



United Cities and Local Governments

Local and Regional Leaders World Summit

Mexico City 16 – 20 November 2010

Concept Paper

1. From 16th to 20th November this year, the Local and Regional Leaders Summit takes place in Mexico City. It is organised by United Cities and Local Governments, the world organisation of local and regional governments, and hosted by the City.
2. The world is familiar with “Summits” which bring together the *national* Heads of State and Government. But in today’s and tomorrow’s world, decision-making cannot be limited to a single level of government – and decisions made at local and other sub-national (regional/provincial) levels are often just as important. And frequently - let us cite climate change as an example – city and local government leaders are in the lead in taking necessary action and in inspiring their citizens to act.
3. So the aim of the Local and Regional Leaders Summit is to discuss the critical issues facing our world and each continent – and to agree our own set of initiatives, priorities and actions.
4. The world of 2010 is one of great uncertainty, and the future is posing a uniquely complex set of challenges for our peoples and for our leaders. In drawing up our programme for this Summit, we have therefore wished to look first at the range of major issues facing the world, with a particular focus on their local and regional impacts, and the local and regional contribution to tackle them.

THE 3 THEMES

5. The Summit will look at three main themes, all of which are connected. Each theme will be introduced by keynote speakers, and a team of high level Respondents from our cities and regions will take the debate forward. Then, within each theme, Parallel Sessions will be organised to allow participants to analyse in more depth some of the main issues raised in the plenary.
6. The themes are as follows:
 - Global crises: Local Impacts
 - The City of 2030
 - Local Governments – Partners in the new Global Governance

The following sections explain the aims of each Theme and session.

THEME 1

Plenary Session 1 – “Global Crises: Local Impacts”

7. The first Plenary will set the stage and the context for the whole Summit. That is why UCLG wishes to start with a broad session which looks at the major issues confronting our world – at all levels. The session will also provide ideas on how to tackle the crises and meet the challenges in our cities and localities.
8. Today, we face a number of crises, together with a set of tough major challenges, which interact upon each other – and which will intensify in future. These include
 - The financial, economic and fiscal crises
 - The climate crisis
 - The coming energy crisis or challenge
 - The demographic challenges
 - The environmental crisis
 - The continuing crisis of poverty and growing inequality

Together, one may conclude, they require us to rethink the model of globalisation which has dominated national and international policy-making in recent decades, and to seek a better balance between the global and the local.

Financial, economic and fiscal crises

9. The world has gone through a great financial and economic storm, which took many countries to the brink of disaster. In many parts of the world, some degree of economic growth seems to have returned, at least for the time being.
10. However, the steps taken to rescue, through public money, the financial private sector, and to stimulate the economy, have involved major increases in public indebtedness in many countries, especially in Europe and North America. And this increase in the level of public debt is now leading – however unfairly – to pressure to make major reductions in public expenditure. So we now have – in many places – a *fiscal crisis* to join or follow the *economic crisis*.
11. This pressure to reduce public expenditure and debt will of course not be limited to the level of national governments – local and regional governments will be forced to take their “share” of the pain. This leads not only to real problems for local authorities in reconciling spending and needs for services, but also risks the imposition of new centralising policies by central governments. These may take the form of new controls on spending or borrowing (either in total or via more ear-marking), or centrally-imposed “efficiency” measures, or top-down reorganisations. And so on.
12. In short, the gradual, sometimes uneven, process of decentralisation which, since the 1970s has taken place in most countries, is now at risk of being replaced or curtailed by a new

wave of recentralisation. So highlighting and countering this risk of recentralisation needs to be a central objective of the Summit. And local governments also need to be able to demonstrate that, even when faced with heavy pressures, they are forward-looking and innovative.

The climate crisis

13. Local and regional governments, worldwide, have been in the forefront on the issue of climate change, and many have taken practical steps in terms of mitigation and adaptation strategies. Many, indeed, are already facing the impact of more frequent extreme weather events. Moreover, at international level, UCLG and its members, and the thematic associations concerned with climate issues, were active in the lead-up to the heads of government meeting at the COP 15 in Copenhagen in December 2009 – and disappointed by the extremely modest results. The next COP is in Cancun soon after the UCLG Summit, but at this stage there are no signs of an imminent break-through to a broader international agreement on measures to control the degree and pace of climate change.
14. On the contrary, recent months have seen a sharp attack by those who do not accept the broad scientific consensus on the extent to which human activity has caused, and is causing, climate change. Polls show that public opinion has been affected by these arguments, and the percentage of those accepting the human causation of climate change has decreased significantly in many countries.
15. So the task of the Summit on this subject – if so agreed - will not just be to reaffirm good practice and the need for the local level to play a major role in countering climate change. We will also need to give a lead to public opinion in our cities, towns and regions, to convince our citizens that the risks of denial and non-action are far too serious to ignore, and that the scientific evidence is robust and convincing.

