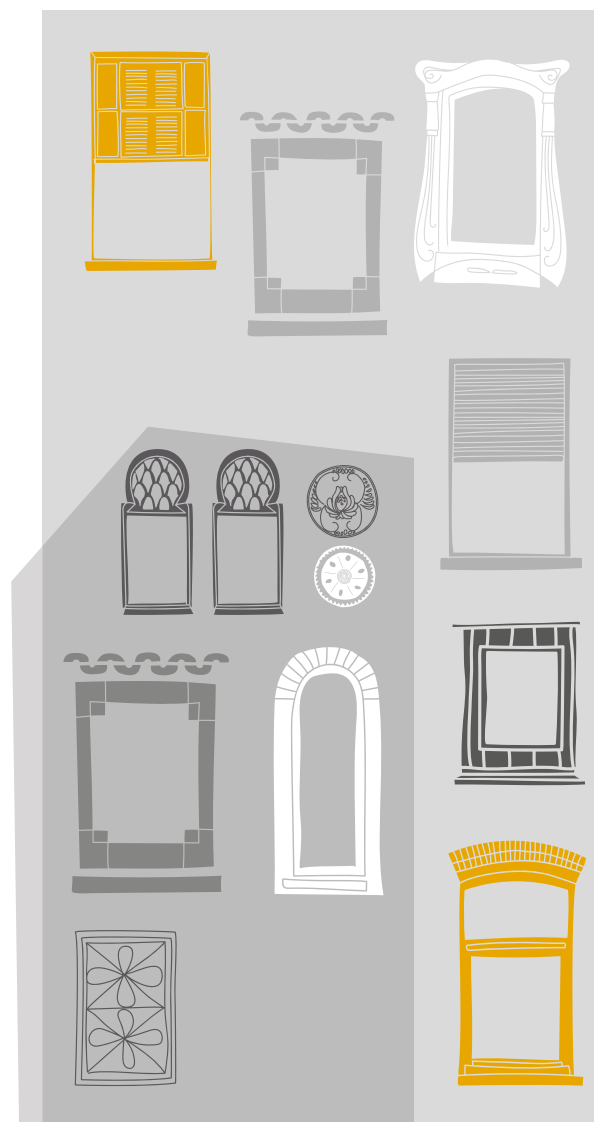
Rasikh Sagitov

Secretary General of UCLG Eurasia



Sections thanked the World Secretariat for renewing their energies, for creating this unique and dynamic experience of the Retreat. Many messages were received congratulating the team for, once again, innovating to keep the World Organization on the cusp of creative and tangible solutions.

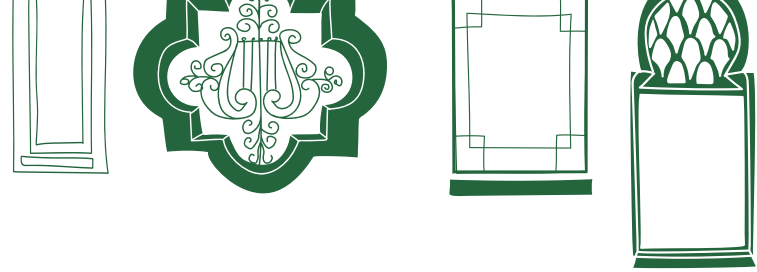
of women and young people, and highlighted the work being done not only at European level, but also working with other sections such as UCLG-Africa to influence global policy. Platforma introduced the renewal of the partnership with the European Commission, which contributes to the policymaking, awareness raising and learning of the organization, and how it can contribute to supporting decentralization not only in Europe but also in the entirety of the world.



“We have met severe challenges. The pandemic has changed the world, but we have a lot of learning experiences that we need to bring to build back better for the future. The retreat is an excellent example for what we can do.”

Carola Gunnarsson

Mayor of Sala, Vice-President of UCLG for Europe



The Plenary moment of our Retreat allowed us to share the priorities from the **#CitiesAreListening Experiences**, which are set to become integral to the People axis of the UCLG Pact for the Future. The session, with speakers from our partners from the civil society, built upon the lessons learned in the past experiences, and centered on the need to put caring at the center, to address cultural rights, to strengthen cooperation between the urban and rural spheres, and above all to rethink how we relate to each other to truly develop a world that cares. The day ended with participants addressing the potential next steps for our advocacy, in particular the need to upgrade how we advocate and campaign.



The second day of the 2021 UCLG Retreat **“UCLG Working for People”**, referenced an important motif for UCLG as *a Global Community that Cares*: that we work for our communities. Day two’s plenary discussions shared priorities from the **#CitiesAreListening** experiences along with the future of our advocacy efforts. Main points from the discussions addressed:



The global agendas remain critical for human centered development building blocks towards the implementation of our Pact for the future. UCLG Committees and Policy Councils recommendations have and will continue to be the backbone of the Cities Are Listening sessions, which follow up on the Live Learning Experiences. The Cities Are Listening experience will be an integral element of the People axis of the UCLG Pact for the Future, with a call to rethink and reshape our territories, in dialogue with our communities and all stakeholders; with an emphasis on care at the center of policy making.

Local and Regional Pathways towards equality are key to ensure aggressive realization of the equality agenda through the reduction of inequalities. Following the proposals from the 2020 UCLG Retreat, the GOLD VI process agenda has identified 6

unique pathways in which Local and Regional Governments can reduce inequalities, those namely being **caring, renaturing, connecting, prospering, commoning and democratising**. The GOLD VI is a participatory process and seeks the inputs from diverse stakeholders to co-create the equality agenda.

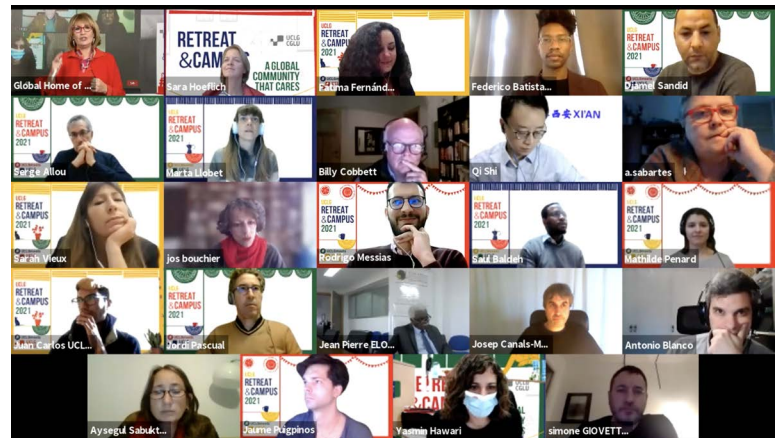
Care, human rights and participatory democracy are essential elements towards a new governance structure that prioritizes social cohesion and equity; with the social capacity to care. The pandemic is a crisis of care, and marker to address the roots of inequalities that were further exposed by the pandemic. Furthermore, there should exist a focus on the rural-urban symbiosis, which highlights the need for a **regional perspective and multi-level governance to the recovery** post pandemic.

New generation of advocacy and seat at the global table, with new opportunities for UCLG to connect as we move towards more online advocacy online; particularly towards the United nations. 2020 has led to more enhanced partnerships and trust through online tools. Hybrid format will be the future of how we improve our capacity to connect with all parts of the world; including those that are not at ease with online tools.

Building on the Durban Legacy of co-creation and including all networks that represent local and regional governments is essential to strengthen the work of the constituency, building on the spirit of meaningful collaborations as a follow up to the 2019 World Summit of Local and Regional Leaders.

Redesign governance structures to enable Local and Regional Governments to be more in the decision-making seat of their own actions. Will be important to enhance advocacy around decentralization and promote innovative approaches towards inclusive multilevel governance as key enablers to the recovery and to strengthen efficiency particularly in emergency context.

