

Annual meeting of the UCLG Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights held on the occasion of the 2021 UCLG Executive Bureau

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The following document is a summary of discussions of the annual meeting of the UCLG Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights (UCLG-CSIPDHR) held on the occasion of the 2021 UCLG Executive Bureau. The meeting gathered representatives of the UCLG-CSIPDHR co-presidency, members and active local governments to address emerging priorities and networking proposals in the agenda. Participants to the meeting also discussed the collective human rights roadmap of the Committee, including a renewed online learning strategy, strengthened partnership with the OHCHR, human rights campaigning and the follow-up process to the Global Charter-Agenda for Human Rights in the City (set to take place from 2021 to 2022).

Welcome remarks and co-presidency roundtable: Emerging priorities

The Mayor of **Grigny** (France) and co-president of the UCLG-CSIPDHR, **Philippe Rio**, welcomed participants to the event. Aware of the current human rights situations in various places of the world, including Myanmar, Colombia and Palestine, as well as the multiple consequences of the COVID-19 crisis, Mr. Rio stressed the importance of local governments as places of both resistance and resilience. Territories where human rights are defended and conquered everyday. Places of innovation to come up with sustainable solutions. Cities of solidarity that promote human rights across the world.

World Human Rights Cities Forum and Myanmar solidarity initiative

The coordinator of the **UCLG-CSIPDHR**, **Amanda Fléty**, shared several updates on behalf of the **Gwangju co-presidency**, who was absent to the meeting due to commemoration events of the May 18 Democratic Uprising taking place in the same day. Ms. Fléty informed participants on how the Myanmar statement¹ has already been endorsed by 32 local and regional governments. The UCLG-CSIPDHR is currently exploring ways to connect this with other human rights struggles. Ms. Fléty also informed the audience on the next edition of the World Human Rights Cities Forum (WHRCF) of Gwangju which will be held from October 7 to 10 focusing on the issue of inequalities, climate change and COVID-19 recovery from a human rights cities perspective.

The director of the **Raoul Wallenberg Institute for Human Rights**, **Morten Kjaerum**, spoke on behalf of the organizing committee of the WHRCF, emphasizing how the Forum experienced extraordinary advances in spite of the pandemic. The WHRCF 2020 marked an important step forward in the work of movement, showcasing very relevant practices to address the pandemic.

Human rights cities campaigning: The 10 > 100 > 1000 project

¹ <https://uclg-cisdpl.org/en/news/latest-news/statement-situation-myanmar-call-local-governments-human-rights-solidarity>

The Special Adviser on Human Rights and 2030 Agenda of **Utrecht** (The Netherlands), **Hans Sakkers**, presented the “10 > 100 > 1000 project” which seeks to enhance the sustainability, professionalism and global outreach capacity of the human rights cities movement. The project has both a quality and quantity focus, as it aims at getting more cities on board of the movement as well as to provide an official label for becoming a human rights city. Mr. Sakkers invited participants to join the forthcoming global campaign that will bring this initiative forward in coming months, taking advantage of already existing “collective moments” such as the OHCHR and UCLG local governments meeting (June 2021), the WHRCF and the launch of the Framework for Human Rights Cities at the Fundamental Rights Forum (October 2021) or the UCLG World Congress of Daejeon (2022). It will be developed in parallel to the update process of the Charter-Agenda for Human Rights in the City, and it will focus on convincing participant cities to join and trigger a snowball effect: inviting more cities to participate and become ambassadors, communicating in social media, creating a community already by 2021... Mr. Sakkers invited participants to reflect on how member-local governments could support the UCLG-CSIPDHR Secretariat in developing this campaign.

The director of international relations of **Seine Saint Denis** (France), **Magali Fricaudet** invited the promoters of the campaign to think on how to better involve different kinds of local governments, including departments, as well as small municipalities located in rural areas.

The human rights director of **Vienna** (Austria), **Shams Asadi** welcomed the proposal by Utrecht and saw this as a good opportunity to promote the implementation of the human rights based approach (HRBA) in local agendas. Many local governments are developing related initiatives through local policy-making; this initiative will help showcase them. Ms. Asadi emphasized the importance of articulating this type of initiative with regional initiatives such as that promoted by FRA.

