



### World Human Rights Cities Forum 2014

“Towards a Global Alliance of Human Rights Cities for All”

#### Concept Note

15-18 May 2014

Kimdaejung Convention Center

Gwangju, Republic of Korea

#### Background and Outline of the Forum

1. WHRCF 2014 is the fourth of the World Human Right Cities Forum, which has been annually held by key actors and stakeholders engaged in building a human rights city in order to implement the vision of a human rights city as articulated in the Gwangju Declaration on Human Rights City adopted on 17 May 2011 at the first WHRCF.
2. The Forum aims to address the emerging challenges facing human rights cities and local governments on the ground such as poverty and rising inequality, unemployment and lack of productive and decent jobs, exclusion of migrants and minorities and vulnerable groups, gender injustice and discrimination, environmental pollution and climate chaos, privatization of land and public space, access to public information and transparency to name a few. To that end, several sessions will be organised to foster participatory sharing and analysis of various experiences and good practices.
3. The Forum is hosted by the Metropolitan City of Gwangju and organized by Gwangju International Center, Korea Human Rights Foundation (KHRF) and United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) with the support of co-sponsors including Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Justice, National Human Rights Commission of Korea, Ministry of Education, the Asia Pacific Center for Education for International Understanding (APCEIU), Korean National Commission for UNESCO, and the Gwangju Metropolitan Office of Education.
4. More than 500 participants both from Korea and abroad, mainly representatives from ‘human rights cities’, including members of the Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights of UCLG, human rights NGOs, grassroots community-based organizations, local parliamentarians, academics as well as UN human rights experts are expected to take part in the meeting.

#### Theme and Concept of ‘Human Rights City’ and the Right to the City

5. The theme “Towards a Global Alliance of Human Rights Cities for All” was chosen to highlight the importance of expanding the human rights cities’ movement worldwide in order to promote solidarity and mutual cooperation among them. It is believed that human rights mainstreaming through the human rights-based approach if rightly and fully implemented at all stages of a human rights city including budgeting, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, can and must be a key to successful innovation to make a city a common space for solidarity for all beyond local and national boundaries.
6. The theme is in line with the concept of ‘Human Rights City’ as defined in WHRCF 2011 which is ‘both a local community and a socio-political process in the local context where human rights play a key role as the fundamental values and guiding principles’ based on the understanding of a “human rights city as human rights



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governance in the local context where local governments, local parliaments, civil society, private sector organizations and other stakeholders work together to improve the quality of life for all inhabitants in the spirit of partnership based on human rights standards and norms.”

7. The theme is also in line with the concept of the “right to the city” as defined in the 2012 1<sup>st</sup> World Summit of Local Governments for the Right to the City (Saint-Denis, France) as “the equitable usufruct of cities within the principles of sustainability, equality, solidarity and social justice”, a concept that should become a tangible reality not only in cities, but also in metropolitan regions, in close dialogue with social movements and civil society in general at local, national and global level.
8. From the European Charter of Human Rights in the City (2000) signed by more than 350 European towns and cities, to those of Montreal (2006), Mexico (2010), Gwangju (2012) and Vienna (2012) and through the adoption of the Global Charter-Agenda of Human Rights in the City (2011), adopted by UCLG, we are pleased to observe that for over 12 years, human rights have been increasingly inscribed in the agendas of local authorities from all over the globe.
9. However, further progress is still needed to make human rights a reality in our cities. According to the Gwangju Declaration on Human Rights City of 2011, human rights mainstreaming emphasizes the human rights-based approach where all inhabitants, regardless of race, sex, colour, nationality, ethnic background, social status in particular, minorities and any other vulnerable groups who socially tend to be marginalized, can participate fully in the decision-making, policy-implementation and monitoring processes that affect their lives in accordance with human rights principles such as non-discrimination, rule of law, participation, empowerment, transparency and accountability.