Breakout sessions:



Complementing the plenary discussions, five breakout sessions were held on priority UCLG work areas including **Migration, Digital Rights, Accessibility, Generation Equality, and Rethinking development cooperation for local governments**; allowing for more in depth discussions on the aforementioned topics and also as a mechanism to support further collaborations and synchronizations of these work areas.

a. Migration

#Cities4Migration

Enhance dialogue on human mobility for all and that is centered on human rights, communities, dignity, and collective memory through the Lampedusa Peace Process and Charter. The Lampedusa Peace Process and Charter can be a mechanism to further **build solidarity and international cooperation on equitable migration championing human mobility as a human right** with the engagement of the diverse experiences and expertise of the different parts of the network.

b. Digital Rights

#Digitalcities

Embracing the Pact for the Future as a connector with digital rights and making a connection with the work of the Cities Coalition for Digital Rights and the strategic partnerships with civil society to further

explore synchronization with this work plan and other areas. Furthermore, shifting the debate on smart cities to more human centered cities that can empower and create opportunities for people to participate and be included in the socioeconomic opportunities.

c. Accessibility

#Cities4All

Moving from policy making to policy implementation and ensuring that local and regional governments can access and co-create critical **capacity building tools and knowledge to prioritize equity and reduce inequalities by adopting universal accessibility** transversally and as an accelerator to the principle of Leave No One Behind and the success of the New Urban Agenda. Capacity building tools, such as the *Building Cities for All Training* program, can also be a resource to foster interactions between municipal authorities and civil society organizations on social inclusion and accessibility.

d. Generation Equality

#GenerationEquality

Mobilizing local and regional feminist leaders to address gender equality particularly towards ending gender-based violence, ensuring the political participation of women, while also ensuring women's economic participation; including at fiscal levels in areas such as public spaces and services, transportation, and climate change . Key dates addressed for the constituency to highlight our commitment to local feminist leadership include the 65th Commission on the Status of Women and the 2021 Generation Equality Forums in Mexico and Paris.

e. Development Cooperation

#DevelopmentCooperation

Update the UCLG Policy Paper on Development Cooperation and place local governance in relation with important global shifts such as the post pandemic future and

towards the last decade of the 2030 Agenda. Important to address the link between climate change and crisis recovery to resilience and migration, fostering education for citizens to close the social divide, recognize decentralized cooperation in this agenda and perspective on reflection on health systems and humanitarian resources.

“Local and Regional governments are key global players to make people’s lives better.”

Michael Fakhri

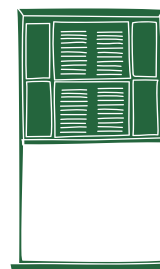
United Nations Special Rapporteur on Right to Food



“At a time when new social gaps are developing in territories that we were not noticing before pandemics, we must promote education for global citizenship.”

Mercedes Sanchez Salido

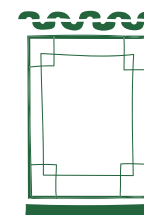
Deputy Director of Cooperation, FEMP



“We will work in the line of the Rome Charter and the right to participate in cultural life for a better society.”

Tunç Soyer

Mayor of Izmir

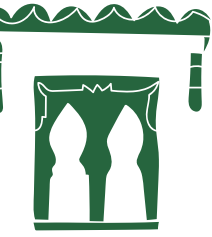


“We must think of new mechanisms where we are not only instruments for the deployment of global policies but active agents in the development of these policies.”

Iñaki Susaeta

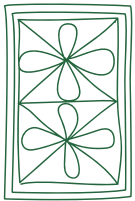
Secretary General, Regions4





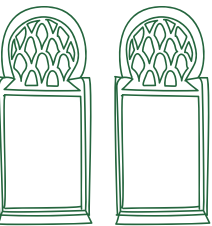
“Focus on building institutional capacities overtime is crucial and has been a fundamental failure, particularly when there are no capacities and resources.”

William Cobbett
Director, Cities Alliance



“WE need to have stronger positions on what we advocate for. Not only being at the table, but calling for concrete measures.”

Frédéric Vallier
Secretary General, CEMR



“There are a series of non-negotiable rights that we need to protect. It is important that we hold on to our global system of human rights.”

Alexandre Apsan Frediani
Principal Researcher, Human Settlements Group, International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED)



UCLG’s next steps

- 1** Incorporating the caring aspect, which is already beginning to appear in products and events led by UCLG, into the narrative and the work programme of the World Organization.
- 2** Understanding the pandemic as a crisis of care, and placing the focus of the

recovery on the concept and policies of care, will determine who to care for and incorporating this concept into policies can ensure everyone stays healthy.

3 Culture was addressed as a key pillar to build social cohesion, and the next challenges to be addressed were the work on maintaining cultural spaces, and rethinking the relationship between culture and the communities that live and breathe it.

4 UCLG’s **Policy and Advocacy Strategy** was brought to the forefront in a session that aimed at making it fit for purpose in the COVID era. One of the key questions is to redefine how UCLG engages in its advocacy, and the ways in which focusing our advocacy around specific moments needs to transform in the coming years. Participants argued that transitioning from focusing on outreach and numbers and towards ensuring the dissemination of the key messages from the movement and the constituency is a key step forward, without neglecting the importance of outreach and campaigns in the digital age.





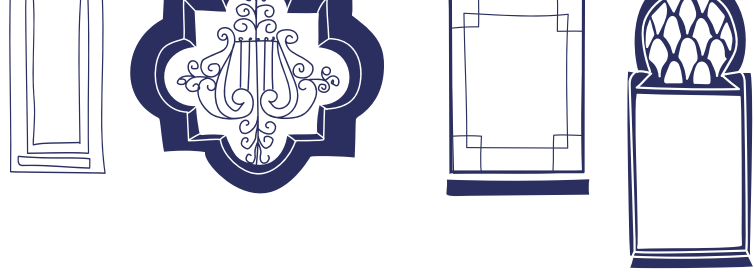
Re-evaluating our relationship with nature: UCLG Acting for Planet

Our commitment to rethink our relationship with nature comes from the acknowledgment of the core value that there is one type of development: universal, and everybody needs to be engaged with. The discussions of the day emphasized the need to build on the common goods, and how the local sphere is the best space to do that.



The discussions of the day emphasized the importance of intergenerational responsibility: from the communities now to those of the future, and developing systems of cities with an urban-rural symbiosis to ensure an ecological transformation.

Day 3 of the 2021 UCLG Annual Retreat gave way to the Plenary on the Ecological Transformation, on Wednesday, 17 February, in line with the respective axis of the UCLG Pact for the Future: The Planet. The day had sessions focused on the priorities of the UCLG ASPAC section in the morning and of the Americas in the evening. The plenary session addressed the **#WavesOfAction** with key-note



interventions by Mark Watts, Executive Director of C40 Cities and Edgar Pieterse, Director, African Centre for Cities, UCLG UBUNTU Advisor; four breakout sessions were held on: Global Covenant of Mayors (GCoM) and the Race to Zero and Race to Resilience; Culture & Nature; Localizing Financing; and Food Security.



Ecological transformation of our relationship with the Planet

Building on the success of the previous UCLG **#WavesOfAction**, the day contributed to identifying potential topics for the next ones on the way towards the World Congress in Daejeon, in 2022. In this regard, it was particularly emphasized the contributions of the UCLG Policy Councils, which had gathered in the weeks prior to the retreat and consisted of policy-making mechanisms for member leaders to strengthen the political debate and develop on the policy priorities of the World Organization.

With those previous conversations and other past landmarks, as the Durban Declaration, the manifesto on Ecological Transition and the Universal Declaration of Humankind Rights, **UCLG Secretary General, Emilia Saiz** opened the plenary session emphasizing how

caring for the planet is an intergenerational responsibility and core to our efforts toward an equitable and resilient future. In the current territorial era, of systems of cities, an urban-rural symbiosis aspect drives the exercise to rethink the relationship with nature, as in addition to people our ecosystems are primordial cornerstones of humanity. Universal development can only be considered through the protection of the global commons.