The coming energy crisis or challenge

16. Everywhere, the future of our energy supplies becomes a more and more urgent issue, as the easy availability of fossil fuels declines, and the need to de-carbonise our economies is more widely accepted. The debate about the timing of “peak oil” intensifies, and energy prices seem destined to rise in real terms. Ethical and environmental issues also arise – for example, how far is it acceptable to cause large-scale environmental disturbance (or worse) in getting oil from tar sands? And what future for nuclear power?
17. At the same time, new forms of more decentralised energy become available or at least technologically practicable, which mean that cities and local governments may be able to have a greater influence in the future development and supply of energy. Energy policies are crucial to many other issues of urban and rural planning and governance – especially transport and mobility, and energy efficiency in buildings of all kinds.

The demographic challenges

18. We all know the forecasts – that by 2050, the world’s population will have grown to 9 billion, from the current estimated 6.8 billion. And that most of this increase will take place in lower income countries which already face many stresses. We have been told many times that,

around now over half the world's population live in urban settlements, and we can be sure that this process will intensify. We know, too, that many countries face a different prospect – of population decline or stagnation, with an increased proportion of older citizens.

19. Local and regional governments have to confront all of these issues. How to plan and build decent urban areas and housing for all, how to decrease (not increase) the number of slum-dwellers. How to better connect the city (economically and socially) with its suburbs, edge cities and nearby urban centres. How to provide adequate public services to poorer people, and to those with greater physical or mental difficulties. Even without the economic and fiscal crises, these issues were big ones for local and regional leaders and governments. Now, even greater political and managerial creativity, skill and commitment will be needed to deal with them in a positive way.

The environmental crisis

20. Our increased population, with a larger urban footprint, our vast use of fossil fuels and of the earth's mineral resources, have already led to a severe loss of habitat for other species, and to the earth's biodiversity. Great steps to preserve a more healthy and diverse environment and bio-system have been taken by governments at all levels – but local and regional leaders need to be ever-conscious of the scale and importance of the environmental crisis.

The continuing crisis of poverty and growing inequality

21. The pattern of modern globalisation has led to growing inequality in many parts of the world, but alongside this, steps have also been taken in many places to combat the most extreme poverty. The Millennium Development Goals are due to be implemented by 2015 (or 2020 for the slum-dwellers target). While real progress has been made towards some goals and targets, others (e.g. maternal mortality) remain far off-track. And whilst cities provide many of the best opportunities for citizens, they are also the places with the greatest inequality of wealth and incomes, often reflected in physical segregation. That provides another major challenge for city leaders.

The challenges (and opportunities) of cultural diversity and dialogue

22. In a globalised world which is at once more joined-up and yet more fragmented, culture has the potential to unite people across boundaries of ethnicity and class. Cities are the places where tradition joins creativity to respond to other challenges. Yet too often, the diversity of cultural expression can be seen as a problem, or source of conflict, rather than as an extraordinary heritage of humankind. City leaders can play a key role in building intercultural dialogue, and in promoting the diversity of culture(s) as a tool for social cohesion. Addressing cultural imbalances and conflicts will be a cross-cutting theme for the Summit.

The challenge of gender equality

23. In many countries, important steps have been taken to promote gender equality, both in terms of political representation (as mayors, councillors etc.) and in terms of policy, but in few countries is there anything like parity. Many countries remain overwhelmingly "male" in their public face to the world, and UCLG and its members are far from immune from this

gender bias. The Summit will aim to address the issue of gender, across its themes and sessions, when looking at impacts, policies, and representation.

Parallel Sessions – Innovating in a cold economic climate

24. The parallel work sessions which follow the first plenary will focus mainly on the consequences of the *economic and fiscal crises*. They look at three inter-related roles of local and regional governments:

- Supporting local economies
- New approaches to public services
- Managing the fiscal squeeze

Parallel Session 1: Supporting local economies

25. The main purpose of this session is to look at what local and regional leaders and governments have done during the recession and economic downturn to stimulate their local economies and help to prepare their residents for their future economic life. Given this experience, and the probable longer-term impact on employment of the crisis, as well as continuing technological change and demographic shifts, what economic development policies are forward-looking city and local governments now working on?

Parallel Session 2: New Approaches to public services

26. This session will examine the issue of how, in an age of rapid change and of tight finances, local and regional governments can protect, develop and organise front-line public services. Has the economic downturn already generated good examples of successful innovation in public services? How can new technologies be used to improve the citizen's experience as well as to increase efficiency? Can different bits of the public sector work together better to provide a fuller, more accessible service? Can and should users of public services have a bigger role in designing and managing them?

