

## **“Cities as Catalysts: Municipal Strategies for Inclusive Local Policies,” Local and regional governments take the stage at the 4th edition of the UNESCO Global Forum Against Racism and Discrimination**

The session “Cities as Catalysts: Municipal Strategies for Inclusive Local Policies”, held on 10 December, the International Human Rights Day, during the 4th edition of the UNESCO Global Forum Against Racism and Discrimination, brought together city leaders from across the globe. Moderated by Fabiana Goyeneche, Director of International Relations of Montevideo and President of the ICCAR Steering Committee, the discussion showcased bold and innovative municipal approaches to combating racism and discrimination. The speakers highlighted their unique strategies for fostering inclusivity, empowering communities, and leveraging diversity as a strength.

### **Fighting Racism Through Education and Cultural Dialogue: Barcelona**

Maria Eugènia Gay, Deputy Mayor of Barcelona, emphasized the city's dedication to combating racism through education and culture. The “Antiracist Barcelona” initiative integrates interdepartmental policies and programs like cultural projects and inclusive dialogues. Key efforts include neighborhood-based anti-discrimination offices and the "Universal Photo of Cultures," aimed at fostering global understanding.

### **Empowering Communities with Partnerships and Inclusivity: Irbid**

From Jordan, Mayor Nabil Kofahi highlighted Irbid's journey towards becoming a green, smart city prioritizing justice, partnerships, and diversity. Irbid's strategies align with the UN's SDGs, promoting youth empowerment through a dedicated municipal department and ensuring 25% representation for women in its council. Mayor Kofahi underscored the importance of accessible public spaces and civic participation as pillars of inclusive urban development.

### **Tackling Poverty and Structural Racism: London**

London's Deputy Mayor Debbie Weekes-Bernard brought attention to the intersection of race and poverty, with 25% of Londoners living in poverty—a statistic disproportionately affecting racial minorities. Addressing structural racism, the city has implemented support programs offering financial aid and immigration advice, returning £40 million to its residents. For London, the fight against racism begins by dismantling the systemic inequalities exacerbated by poverty.

### **Redesigning Policies Through a Decolonial Lens: Bologna**

Emily Marion Clancy, Deputy Mayor of Bologna, linked climate and racial justice, focusing on institutional reforms. Bologna's anti-discrimination center co-designs services with 28 local associations, ensuring a participatory approach. The city promotes campaigns that recognize all residents as belonging to Bologna, aiming to dismantle colonial perspectives in policy-making.

### **Ensuring Inclusive Nightlife and Combating Violence: The Hague**

In The Hague, Deputy Mayor Marielle Vavier addressed youth discrimination and gender-based violence. Her innovative policies include “Safer Clubbing,” which educates nightlife establishments on inclusivity, and campaigns against violence towards women. By empowering young people and women, The Hague is forging a path toward a more equitable city.

### **Combating Structural Racism Through Education and Policy: São Leopoldo**

Mayor Ary Vanazzi shared São Leopoldo’s initiatives, such as racial equality councils and educational reforms to challenge racism. These frameworks prioritize Black populations in university admissions and promote curricula addressing systemic inequality. Despite the challenges posed by extremist rhetoric in Brazil, the city continues to champion solidarity and respect.

### **Addressing Territorial Inequalities: La Courneuve**

Mayor Gilles Poux discussed tackling territorial and social discrimination in La Courneuve. The city’s Atlas of Inequality aids in understanding disparities and creating targeted policies. Efforts in literacy and cultural engagement aim to rebuild trust and solidarity in a historically marginalized population.

### **A Call for Change from UCLG’s Municipal Movement**

Emilia Saiz, Secretary General of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), closed the session by calling for a paradigm shift in local governance. She showcased the Local Social Covenant, UCLG’s contribution to the upcoming Second World Summit for Social Development, which promotes a renewed local service provision, looking at equality from a feminist perspective, government from a proximity perspective, in relation to nature to address climate change from the communing, with care at the heart of decision-making. By fostering stronger democracies and embracing difficult conversations around racism, migration, and feminism, cities can lead the charge for systemic change.

This session underscored the transformative power of cities in the global fight against racism and discrimination, offering a shared vision of inclusion, justice, and community-driven progress.