Edgar Pieterse, Director, African Centre for Cities, UCLG UBUNTU Advisor kicked off the interventions with concrete suggestions for mid-term waves of action, on how to connect the idea of neighborhood with planet, also considering the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The suggestions for the next waves of action addressed the need to address how the **persistence of informal jobs in cities and territories directly affected** the livelihood conditions of the people in face of lockdown measures to contain the outbreak: which yet met with deteriorating capacity of multilateralism in recent years.

In response and to revert the glacial progress, he highlighted the opportunity to radically ramp up the use of public employment programs, connected to building green, caring and solidarity economies and public spaces. In addition, he focused on the importance of green infrastructure and local public services for the wellbeing of people, particularly on healthcare, education and digital access, which thus require additional investments to enable local governments to explore solutions based on the communities and neighborhoods.

Mark Watts, Executive Director of C40 Cities asserted we live on a decisive moment that the COVID-19 framework should lead to change the ways economy is conceived and reinvent cities. In face of the current situation, the relevance given to climate action needs to be increased, with the acceleration of commitments and ambition towards 2050, cutting off emissions and a remarkable potential for job generation.

Stimulus packages and investments, including public, should not only focus on immediate relief, but change the structure for greener and more equitable economies and support actions to divest from fossil fuels, which is the focus of the Cities Race to Zero. Among some exemplary cases, he emphasized how cities now consider giving back public space, with interesting cases that follow a 15-minute city format, and other programs focused on

ensuring the right to access basic goods and services, and the nature-based solutions.

Following the inaugural interventions, Corinne Lepage, former French Minister for the Ecological Transition, called on the need to maintain the Universal Declaration of Humankind Rights as crucial in the current pandemic context. The need to link natural space, the built environment and our life conditions, which define humanity's right to live in a healthy and sustainable planet.

The need to **rethink current models of financing** was also an essential aspect of the discussion, introduced by FMDV, who in particular addressed the need to develop partnerships with the private sector, and developing a common advocacy in the framework of the implementation of global agendas.

The aspect of sustainable tourism in the aftermath of the pandemic was considered a key topic for local and regional governments, in particular, participants argued how the sector will need to be transformed to maintain its competitive capacity and drive socioeconomic recovery in every region, all the while bringing to the table the need to develop sustainable tourism strategies.

The city of Geneva reminded the relevance of the contributions of the UCLG Policy Council on Resilient Cities to these discussions, particularly how we face several pandemics at the moment and that resilience will require action to fight poverty and climate change.

Frederic Vallier, Secretary General of CEMR explored that in the UNFCCC COP 21 and its outcome Paris Agreement already pointed to the need to change the model of development, and how the COVID-19 pandemic is an opportunity to go towards this model of development, giving a chance to the society to reinvent itself and respect nature, biodiversity and climate, in order to avoid additional crisis.

Smart, resilient, sustainable, and inclusive. These four words will be the inspiring themes

of the upcoming 2022 UCLG World Congress, introduced in our Retreat by the City of Daejeon. Peace and security driven by local and regional governments will also be a critical part of the experience of the 2022 Congress, with the host city bringing together cities from North Korea and all countries.

Breakout Sessions

a. GCoM contribution to Race to Zero and Race to Resilience

#RaceToZero

Building on the ongoing process among GCoM, UCLG, ICLEI to increase the coherence and coordination at global and regional levels, **Amanda Eichel, CEO of the GCoM**, explained how the Cities Race to Zero and to Resilience are completely aligned to the GCoM objectives and will become a fundamental programmatic pillar moving forward, including at UNFCCC COP 26. It was emphasized that the engagement of regional sections will be fundamental to the success of these races, especially to ensure their specific circumstances, needs and priorities are properly addressed and linked to the Race initiatives. As an example of the needed regional interface, representatives from **UCLG Africa, Mohamed Nbou and Secretary General Jean-Pierre Elong Mbassi** confirmed the section is keen on working with GCoM on these initiatives and reminded the importance of combining mitigation and resilience in the continent, building the capacities of municipalities and taking into account territorial contexts and links to biodiversity and food systems. **Meggan Spires, representing ICLEI Africa** stressed the need for systemic approaches and for improving the climate monitoring and reporting system in the region.

b. Localising Financing

#LocalFinance

The breakout session on Localizing Sustainable Financing provided a reflection on how to enhance the local finance strategy of UCLG and reinforcing capacities to enhance

access to resources. The moment was taken to review the “Strategy on Localising Financing for Sustainable Urbanization and Territorial Development” three years after its adoption. With key input from experts as **François Yatta, Director of Programmes, UCLG Africa, Michael Wodzicki, Director of Strategies and Development, Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) and Elton Stafa, Regional Fiscal Decentralisation Expert, Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South East Europe (NALAS)**, it was explained how a renewed strategy in the context of the COVID-19, should look into how to increase resource mobilisation and improve the quality of spending through capacity building and technical assistance, the need to engage in direct interaction with international financing institutions and to provide platforms for dialogue and exchange at the national level.

c. Culture & Nature

#Culture #Nature

The linkages between Culture and Nature were addressed in the breakout session, which highlighted the need to integrate heritage and the environment, as well as the need to strengthen the UCLG Community of Practice on Culture. The Coordinator of the **UCLG Committee on Culture, Jordi Pascual**, presented the several instruments and analysis carried in the past that emphasize the links with nature, particularly reminding that ecological transition to a new model of sustainability of life and more caring societies is also a concern of cultural policies and how the tourism and cultural sector will be key for building resilience. Among many participants, **Luz Amparo Medina, Director of International Relations of Bogota** called for an integrated view of urban policies and development, which considered concomitantly culture and nature. **Dr Ayşe Ege Yildirim of the International Council on Monuments and Sites- ICOMOS** reminded that the whole understanding of nature is culturally defined and that an expanded concept of ‘heritage’ needs to be developed, beyond traditional notions of ‘cultural heritage’.

d. Food security

#FoodSecurity

Food security has been high on UCLG’s agenda for a long time, and the breakout session addressed the importance of food as a way to address climate and social justice, and health. The session was attended by representatives of cities and regions such as Barcelona, Granollers, Bilbao, Catalonia and Nouakchott. It was emphasized that the topic food systems have fundamental and rather unexplored urban and territorial dimensions and these should be spotlighted in events this year including the UN Food Systems Summit, the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact Forum to be held in Barcelona, which is World Capital of Sustainable Food in 2021, other events include CBD COP 15 and the UNFCCC COP 26. **Dra. Ana Moragues, researcher at the University of Barcelona**, pointed that current food systems contribute to perpetuating inequalities, in addition to environmental issues there are problems of access to nutritious and healthy food. The session called for additional solutions to be explored, considering the linkages with poverty, and the need to address the role of intermediary cities and research to achieve sustainable food systems.





Pathways to Global Resilience

#MCR2030 #ResilientCities



In the stocktaking segment of the plenary session, it was highlighted that cities and territories of all sizes will be instrumental to building resilience and attaining the necessary transformation the world needs. Either through its policy councils, the Emergency Governance Initiative, specific criteria for the Forum of Intermediary Cities, the Race to Zero and to Resilience, among other efforts UCLG included pathways to resilience was core to its agenda.

With that in mind, the **UCLG Learning Team** presented the latest updates of the Learning Module on Resilience, which held well-attended sessions of Training of Trainers with different UCLG regional sections and is the result of a collaboration with UN-Habitat, UNDRR and other partners throughout the past couple of years. The second Module on Resilience is being finalized and will continue to explore concrete case-studies and learning methodologies to support local and regional governments and their association in prioritizing an alternative development model that has resilience building at its core. It was also reminded that UCLG Secretary General co-chairs the Making Cities Resilient 2030, a useful platform that provides

assessments and other tools from different providers, gathering practitioners and experts to support cities advance on the resilience agenda.