The Strategic Planning Director of **Montreal** (Canada), **Veronique Lamontagne**, confirmed how human rights are also a key agenda for her city government. Human rights help connect and give a collective meaning to different agendas (diversity, inclusion, dignity). This has become more relevant due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As Montreal adopted a new, two-years roadmap to advance human rights, she guaranteed how her city will be standing with the movement. She recognized the interest of developing some sort of global recognition for human rights cities through UCLG’s work.

The Mayor of **Granollers** (Spain), **Josep Mayoral** emphasized how this initiative should recognize the emergency situation many local authorities are facing due to the pandemic. Social expenditure doubled only in the last year. Local governments should count with enhanced access to relief funds so they can better address the ongoing inequality crisis. This campaign should reaffirm the importance of local government solidarity and their role in bringing decision-making closer to people’s lives.

The Deputy Mayor of **Grenoble** (France), **Emmanuel Carroz** argued how the current global situation showcases the fragility of an international system based on states only. In terms of public policies, local governments need more funds to deliver crucial solutions on caring, inclusion and rights access. This should be a priority and an argument for the campaign: Local governments are key to enhancing people's access to fundamental rights, especially the most vulnerable and those left behind.

The participatory democracy director of **Goicoechea** (Costa Rica), **Cindy Chinchilla**, stressed the importance of bringing Latin American membership from UCLG to this campaign. This has become more relevant at a time of ongoing human rights violations, democratic crisis and widening

socio-economic inequality caused by the pandemic. She proposed to have a common work plan that recognizes the specificities of each region and develops promotion events in them.

Violence against women: Towards a global observatory by local governments

The director of international relations of **Seine Saint Denis** (France), **Magali Fricaudet** expressed her respect for the Gwangju colleagues celebrating the anniversary of May 18 Uprising (1980). She introduced the Seine Saint Denis territory (a co-president of the UCLG-CSIPDHR) and shared how her local government (department level) counts with a pioneer Observatory to fight violence against women. In this case, Seine Saint Denis localizes human rights with regards to the rights of women. This is important at a moment where international human rights conventions on this issue are being challenged by some nation states. Seine Saint Denis work is based on proximity and multi-stakeholder coordination. It also recognizes the importance of international cooperation as this is a universal issue. This is why the Seine Saint Denis aims at working with other local governments of the UCLG-CSIPDHR on the creation of a global initiative to address violence against women. This initiative would be based on the exchange of practices and promotion of common frameworks for action. Ms. Fricaudet argued how the next WHRCF might offer a good opportunity to present a more advanced version of this project. She also identified the online learning platform of UCLG as a good space to promote the exchange of practices on this matter. The Seine Saint Denis initiative has been supported by the UCLG-CSIPDHR Secretariat and the French cooperation agency.

The director of the **Raoul Wallenberg Institute for Human Rights**, **Morten Kjaerum**, welcomed the idea of bringing this issue to the Gwangju's Forum. He also noted how many local authorities in Sweden are taking a more proactive role on this issue, speaking about "Violence Free Cities". He also emphasized the importance of data in line with the Fundamental Rights Agency's work.

The advisor on cities and urbanization of the **Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights** (OHCHR), **Bahram Ghazi**, argued how the issue of violence against women has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. He expressed his gratitude for Seine Saint Denis recently sending a contribution to the report on femicide prevention by the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women. It is crucial to showcase local governments' practices to help put words into action.

The Directress of the **ALLAS network** and technical officer of **Montevideo** (Uruguay), **Paola Arjona**, shared how her city developed a specific plan to protect women who are victims of violence in the context of the pandemic and future recovery. Other relevant initiatives have been developed across Latin America, where violence against women is considered a "silent pandemic". The project should also focus on strengthening the work of all local actors involved (civil society, communities).

The Executive Director of Institutional Representation of **Mexico City** (Mexico), **Mariana Flores** argued how the current pandemic aggravated the situation of women who are victims of violence, but also enhanced the general levels of awareness. Mexico City is committed to address this issue and is ready to collaborate with this initiative. However, Ms. Flores believed it would be good to think in advance on how to articulate this initiative with other similar ones at a level of city networking.