### **Agenda and Program Structure**

10. The meeting will have several types of sessions and activities: Opening Ceremony, two Plenary Sessions, Special Session, Human Rights Culture Tour and Closing Ceremony. Simultaneous interpretation in English, French, Spanish and Korean will be provided in the Opening Ceremony, two plenary sessions, Special Session and Annual Meeting of the UCLG’s Committee on Social, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights. Sign language interpretation will be provided additionally at both Opening and Closing Ceremonies
11. Plenary sessions will count with the participation of high level representatives from cities, international civil society organisations, and academia from different regions of the world. These sessions will deal with the overall topic of the event from a holistic and strategic perspective in order to draw some lessons about human rights policy-making, monitoring and evaluation.
12. There will also be workshops such as experts’ workshop on local government and human rights (15 May), thematic workshops (16 and 17 May) and related special events throughout the Forum.
13. The Experts’ Workshop on Local Government and Human Rights will be held on 15 May with a number of UN human rights experts including some members of the UN Human Rights Council Advisory Committee (HRCAC), city representatives and human rights practitioners to provide inputs for the research paper according to the UN Human Rights Council’s resolution (A/HRC/24/L.2) adopted on 26 September 2013 requesting “*the UNHRC Advisory Committee to prepare, a research-based report on the role of local government in the promotion and protection of human rights, including human rights mainstreaming in local administration and public services, with a view to compiling best practices and main challenges*”. The HRCAC is expected to present a progress



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report to the UNHRC at its twenty-seventh session in September 2014. This workshop will be organized by the KHRF and relevant UN human rights bodies, with support from Metropolitan City of Gwangju. The Working Language will be English.

14. The Experts Workshop will also include a session on “Gwangju Guiding Principles for Human Rights City” which was adopted at the 3<sup>rd</sup> WHRCF on 17 May 2013. The Gwangju Principles will be finalized during this workshop with the implementation guidelines to be developed by participants.
15. Thematic workshops will be organized on 16 and 17 May 2014 simultaneously by local civil society organizations in Gwangju. Simultaneous translation in English and Korean will be provided for all workshops. Additional languages for two different sessions will be available. For City and Child/Youth, Japanese and for City and Disability, Sign Language and Portuguese interpretation will be provided and themes are as below:
  - State Violence and Human Rights – A New Form of State Violence; Privatization
  - City and Child/Youth – City and Space Where Child/Youth Can Play
  - City and Disability – Independent Living for People with Disabilities and Universal Design
  - The Elderly and Human Rights – The Elderly Human Rights in the Twenty-First Century
  - City and Gender – Women’s Rights and Human Rights City
  - Environment and Human Rights – Urban Sustainability and Energy Justice
16. There will also be several special events throughout the Forum which are as follows:
  - Event 1 (17 May 2014): Human Rights Culture Tour.
  - Event 2 (17 May 2014): Citizens’ Rally on the Eve of May 18 Democratization Movement organized by Citizens’ Organizing Committee.
  - Events 3 (18 May 2014): The 34<sup>th</sup> Commemorative Ceremony of May 18 Democratization Movement at the May 18 National Cemetery organized by the Ministry of Patriots and Veterans’ Affairs.
17. Besides these events, the Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights of UCLG will organise a working meeting to discuss its Strategic Plan for the period 2014-2016 and brainstorm about the organisation of the 2<sup>nd</sup> World Summit of Local Governments for the Right to the City, to be held in 2015.

### **Gwangju Spirit and Commitment to Human Rights**

18. The 2014 WHRCF is a sign of continued commitment of the people and the municipal government of Gwangju as well as an invitation to all like-minded mayors and human rights advocates to the vision of a Human Rights City for promoting solidarity and cooperation towards a universal culture of human rights beyond national and city boundaries among all urban residents and inhabitants. Gwangju is firmly committed to this vision as it is consistent with the Spirit of Gwangju for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Reference Documents**

- 1) Gwangju Declaration on a Human Rights City of the WHRCF 2011(17 May 2011)
- 2) Global Charter-Agenda for Human Rights in the City (11 December 2011)
- 3) Gwangju Statement of WHRCF 2012 (17 May 2012)
- 4) Final Declaration of the 1<sup>st</sup> World Summit of Local Governments for the Right to the City (St Dennis, France, 12 December 2012)
- 5) Gwangju Statement of WHRF 2013 (17 May 2013)
- 6) Gwangju Guiding Principles for Human Rights City (17 May 2013)