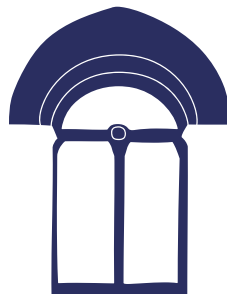
Resilience Learning Module I:

Fundamentals of Resilient Governance & Development

Localizing the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction to ensure resilience-based sustainable and inclusive development

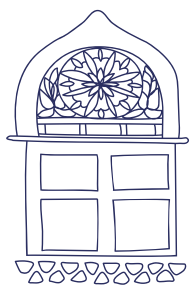
Johnny Araya, mayor of San José and Co-Chair of UCLG Policy Council on Safer and Resilient Cities, Capable of Facing Crises, concluded the session explaining we have need challenges to face and how the retreat is showing there are ways to contribute to the economic recovery, reinforcing processes of social inclusion and addressing the climate emergency.

“As we set priorities for the recovery, we need to start by considering the most vulnerable and excluded by the global system. We need to ramp up the potential of public employment to rebuild a sense of identity and transitioning into more stable work.”



Edgar Pieterse

Director, African Centre for Cities, UCLG
UBUNTU Advisor



“The COVID-19 framework is the perfect moment to change the way the economy is conceived, going beyond the most immediate response to the current needs of the population. I think it’s a moment to reinvent cities.”

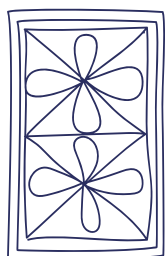
Mark Watts

Executive Director of C40 Cities

“Our commitment to rethink our relationship with nature comes from the acknowledgment of the core value that there is one type of development: universal, east-west, global north and south, and everybody needs to be engaged with. We need to build on the common goods, and the local level is the best place to do that.”

Emilia Saiz

Secretary General of UCLG



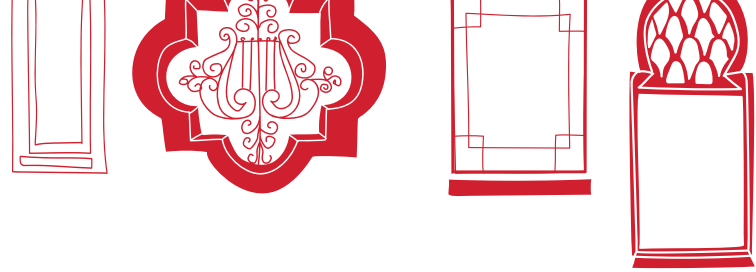
What is next?

- 1** The need to establish a different type of relationship between local and regional governments and the public sector, but also between communities and different spheres of government.
- 2** Develop clear links between the commitments of the municipal movement and the agenda of local and regional government.
- 3** Bringing the topics discussed in the session such as tourism, the new relationship between humankind and local financing, as well as the joint advocacy from the constituency, to the COP26 and the High-Level Political Forum.
- 4** Building, together with Daejeon as we go towards the World Congress, a new concept of peacebuilding and re-evaluating what being a “smart” city entails for communities.
- 5** **The Research team** is incorporating the concept of care and co-creation in the upcoming GOLD VI report. The research developed towards the report will find its way to the new platforms that UCLG is developing, and is set to “talk” to other key issues for our Network. Financing, decentralization, climate change, the use of data... everything that is a part of the urbanization process is also a part of our research agenda, and thus a part of the World Organization’s work moving forward.

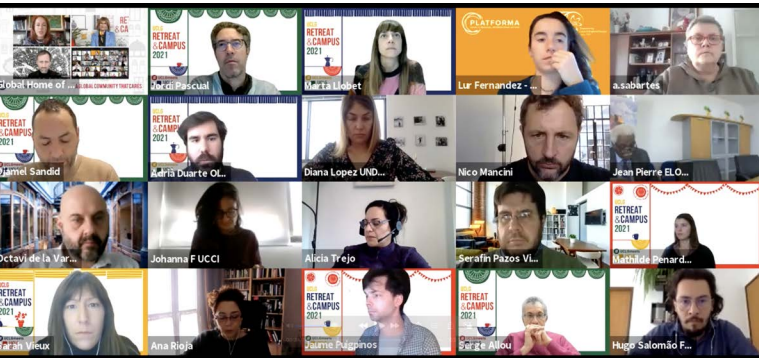




A platform of platforms: The municipal movement acting for government



and the multilateral system with Philipp Rode, Executive Director of LSE Cities, and María Fernanda Espinosa, President of the 73 United Nations General Assembly and UCLG UBUNTU Advisor; four breakout sessions on: VSRs, Crises, Connecting across Habitat Rights and the Right to the City: building on the dialogues with United Nations Special Rapporteurs, and Local4Action Hubs; and a presentation from UCLG Secretary General, Emilia Saiz, on *the digital revolution of the movement* and our transition towards an *augmented (local) reality*.



The Digital Revolution of the municipal movement was the core of the priorities for the “acting for planet” day in the Retreat. During the more than 100 years since its inception, UCLG has been involved in enhancing local governance and democracy as a means to strengthen communities. This push towards a better world, which is at the core of our movement, was reinforced when Secretary General Emilia Saiz laid out the platformization of our municipal movement: UCLG is set to transform how it tells its stories, strengthening its network of priorities.

One of the key elements of the day was the panel discussion on **the future of governance**



The future of governance and the multilateral system

In the spirit of moving to a world driven by communities, UCLG adopted the mandate to develop a forward-looking Pact for the Future. The Pact is set to bring together a new social contract, establishing the next generation of

human rights, fostering a new relationship with nature, and deepening the democratic process and transformation of cities and territories.

In this spirit, the plenary on the government day of the 2021 UCLG Annual Retreat, focused on reflecting on how governments will need to look in the next decades. Driven by partners from Academia and the President of the 73rd UN General Assembly **UCLG Secretary General, Emilia Saiz**, opened up the discussion by recalling the core values of the international municipal movement: peace, local democracy, inclusion and right to the city, accountability, open government and reminded that the movement wants to ensure the world is shaped through the expectations of communities and that in this regard, multilateralism will need to be reshaped.

Philipp Rode, Executive Director of LSE Cities, highlighted that in the past 5 years there has been a big leap forward in the global capacity to improve strategic planning, in vertical and horizontal coordination and that this type of change required reforms of institutions, collaboration among actors, and connections between people.

Looking towards our future it is critical to engage in emergency governance that is people centered, to build capacity and equip actors with better tools, both in the regional context and internationally, is clear and that we must further engage in sustainable digital practices as communications through digital platforms increase, and increase access to financing. Decentralization and multilevel governance are again on the agenda as we live under conditions of emergency. Democratizing these processes through more empathetic governance is, more than ever, back on the horizon.

More state, more community, and more multilateralism were, according to **María Fernanda Espinosa, President of the 73 United Nations General Assembly, UCLG UBUNTU Advisor** the three lessons to adopt from the pandemic. COVID-19 has emphasized

the important role of the state in providing public goods and underscored the need for local and regional governments and their associations and networks as the champions of community building.

The need to rethink the global common goods that are non-exclusionary, and the role of the multilateral system in ensuring this, is essential and critical, making a particular reference to access to vaccines. She concluded by highlighting how critical it is to rethink the concept of the nation state and see it not as a homogeneous space but as an aggregation of powers – with strengthened local and regional governments and a new redefinition of power at the international level.

Governance and capacity building were the key topics of the debate in the ensuing panel discussion., **Octavi de la Varga, Secretary General of Metropolis**, underlined that while we live in a world which is very complex and interconnected, our models of governance do not reflect these complexities while **Jorge Perez Jaramillo, Advisor to the Governor of Antioquia and UCLG UBUNTU advisor**, reiterated the importance of establishing multi-stakeholder networks to facilitate capacity building and emphasized that local and regional governments are key with regard to technical development and that collaboration should be fostered with universities.