Local governments and peace agendas

Mariana Flores from **Mexico City** also updated participants on the ongoing process of the Cities for Peace Forum. The Forum aims at reinforcing the global conversation among local governments and

other stakeholders (UN, civil society...) on how to build peace in worldwide territories. Looking at the causes of conflict and insecurity is key, including poverty and inequality. The Forum is seen not only as a concrete space to meet but also as a continuous process of reflection and dialogue. Everyone is invited to participate and propose new activities and events². Mr. Flores argued how this Forum could provide an opportunity for the 10 > 100 > 1000 campaign to organize an event or specific call to action. The role of the UCLG-CSIPDHR in this process is to help develop a declaration on cities free of violence by October, bringing more contents, cities and actors to the table

The Mayor of **Granollers** (Spain), **Josep Mayoral** shared how his city, as a leading member of the Mayors for Peace initiative in both Catalonia and Europe, is fully engaged in this process. Mr. Mayoral argued how every city in the world should have their own peace agenda at the local level.

Closing remarks

The Territorial Secretary of **Plaine Commune** (France), **Habib Gniengue**, delivered the closing remarks of the Meeting's first segment. He shared how Plaine Commune - a historical member of the UCLG-CSIPDHR - is trying to develop a new international strategy. It will follow-up on the previous work led on the right to the city, while better anchoring this strategy with the territorial priorities of the same Plaine Commune, especially marked by the forthcoming celebration of the 2024 Olympic Games. Plaine Commune and the UCLG-CSIPDHR will continue to explore synergies.

Presentation of the human rights roadmap

The coordinator of the **UCLG-CSIPDHR**, **Amanda Fléty**, introduced the 2021/22 roadmap on human rights proposed by the Committee. The roadmap is composed by three main processes: the launch of a global campaign to strengthen the human rights cities movement (mainly based on the initiative proposed by Utrecht); the establishment of a learning platform and creation of a MOOC on human rights and local governments; and the update process of the Charter-Agenda for Human Rights in the City. The coordination assistant of the UCLG-CSIPDHR, **Jaume Puigpinós**, presented the online learning strategy, which is being developed in partnership with the UCLG Learning Department. The MOOC on local governments and human rights will rely heavily on member-local government concrete experiences and will help support policy innovation among UCLG members. This initiative will also be developed in partnership with other organizations present in the meeting (Raoul Wallenberg Institute, Global Platform for the Right to the City and OHCHR) among others.

When presenting the Charter-Agenda update process, Ms. Fléty first highlighted the added value of this document: A pioneer human rights document at an international level based on local and regional governments' concrete experiences and points of view. In launching this follow-up process, the UCLG-CSIPDHR aims at capturing the latest advance made by local and regional governments over the last decade (thus, better acknowledging the existence of other local declarations and guiding principles) as well as inspiring the next 10 years of human rights cities movement, better addressing the emergence of a new generation of human rights. The process will be developed throughout 2021 and 2022 in three simultaneous courses of action: one based on consultation, one on co-creation and one on promotion. The first one will allow interested parties to send contributions through the dedicated space in UCLG Meets³ or to organize regional consultations and live discussions. The

² More information about the Forum: <https://www.ciudadesdepaz.com/>

³ <https://www.uclgmeets.org/processes/Charter-Agenda-HR?locale=en>

co-creation course will establish a steering committee (local governments) and a writing committee (mixed) to develop a draft document. The third course of action, based on promotion and advocacy, will connect with the global campaign initiative as well as UCLG's consultation mechanisms, with the aim of triggering UCLG's adoption of the document in the 2022 Daejeon Congress.

Feedback by local government representatives

The human rights director of **Vienna** (Austria), **Shams Asadi**, celebrated the human rights roadmap and Charter-Agenda update process, while emphasizing the importance of anchoring this process also within ongoing regional initiatives such as the one led within the FRA.

The Mayor of **Granollers** (Spain), **Josep Mayoral**, expressed his willingness to join this process and invited local governments to embrace narratives grounded in local priorities and concrete work.

The Deputy Mayor of **Sfax** (Tunisia), **Med Wajdi**, highlighted the importance of recognizing regional specificities throughout the process, recognizing the specific needs of country contexts like Tunisia or Palestina where local autonomy and democracy are not yet a given.

The technical officer of the **Global Platform for the Right to the City**, **Sophia Torres**, argued how her organization is ready to take part in this process as a civil society organization. She emphasized the importance of recognizing the multiplicity of visions around human rights (urban rights, habitat rights right to the city) throughout the process and exploring synergies between different initiatives.