Parallel Session 3: Managing the financial squeeze

27. This session looks at the impact of the same set of financial and other pressures on local and regional governments, but from the internal management perspective. We wish to protect front-line services to the public as far as possible, but we also need to ensure that our own administrations remain viable and effective. Are our traditional management and departmental structures well-adapted and efficient? Is there room for public sector organisations to share more "back office" services like IT or financial services? How far can or should an authority outsource central support services (e.g. law, finance, personnel) to save costs without losing strategic control? Are there successful ways of raising more revenues without causing hardship?

THEME 2

Plenary Session 2 – “The City of 2030”

28. The second Plenary Session takes into account the crises and challenges highlighted in the first, but the focus here is on our role, as local and regional leaders, in developing a realistic and positive vision and set of strategies and policies for the future of the “City”. We have taken the year 2030 as a symbolic one. Being 20 years ahead, it is far enough in the future to mean that we have a chance to think in quite far-reaching ways about the changes we want to see. But it is not so far away as to render all discussion utopian and unreal for busy politicians and senior managers.
29. The term “City” is not intended to imply any particular size or type of urban settlement. The City can be large or small, a metropolitan region or a fairly small town. What is significant is that – faced with so many challenges – we should be able to identify the main strands of a new development model for our urban areas.
30. So this plenary session aims to stimulate and challenge us in our thinking about our urban future, if our urban areas are to be built on a sustainable basis. It will look at issues of urban footprint and spatial planning, at the diversity of functional relationships between the urban core and periphery-ies, at new ways of living and working in the city, at urban governance and inclusion. At creating a world of liveable cities, a world of cities without slums. Future changes may then be radical or more incremental – but they need to be based on a holistic concept or vision.

Parallel Sessions – a Local Vision for Our Global Urban Future

31. The Parallel sessions under Theme 2 will look at four specific aspects of the future of the City, with emphasis on the future inter-relationship between the City and the Citizens:
 - Living in the city
 - Working in the city
 - Moving in the city
 - Shaping the city

Living in the city

32. By “living in the city” we mean not just residing (though a decent home is a right for all), but the whole experience of life – culture and art, recreation and sport, shopping and retailing, enjoying the public space... This session will look at how to develop the city’s “liveability”, both for its own sake, and as part of its overall attractiveness to the world. How should our cities be preparing (physically and otherwise) for changes in lifestyles and culture? How can cultural creativity, diversity and dialogue be integrated into the social and physical fabric of tomorrow’s city?

Working in the city

33. The aim of this session is twofold. First, to look at what sort of jobs, in what sort of economies, and in what sort of conditions, our citizens are likely to be working in, 20 years from now, taking into account technological change, lifestyle shifts etc. And how far can city governments help to ensure that they are jobs of decent quality, as well as quantity, and open to all?
34. Second, to discuss how the fabric of the city needs to evolve – or be re-constituted – to meet the new requirements. Do we envisage a “greener” local economy with more mixed-use quarters? Or on the contrary, will we see a greater division between the urban or extra-urban “workspace” and the rest of the city’s physical and social fabric (excepting the service jobs which underpin the city centre economies). Will there be a greater emphasis on local jobs for local people, or greater migrations of workers (within or across national borders)? And how far will city economies depend on their synergies with nearby towns and on inter-linked “clusters” of service or manufacturing industries?

Moving in the city

35. Transport and mobility – these are fundamental to our vision of the city of 2030. Movement around the city, between home and work and play, but also movement into and out of the city, connecting to neighbouring and “peripheral” suburbs and towns, the region and the wider world... they are crucial to a city’s competitiveness and efficiency as well as to the wider enjoyment and well-being of its people. Transport infrastructure also shapes the city’s physical development – do we have, do we want, can we control urban sprawl, suburban utopia, out-of-town shopping malls?
36. This session will pose and try to answer some key questions. What is the future of the car in the city? Which predominant kinds of urban mobility for the future? More priority for public transport? And what sort of public transport will we need? Is public transport something for the poor or for all? How best to bring goods and supplies into the city, and what distribution systems? And what about the economics of urban transport?

Shaping the city

37. The city has a physical shape, distribution and appearance, reflecting its economy, mix of uses, design, and the connectivity between its parts. There is in many countries a long tradition – with greater or lesser commitment or success - of consulting the public on the overall urban plan and on major new planning proposals. But the city is of course more than this – it is about the relationships between people and communities, about inclusion and participation.... about developing what is called “the right to the city”.
38. This session therefore focuses on the issue of urban governance. In addition to the vertical and horizontal relationships with other spheres of government, and with neighbouring towns and provinces comprising the geo-economic region, there is the inner relationship between the city and its people. A well-run and well-running city experiments and builds diverse forms of participation – city-wide and in neighbourhoods or communities of interest – as well as structures and measures for inclusion and integration.