Luz Amparo Medina, Director of International Relations, City of Bogota, highlighted that the multilateral system is key in forming a global consensus on the priorities we as a world must face today and called on all participants to think now on how we can ensure that the consensus also focuses on the way in which we will achieve these priorities noting that our values must be community based and shared. Finally, **Frederic Vallier, Secretary General, CEMR**, noted that when speaking of these new models of governance and development and the use of digital tools, we must ensure that we bring everyone with us on that and no one is left behind.

Breakout Sessions

a. Voluntary Subnational Reviews

The breakout session's objective was to present the concept of Voluntary Subnational Reviews (VSRs) and to prepare for a workshop on VSRs to be held in March, 2021. In this regard, **Edgardo Bilsky, Director of Research, UCLG** presented the concept of a VSR and underlined its difference with regard to Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) highlighting the fact that they are produced by local and regional government associations and that their value lies in the notion of consolidating a policy vision from local and regional governments within a national context. Representatives of the **Capacity Institution Building (CIB) Working Group** highlighted the importance of ensuring that there is a connection between VNRs and VSRs pointing out that the work of LRG associations in the VSRs will be crucial to national governments in their work towards the implementation of the global goals. Representatives of **Norway, Germany, Mexico, Indonesia and UCLG Africa** contributed with local experiences in this regard.

b. Crises

The breakout session's objective was to present and discuss the activities of the UCLG Working Group on Territorial Prevention and Management of Crises. In this regard, **Simone Giovetti, Programme Officer at CUF**, and focal point for the Working Group up the discussion by presenting the work of the group and gave the floor to **Fanny Salé, Councillor from Loire-Atlantique** who pointed out the importance of the group in promoting solidarity among local and regional governments and at the international level related to crises. **Mayor of Soest, Rob Metz**, highlighting the vital role peer learning has in the management of crises pointing out that Dutch LRGS and French LRGs have been working together in various fronts helping the ground running on economic recovery, distributive items for protection, and training on digital skills.

c. Connecting across Habitat Rights and the Right to the City: building on the dialogues with United Nations Special Rapporteurs

This breakout session's objective was to present the ongoing work that has been taken up within the framework of the CitiesAreListening Experiences held with Special Rapporteurs and debate where the work will be going in the next year. In this regard, **Amanda Fléty of the Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights of UCLG, Lorena Zarate of the GPR2C and Yolande Hendlér of HIC**, introduced the roundtables of the Special Rapporteurs highlighting the role they have played in helping foster collaboration among special rapporteurs and local and regional governments and civil society. In this regard, **Josep Mayoral, Mayor of Granollers**, recalled the importance of collaborating amongst different stakeholders and called to explore solutions to the issues we are facing at the local level not only in the short term but in the long term as well. **Representatives of Mexico City, the General Assembly of Partners and of Mercociudades** joined in the discussion as well.

d. Local4Action Hubs

The last breakout session was on the UCLG Local4Action Hubs and focused on presenting existing Hubs as well as the different phases involved in the process. **Carla Rey, Secretary General of AICCRE**, highlighted that HUBs are more than just a label and they are a process which help summarize experiences and bring people together. A **representative of Xian** shared with the group that one of the added values of HUBs is particularly bringing young people together and fostering education while **representatives of UNDP** stressed that visibility should be given to the HUBs at the HLPF. **Nicholas Gharbi, Principal Advisor, Madrid**, underlined that we can recognize the HUBs as a community, an integrated ecosystem of practitioners. **Representatives of FAMSI, and Bilbao** also contributed to the session.

The digital revolution of the movement

The digital revolution of the movement introduced during the Retreat will take the shape of an all-new UCLG information system that reflects the notion of the “Platform of Platforms”. The system will be driven by the concept of the “power of we”, the strength of an entire network working together to transform the world, and will showcase the advocacy of UCLG in a way that links the overall narrative, the processes, and the outcome documents. The “power of we” platform is set to be linked with the #UCLGMeets platform to link the decisions taken with the story that the World Organization tells.

It was highlighted that we are learning to further collaborate with each other. Within this context, it is also critical to emphasize how crucial it is to ensuring traceability of our efforts and that we are duly connecting the dots between projects, initiatives, people, communications, and more.

When we look at a report or programme, it is important to ask ourselves: why this programme? Why this report? Where do the priorities come from? What are we committing to? What are we advocating for the answer to these questions that need to be taken into account whenever UCLG tells a story or reports on a process. When reporting on these two issues, especially in the era of algorithms and artificial intelligence, being able to highlight where our work comes from, where it is going in the future, and who is involved.

Within this context and to facilitate further collaboration and synchronization, and to foster traceability, a platform is being developed by the UCLG World Secretariat to transform the way in which the network reports. It was further highlighted that this would have an effect on the structure of our documents and the way in which they talk to each other. Finally, it was pointed out that the platform would also be a part of the same ecosystem that involves the existing UCLG Local4Action HUBs and #UCLGMeets platforms.



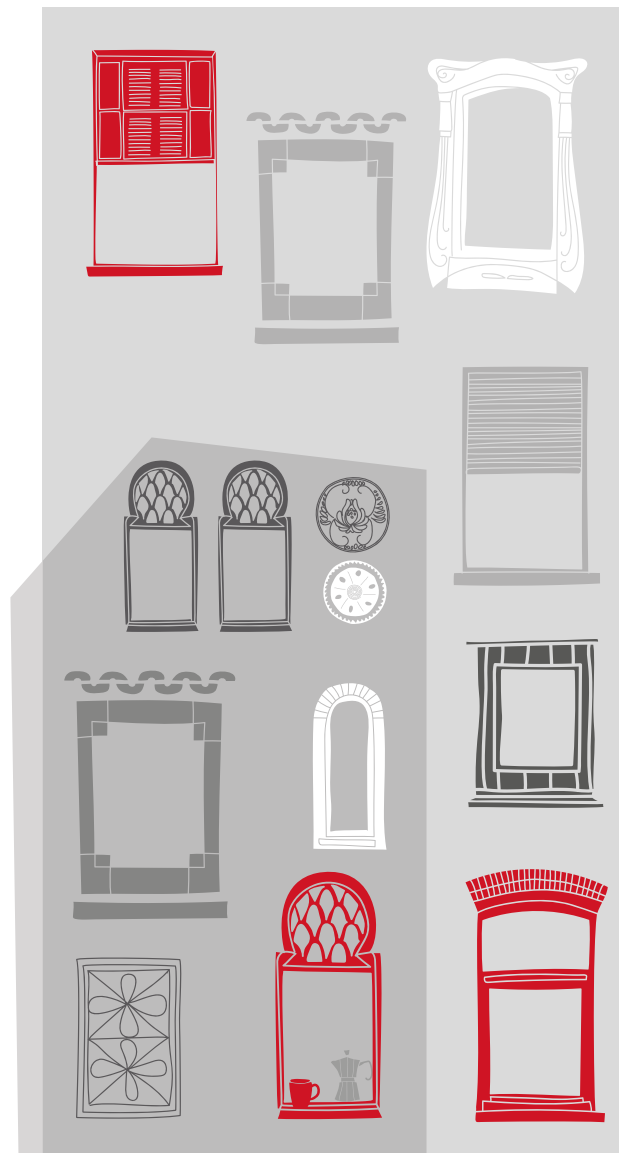
The renewal of how we tell the UCLG story closed the segment of UCLG working for government. Secretary General Emilia Saiz addressed the digital revolution of the movement and our transition towards an augmented (local) reality. The issue was framed within our notion of “working as a network” and around the concept of “the power we”. Through the renewal of our Waves of Action, through our Live Learning Experiences, and through the #CitiesAreListening space, the notion of working as a network has strengthened as well as our desire to synchronize further, despite the pandemic not allowing us to see each other physically.

