



THE DONOSTIA-SAN SEBASTIAN DECLARATION FOR LIVING TOGETHER IN CITIES

Cities gathered at the Palacio de Aiete, San Sebastian, now known as The House of Peace and Human Rights, which is also the headquarters of the Institute of Democratic Governance, resolve the following

DECLARATION:

1.- Our cities are a reflection of the social reality of a globalised, complex and interdependent world, and express the many and diverse problems, contradictions and conflicts of our time.

These situations translate into very serious difficulties for the achievement of co-existence and social cohesion in cities.

Although our problems are different, we share the common objective of the defence of a civil culture that would allow us to overcome the obstacles to the fulfilment of all the rights of citizenry for all men and women, the access to fundamental rights and basic services, and the rejection of violence, intolerance and xenophobia in all their manifestations.

2.- The task of living together and our determination for our cities to be spaces for meeting, mutual knowledge, interculturality and equal development, in short, a fundamental framework for the promotion of human rights, make us especially sensitive to the role that cities must play in overcoming the crisis we are currently suffering (economic as well as political, and everything such a crisis has done to undermine confidence in institutions and democratic values), as well as in the necessary construction of meaningful co-existence and the processes of reconciliation and civic harmony, to overcome situations of violence.



3.- In the modern era, cities have been places that have welcomed and offered the possibility of integration to all. They have also been an amalgam of identities, driven by respect for cultural plurality, always perceived as an element of richness, and of the freedom of circulation between borders as the expression of cosmopolitan citizenry, without migratory discrimination, for reasons of race, nationality, culture or out of xenophobia.

Cities are a space to protect and guarantee rights, spaces that are a mixture of social relations derived from the relationship between native inhabitants and migrant populations, and the displacement of human beings in their quest for new horizons and happiness in life, which ultimately brings co-existence within diversity, as well as innovation and creativity to cities.

The polyphony of cities has allowed us as human beings, men and women, to acquire and properly value the experience and the different flavours of the variety we now enjoy.

4.- But cities also reflect, in all their harshness, the negative consequences of globalisation and conflicts among different peoples and communities for linguistic, cultural and social reasons, as well as for reasons of identity. That is why they can also be perceived as territories of conflict, segregation or exclusion.

It is for this reason that we think that the city must be a place for opportunities, where local governments must act decisively and with the participation of citizens to eliminate social differences, as spaces informed by a culture of peace and the peaceful coexistence of all with recognition of and respect for diversity and different identities.

5.- It is, therefore, precisely in the city that work has to be done to humanise conflicts and apportion equal responsibility to all concerned in order to attain inclusion, as opposed to exclusion and self-exclusion.

Striving for peace with justice, social inclusion, interculturality, the resolution of conflicts, reason as opposed to force, education for peace and co-existence is not something foreign to our responsibilities as Mayors and Mayoresses. It is a political compromise that must extend towards all areas of



local governance and must be materialised in public policies by guaranteeing rights: from town planning and housing to ecology, education and culture.

All these disciplines, with the application of human rights, can contribute to the construction of more just co-existence, within a framework of freedom and inclusion.

And none of them must be foreign to this very important responsibility we all have.

6.- The cities that have met here in San Sebastian give a very firm undertaking towards the achievement of these objectives and resolve to work, in a Network, to share information, exchange projects, good practices and experiences amongst the technicians and politicians of our cities.

In this sense, next year we shall also hold day-long workshops and meetings to study and monitor projects on the culture of coexistence, for the safeguard of human rights and for the elaboration of programmes for education in democratic values.

We shall also base our initiatives on the processes of peace and reconciliation that any one of the cities might be engaged in and we shall promote policies of decentralised cooperation and development.

7.- We resolve that this House of Peace and Human Rights of Aiete would coordinate the work of communication amongst these cities, human rights institutions and community organisations that are working on alternative experiences, that hereby adhere to the undertakings contained in this Declaration. It is our firm desire that other cities also become part of this undertaking.

We should like, for this venture, to have the important support and contribution of the UCLG (United Cities and Local Governments) Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights, and the FEMP (Spanish Federation of Provinces and Municipalities and Provinces).

Donostia-San Sebastian, December 14, 2010