The Mayor of **Grigny** (France) and co-president of the UCLG-CSIPDHR, **Philippe Rio**, emphasized the importance of co-creation for bringing this process forward. Recognizing the diversity of realities should be key for this agenda from the beginning. Mr. Rio argued how there's a need to renew local governments' agenda on human rights to better reflect local realities: All realities. More emphasis should be made on the issue of poverty and inequalities, direct attacks to human dignity.

The director of International Relations of **Bogotá** (Colombia), **Luz Amparo Medina**, warmly welcomed the expressions of support with the Colombian people by all participants. She argued how, nowadays, it was more important than ever to promote collaboration and concrete exchange to protect human rights at a moment of deep global transformations. Ahead, there's a huge generational challenge. In Colombia, the youth feel they have been left behind without real opportunities to start their life project. The human rights agenda should be intertwined with the opportunities' agenda

The Social Inclusion Chief of **Valencia** (Spain), **Ferran Senent**, warmly welcomed the presentation of the human rights roadmap and confirmed how Valencia is ready to participate in it. Mr. Senent argued how the ongoing process of human rights policy innovation taking place in Valencia can be of inspiration for this process and other cities. This is based on the implementation of new participatory process and specific institutions to address discrimination and hate speech through human rights and intersectionally. Many of these issues are connected to the topics at stake here.

The Deputy Mayor of **Libreville** (Gabon), **Annie Chrystel Limbourg**, showed her willingness to participate in the renovation process of the Charter-Agenda. She argued how it makes total sense to update the document 10 years after its adoption to better reflect recent innovations implemented by local authorities. Ms. Limberg also celebrated the increasing engagement of the OHCHR in this work.

The project officer of **the Catalan Fund for Cooperation, Irene Zarza**, shared the intention of the Fund to participate in this human rights roadmap as well, based on its rich decentralized cooperation experience. Besides considering human rights as a cornerstone of its global strategy, the Fund counts with a leading program of “Cities defenders of human rights⁴” where Catalan municipalities commit to protect human rights defenders from across the world while promoting their work at a local level. The Fund also contributed to processes of local implementation of the rights based approach.

The participatory democracy director of **Goicoechea (Costa Rica), Cindy Chinchilla**, proposed holding regional consultations that could eventually meet at a later stage of the process.

The coordinator of the **International Observatory on Participatory Democracy (IOPD), Adrià Duarte**, highlighted the importance of placing human rights high in the agenda of priorities of municipalism. The IOPD is ready to contribute to this process by showcasing the specific work led on the right to participate and the importance of defending local autonomy and innovation.

The officer in charge of the migration file of **UCLG, Fatima Fernández**, noted how the methodology proposed for the Charter-Agenda process seemed really inspiring. She argued how there was room for cooperation between this process and the UCLG initiative on a Lampedusa Charter on migration. This initiative plans to address migration from a local government perspective and to build a new agenda based on peace and dignity. Both processes will provide a key boost to the UCLG Pact for the Future.

Closing remarks: Towards strengthened partnership with the OHCHR

The advisor on cities and urbanization of the **Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Bahram Ghazi**, celebrated the long history of collaboration between the OHCHR, UCLG and the UCLG-CSIPDHR. This collaboration allowed to hold the 2019 Geneva meeting of local governments for human rights with representatives of the OHCHR⁵. A new agreement between the OHCHR and UCLG to be presented to cities soon will allow both organizations to strengthen this collaboration. Among other features, this agreement aims at creating a dedicated space of dialogue between local governments and their representing initiatives and the OHCHR. It will enable an enhanced cooperation between local governments and UN consultation mechanisms, allowing the latter to know more about local innovations. The extensive field presence of the OHCHR across the world will also be instrumental to this effort, while proposing new capacity building opportunities.

Mr. Ghazi stressed how important it was to invite more local governments to join these initiatives. In spite of the difficulties encountered, the aim is to move forward with human rights: Considering them as a platform to push for transformation and or provide legitimacy and an action framework to build local governments’ resilience capacity in the face of crises. Mr. Ghazi argued how the Myanmar initiative could be extended to other contexts. Mr. Ghazi argued how the next WHRCF will offer a good opportunity to expand this agenda. Mr. Ghazi shared how the OHCHR and UCLG will try to organize a local government meeting soon to give feedback to the proposed common roadmap.

⁴ <https://ciutatsdretshumans.cat/es/qui-som/>

⁵ <https://uclg-cisdp.org/en/news/latest-news/local-governments-bring-human-rights-home-report-local-government-meeting-un-human>