UCLG Key Steps

- 1 Decentralization and multilateralism are back on the agenda, and it is critical to address them through the lens of democratization and a more empathetic governance.
- 2 It will be critical to understand what digitalization and artificial intelligence are doing to our government models, and ensure that our policies are made with people in mind, harnessing technology in the benefit of communities.
- 3 The SDGs are a framework and a “survival kit” to recover from the pandemic. The

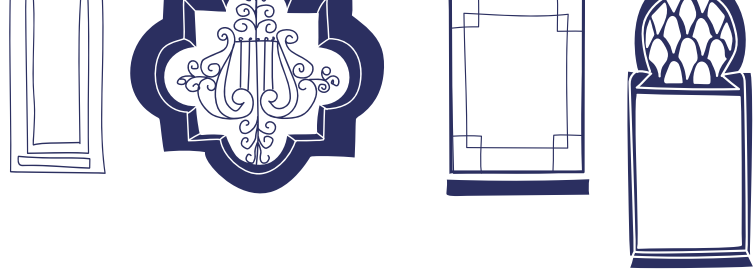
need to retool the multilateral system will need to be accompanied by concrete roadmaps and filling the current gaps with capacity and resources.

- 4** The digital revolution of the movement is set to take the shape of an all-new UCLG information system that reflects the notion of the “Platform of Platforms”. The system will be driven by the concept of the “power of we”, showcasing the advocacy of UCLG in a way that links the overall narrative, the processes, and the outcome documents. The “power of we” platform is set to be linked with the #UCLGMeets platform to link the decisions taken with the story that the World Organization tells.
- 5** The **Learning** aspect of UCLG has evolved to include e-learning as a key pillar of its work. The session on Learning showcased the many initiatives driven by the Network (from MOOCs driven by the Sections, Committees such as Local Economic Development, and Working Groups, to peer-learnings) as well as the importance of connecting the learning initiatives and platforms developed to ensure that UCLG is truly a Learning Network.





The Annual Meeting of the Global Taskforce expands and gathers in the year of review of the New Urban Agenda



differently in the future, citing examples from countries who had committed to multilevel climate action.

The Annual Meeting of the Global Taskforce also allowed us to welcome the two newest members of the Global Taskforce to a constituency that already boasts **27 members**. **The Mayors Migration Council (MMC)** and the **Resilient Cities Network** will be essential to further our agenda on migration, resilience, and the ecological transition, and allow us to strengthen linkages and advocate as one in all spaces.



The Annual Meeting of the Global Taskforce took place at the tail end of our UCLG Retreat to provide a space for topics related to pivotal joint advocacy moments of the year. **Over 200 participants** gathered in a session that included representation from all the networks of the Global Taskforce and numerous partners including Cities Alliance; local and regional leaders, and representatives from the United Nations to debate the key priorities of our constituency. Joining forces for sustainability towards COP26, the roadmap towards Habitat III+5 and the opportunities of a year full of summits with gatherings such as Urban 20, CSW65, or the UN Food Systems Summit were the key focus of the exchanges.

The Session was opened by **Gino van Begin**, Secretary General, ICLEI, who called on the necessity to continue to work, at all levels, to accelerate sustainability, and to understand the pandemic as a wake-up call to do things



Next steps for the joint constituency of local and regional governments.

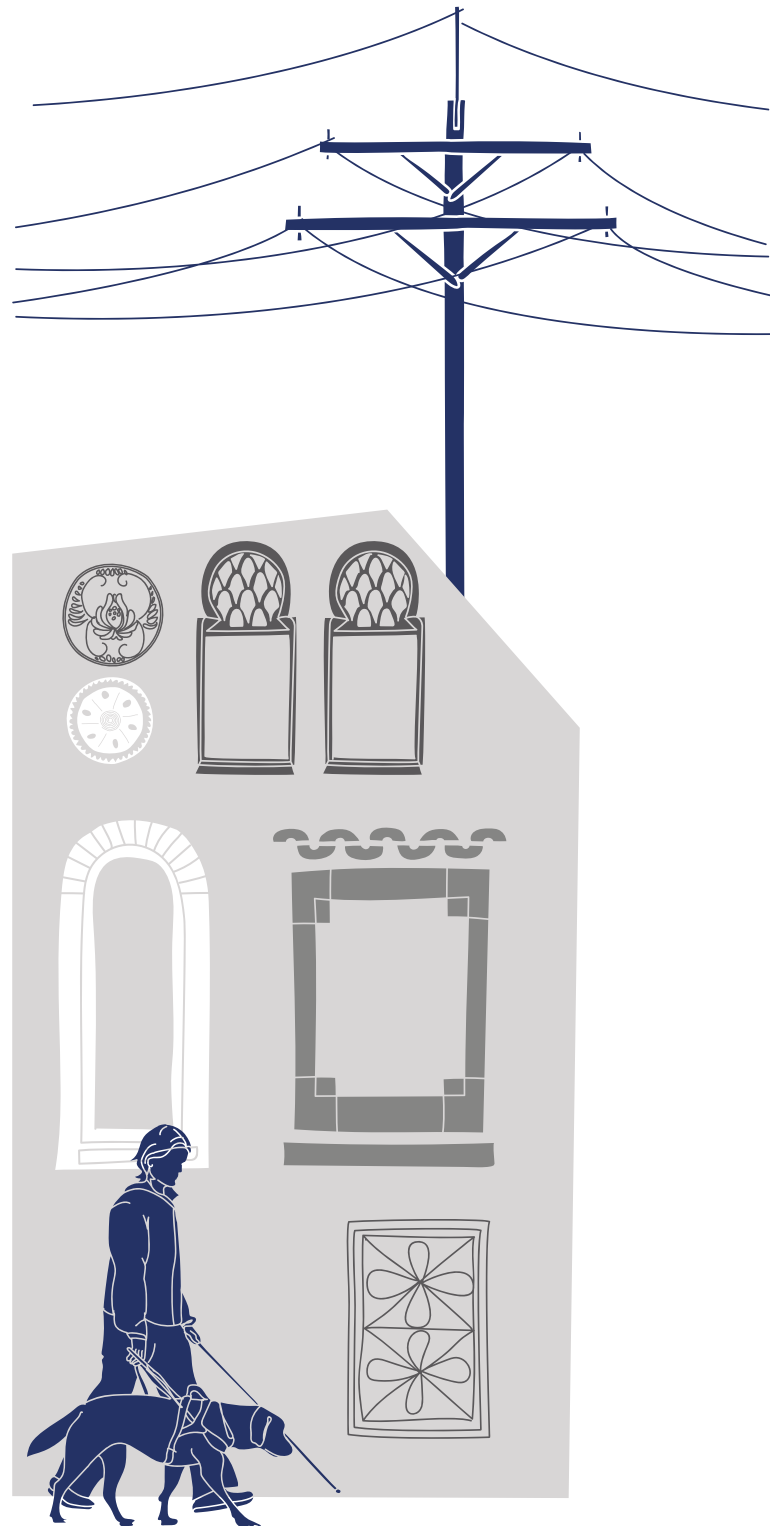
- 1** Participants proposed to develop joint policy recommendations for events in the agenda as well as technical meetings on all the specific processes mentioned in the session.
- 2** It was further agreed that proposals would be developed to transform policy materials of the members of the GTF into self-training materials available on-line making use of the learning platforms of the different members.
- 3** The Annual Meeting of the Global Taskforce came to a close by proposing a structural process for the upcoming World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments with 3 preparatory meetings this year, without all of them having to be political, in May and July, and another one in the second half of the year. It was suggested to bring our shared messages to the preparatory meetings in our conclusions to the World Assembly.
- 4** The political meeting at the end of the year could provide the framework to develop a structural annual meeting of the constituency with the United Nations System.

Honouring our predecessors

The UCLG Retreat was also the space to remember critical actors in the municipal movement, people who have dedicated their lives to advocating for a better world built from the bottom-up. During several emotional moments, representatives from UCLG leadership and, in particular those who worked more closely with him such as Secretary General of UCLG-MEWA Mehmet Duman and Copresident Mohamed Saadie, remembered Mayor Kadir Topba, former mayor of Istanbul and UCLG President who passed away recently.