THEME 3

Plenary Session 3 – “Partners in the new global governance”

39. The modern world brings amazing new opportunities and technological developments to many of us, but also many challenges and crises we have to resolve, which do not reflect or respect traditional national boundaries. The nation state remains essential in protecting citizens, but increasingly the world depends on transnational, continental-regional and global solutions and structures to tackle these big issues.
40. At the same time, most national governments have discovered that they cannot – even with these supra-national structures – deliver effective results on the ground. Only the local and regional-provincial levels of government can do that. And local and regional governments cannot be only implementers of decisions taken by others – they have to be involved in shaping those decisions.
41. Plenary Session 3 is therefore dedicated to these issues of multi-level governance. The keynote speakers will look at the current trends in global and continental-regional structures, including developments in the UN and Bretton Woods system, the change from G8 to G20, new ideas for international governance on climate change and other issues, and world-regional structures like the AU, EU, ASEAN, Mercosur etc. The session will also look at how far these structures have taken account of the role of local and regional governments as partners in governance and for a positive development – and how we can enhance our role.

Parallel sessions – Towards a mature partnership in decision-making

42. The parallel sessions under Theme 3 will discuss three broad spheres of involvement of local governments as partners:
 - Partners in international development
 - Partners in global solutions
 - Partners in regional integration

Partners in international development

43. We have made some progress in recent years in being seen as actors or partners in international development. The European Union and the African Caribbean Pacific (ACP) states have agreed formally on the important role of local authorities in development, and in theory they should be involved and consulted on national development programmes. UCLG’s recent policy statement on aid effectiveness highlights our key points.
44. Moreover, this role has been recognised, at least to some extent, in the international debates on “aid effectiveness” – which many wish to rename “development effectiveness”. The Accra Agenda for Action (2008) adds a local government dimension to the Paris Declaration, which was silent on our role. And the issue will come back in 2011 in the major international High Level Forum on aid effectiveness in Seoul.
45. Local and regional governments can also play a crucial role in delivering most the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – both in lower income countries, and in higher income ones

through public campaigning and education on development issues. Moreover, UCLG is often asked by international agencies to promote their campaigns against poverty, or to raise awareness of the MDGs, and so on. This session will also look at how we can undertake campaigning work more effectively with our partners on development issues.

Partners in global solutions

46. Cities and local governments play an active role in helping to solve or mitigate many of the biggest problems facing the world. This session will showcase examples of our action in some of these fields, e.g. city diplomacy, trans-cultural alliance-building, climate change, energy, water, food, and also look at how far we have been successful – or not – in getting the international community to recognize our contribution, and work with us as partners.

Partners in regional integration

47. As we have noted (paragraph 39), there are moves towards greater economic, and in some cases political, integration in most continental regions. The aim of this session is to learn what is going on in the different world regions, and to discuss strategies for enhancing our role and impact in these increasingly important international organisations.

OPEN SESSIONS

48. There is room, during the time allotted for Parallel sessions, for five sessions to be held at the same time. The organisers have deliberately left some “spaces” in the programme at this stage, so that our partner associations and organisations can propose to organise their own sessions which will add value to the Summit. To be precise, there is space for two further sessions under Theme 1, for one under Theme 2, and for two under Theme 3. The UCLG Secretariat can be contacted by those interested in organising a session.

THE SUMMIT’S KEY MESSAGES

49. It will of course be for the leaders of our cities and our local and regional governments, IN Mexico City, to debate and define the specific key messages from the Summit to transmit to the international community, to our national governments, and to our partner organisations. But we anticipate, in organising the Summit, that these key messages will include the following:

- The world’s cities, local and regional governments are essential partners if we are to tackle the complex set of crises and high-level challenges facing the world
- Our Leaders stand ready to play a full role, with national governments and the international community, in solving these crises and challenges, including via the new forms of global governance which are being developed
- These crises and challenges – especially the growing fiscal crisis – must absolutely not be used as an excuse for policies or practices of recentralisation by central governments
- Our local and regional governments are demonstrating their creativity to limit the harmful impacts of the economic and fiscal crises, and their powers of innovation to address other major challenges
- The way our world’s cities – big, medium and small – develop and work in the next decades, will play a decisive role in shaping the future of our planet

- We need to rethink our models of “the city”, in all its diversity, ready to meet the huge future challenges and opportunities which we have identified, and building new forms of participation, inclusion and governance