They brought to life his heritage as a champion of the municipal movement, as a leader who was willing to listen to every individual, and as

a true partner for transformation for the time he served as President. His dedication to UCLG, his work towards strengthening the global voice and his commitment to enhancing the diversity and inclusivity of the Organization were highlighted as essential to bring our World Organization to the next level by our Presidency during the Retreat.





The Presidency met within the Retreat to address inequalities in the recovery



The first meeting of the UCLG Presidency for the year 2021 took place in the framework of our Annual Retreat. The Presidency meeting received reports from the policy discussions, and confirmed priorities for the Presidency for the year 2021. They welcomed the progress made in enhancing partnerships with all stakeholders and particularly the United Nations which were represented at the highest level throughout the Retreat.

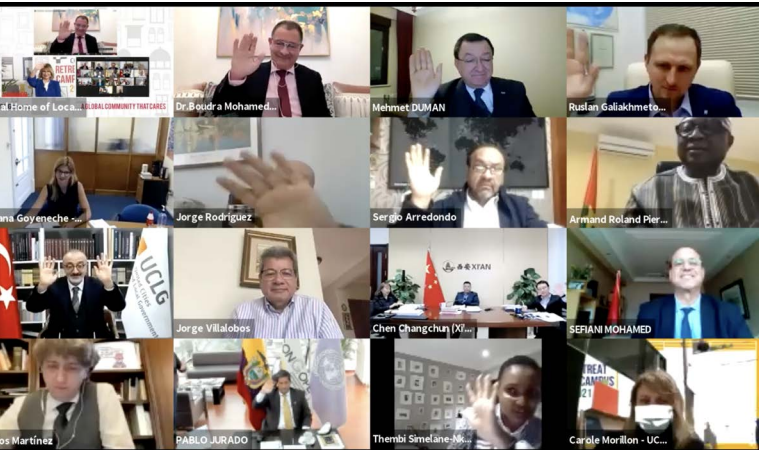
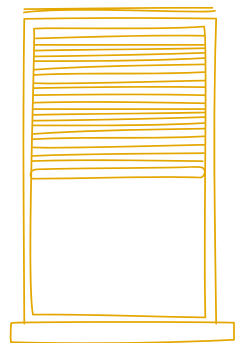
Members of the UCLG Presidency addressed the debates of the Retreat, and confirmed the important focus of the three axes of our **Pact for the Future**: they emphasized the need to seize the opportunity to develop a new social contract.

President **Mohamed Boudra** opened the meeting by honoring the memory of former UCLG President (2010-2016) and Mayor of Istanbul Kadir Topbaş. His dedication to UCLG, his work towards strengthening the global voice and his commitment to enhancing the diversity and inclusivity of the Organization were highlighted as they were in the very first day of the Retreat.

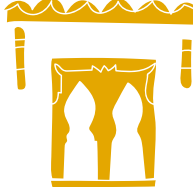
“Our Retreat opened our windows to a year that is complex but thrilling. It has also allowed us to further the debates on the Pact for the Future that our World Organization has been mandated to implement. A new social contract for the people, for the planet and for government.”

Mohamed Boudra

UCLG President, Mayor of Al-Hoceima, President of the AMPPC



The priorities of the UCLG Presidency guiding our work for the year.



“The pandemic has taught us that our destinies are linked, that we cannot overcome these great challenges separately, that we will only overcome the pandemic when vaccines reach us all.”

Ada Colau

Mayor of Barcelona and UCLG Special Envoy for the United Nations and the 2030 Agenda

It is essential to push forward as partners for the transformation of the international system, to ensure the inclusion of our communities in the decisions that affect them and as a means to overcome systemic crises. Food systems are a priority in the aftermath, as is reinforcing the role of UCLG as we work towards the Food Systems Summit of the UN in the role of Barcelona as European Food Capital and part of the Milan Pact.

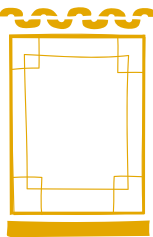
The rise of inequalities as well as the opportunities arising in areas such as public transportation were highlighted as a critical aspect, as is the need to address migration as a global topic, linking it with the climate and territorial agendas.



“Combating poverty caused by pandemic is something we need to do. This calls for ensuring fair resources so that LRGs can provide access to basic services, especially health, during the pandemic and beyond.”

Uğur Ibrahim Altay

Mayor of Konya and UCLG Co-President

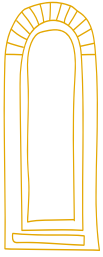


The Presidency reiterated the need to ensure equal access to vaccinations as well as the role of UCLG in ensuring that the recovery is done with everyone in mind. The territorial aspect to equality was a sentiment echoed during the session, emphasizing that there cannot be equal access to vaccines if all territories cannot do so.



“One of the great post-pandemic challenges is





to tackle the inequality that has grown exponentially. One of the guiding stars of UCLG is a more socially and environmentally balanced world.”

Johnny Araya

Mayor of San José UCLG Co-President and President of FLACMA

respond to the crises, ensuring proper food distribution and that municipalities are able to respond on the ground”

Thembisile Nkadameng

Mayor of Polokwane, UCLG Co-President, and President of SALGA



The treasury, represented by **Berry Vrbanovic** and **Madelaine Alfelor**, argued how the World Organization has demonstrated its capacity to adapt and its relevance for the membership. They introduced the state of affairs of the UCLG External Assessment, which will develop a series of recommendations towards our Executive Bureau. The need to balance health and the economy in the recovery without compromises were also a key issue, one that the World Organization is set to adopt in 2021.



“We talk about health coverage, equality... but if it is not territorialised we will not achieve it. The NUA is the key to leaving no territory behind and to achieving all of the global goals.”

Carlos Martínez

Mayor of Soria and UCLG Presidency Envoy for the New Urban Agenda

Strengthening local and regional governments’ capacities to respond to crises will be essential for the short-and long-term strategies to ensure sustainable territories. Eliminating institutional overlaps will be key to respond with clarity to the challenges that await us in the future.

Carola Gunnarsson, Mayor of Sala, President of SALAR and Vice-President of UCLG for Europe commended the efforts to continue the quest for gender equality. She called for determined action to ensure that equal representation between men and women in political life is a common goal that we develop together.

The Vice President of UCLG for MEWA and President of the Union of Dannieh Municipalities, **Mohamed Saadie** addressed risk reduction and the need to work hand-in-hand to enhance the resilience of our planet. He called for the special needs of his region to be taken into account in both the actions and the strategy.



“We need to rise to the challenge with strong emergency systems that can

Pablo Jurado, President of CONGOPE, and Vice President of UCLG for the Forum of Regions called on the need to join forces among spheres of government to ensure unity between the urban and rural spheres.

Chen Changchun, Vice-President of the Xi'an Political Consultative Conference and Secretary General of the Xi'an Municipal Government of Xi'an, addressed the work of the city around the three axes of the Pact for the Future and in particular, their work around the Policy Council on Opportunities for All.

Arnaud Ngatcha, Vice-mayor of Paris, called on the importance given to gender equality by the city of Paris, in particular in regards to women's representation in political and social life. He confirmed the interest of Paris to contribute to redefining the priorities of local governments in the recovery context putting sustainability and democracy at its core.

Peter Knip, Director of VNG and on behalf of Co-President Jan Van Zanen, introduced the importance of the Peace Agenda in 2021 and 2022, in particular calling attention to the process of UCLG's Peace Prize. He further reinstated the importance of rebuilding trust among communities and their governments, in particular in a time in which tensions among the public and institutions are at a low point.

Furthering our work with the United Nations

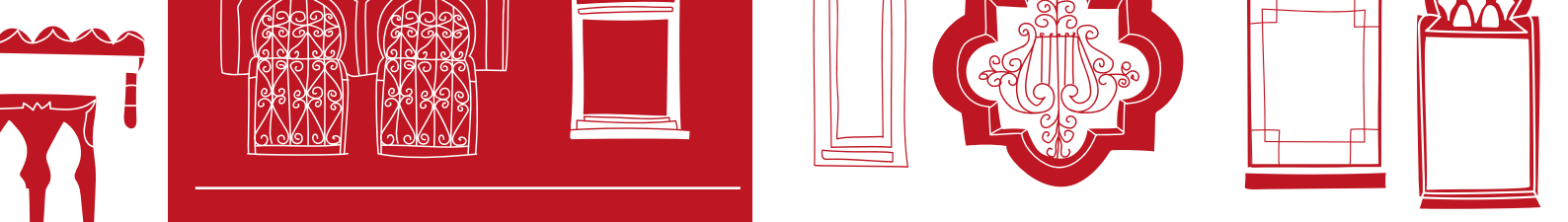
2021, the year of the review of the New Urban Agenda, will be critical to establish a direct link between the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the development and implementation of sub-national urban policies carried out by local and regional governments worldwide and promoted by UN-Habitat. Undersecretary-General of the UN and Executive Director of UN-Habitat **Maimunah Mohd. Sharif** highlighted how the review process for the New Urban Agenda offers us an opportunity to place priorities in the centre of the debate and to call for support for local and

regional governments in ensuring frameworks that allow us to deliver.

UCLG has also been working with UNDP on the consolidation of the localization of the SDGs and as part of the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments. The next steps of the partnership between our World Organization and UNDP were introduced by **Ulrika Modéer** Deputy Secretary-General and Director of UNDP's Bureau for External Relations and Advocacy,

Representatives from the UN Office of the High Commissioner on human rights expressed the interest in cooperating between our World Organization and the Office of the High Commissioner building on the work we've done in the past, in Geneva, to increase the number of partnerships with stakeholders on the field of human rights.





Next Steps: Our upcoming events and where we go now

The session closed by reminding the importance of the gender equality agenda, with CSW taking place in March, as well as with the upcoming HLPF in July, which will host a Forum on Local and Regional Governments. The UCLG Culture Summit hosted by Izmir and the UN Summits this year are high on our priorities this year, with the aim at envisioning all of the elements needed for a healthy recovery.

The presence of the UN partners in the Presidency meeting reflects the priorities of the UCLG Pact for the Future strategy: strong local governments underpinned by the implementation of the Urban Agendas, and to anchor the universal concept of development built around the SDGs and the people centered social contract with human rights at the heart of policy development.

The outcomes of our Policy Councils, on the way to enhancing the renewal of our Strategy.

The UCLG Policy Councils held meetings in the week prior to the UCLG Retreat. The Policy Councils allowed for the opportunity to discuss, set our priorities and expectations for the work of these political mechanisms. The conversations and themes introduced in the Policy Council meetings set the way for the conversations of the Retreat, and the Co-Chairs of the Councils presented a brief overview of the results at the end of the week.

1 The rights agenda took centre stage in our **Policy Council on the Right to the City**, with explicit mention to the second generation of rights and tackling the limitations to public

service provision brought to light by the pandemic, especially in relation to vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities and children with special education needs;

2 The **Policy Council on Opportunities for All** acknowledged the critical role of culture in creating a sense of community and developing innovative tools for making cultural activities more accessible, and further addressed whether “opportunities for all” is a title that reflects the challenges that it covers;

3 The **Policy Council on Multilevel Governance** addressed the renewal of democracy, the metropolitan aspect of multilevel governance and engaging local governments in the development of national recovery packages. The session also argued that the COVID-19 pandemic could be used an opportunity to address bottlenecks in multi-level governance, notably related to the fragmentation of competencies, a lack of coordination, and complicated funding schemes;

4 An undeniable link between our equality agenda and our Agenda on the Ecological Transition was established in our **Policy Council on Safer, Resilient, and sustainable cities**, who called on the need to conceptualize resilience more broadly, notably to encompass notions of social cohesion, and participating in the raised ambitions in COP26;

5 The **Policy Council on the New Urban Agenda**, which had been introduced by the Mayor of Soria, had held its first-ever meeting with the

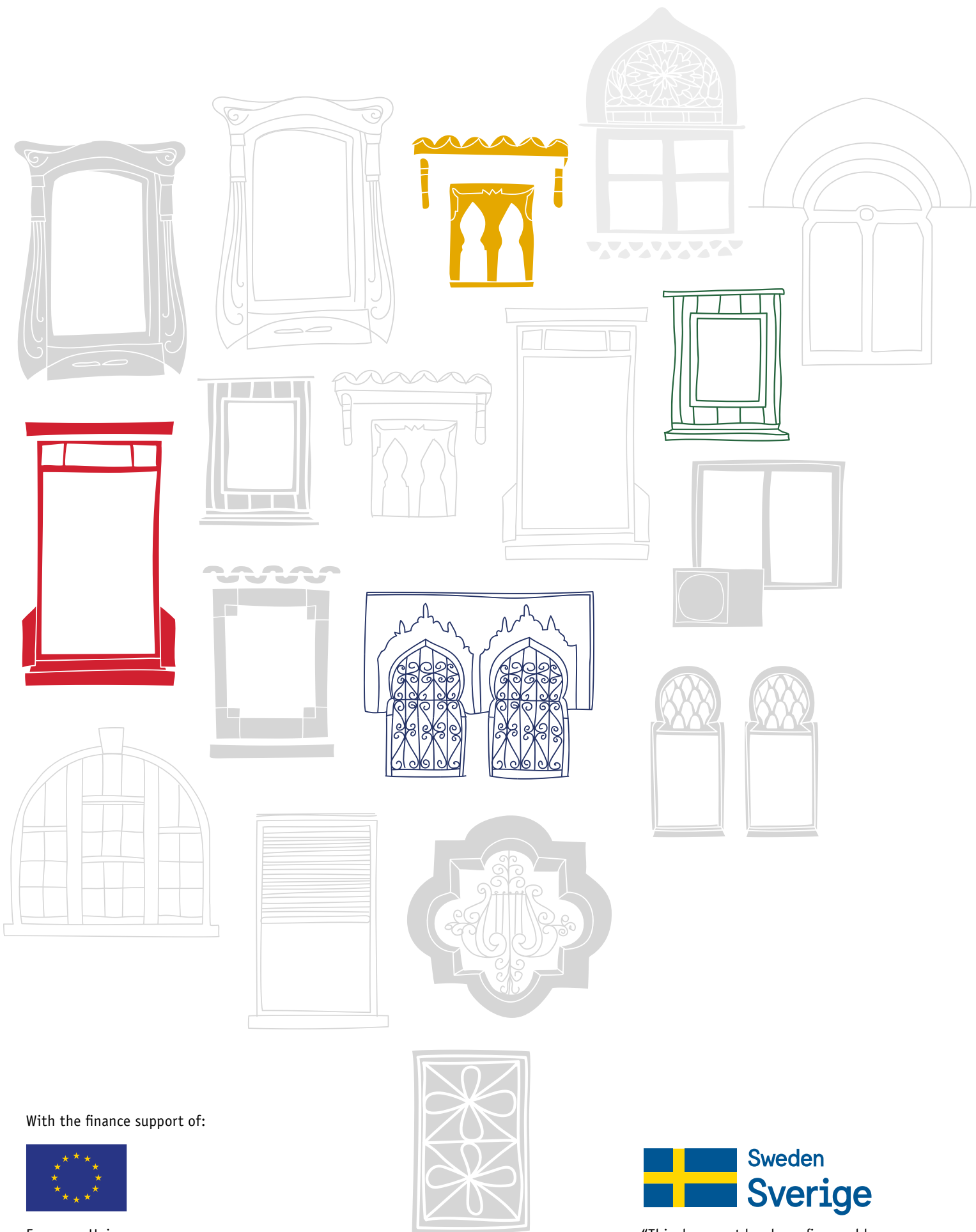
commitment of our constituency to start a process of policy discussions to be presented at the Habitat III+5 Conference and of developing shared cross-party visions for the future of cities and the urban-rural continuum.





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