

MUNICIPALISM WORKING TOWARDS A PACT FOR THE FUTURE



UCLG
UBUNTU



UBUNTU: Visions to deliver the Pact for the Future.

UCLG's UBUNTU advisory board held its first 2021 meeting on January 19th to discuss their policy priorities in light of the COVID-19 crisis and how they envision UCLG's Pact for the Future.

The board, which aims to inspire and provide advice to the Presidency of the World Organization with a broad outlook that goes beyond the day-to-day work of its members, highlighted the importance of both the work done to ensure that the international system listens to cities, as well as the trajectory that led to #CitiesAreListening and tackled the following questions:

- Where are local and regional governments going? Where should they be going?
- What is essential to local and regional governments? What should not be left behind?
- What is the role of solidarity in this new era? How can we guarantee it?

These were all questions that the UBUNTU advisory board answered with **UCLG Pact for the Future in mind as the canvas upon which to co-create the next generation of human rights**. Throughout the session, they delivered their views on the **key triggering aspects to make the future that our communities need a reality**.



The pact for the future in the eyes of UBUNTU

The creativity of the UBUNTU advisory board allowed to spur the conversation with a brief pitch on what the Pact for the Future means to them and how it can contribute to achieve the future that our communities need. Feminizing politics, bringing Academia to the table, transforming the international system, and revolutionizing how we understand local finance and the involvement of local and regional governments in the climate agenda were just some of the calls of our advisors as we look for the future.

We need to recognize diversity and redistribute wealth and power. This means, in short, that we need to feminize politics". **Ana Falú**, Chair, Professor and Researcher in Architecture at the National University of Cordoba and Director of INVIHAB

"We need to co-create a Network of academics to be a part of the global movement for innovative development of cities around the world" **Jorge Pérez Jaramillo**, Dean of Architecture Faculty, University of Santo Tomás, Medellín

"This is a seminal year to advance the global climate change agenda. You cannot self-isolate when talking about climate." **Debra Roberts**, Co-chair of Working Group II Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

"We need to collectively explore how to activate the radical imaginaries we all have in our minds to transform societies" **Edgar Pieterse**, Director, African Centre for Cities and South African Research Chair in Urban Policy at the University of Cape Town

"We need to focus on trying to build an inter-urban system, and we need to address the question of what are the common goods and how they can be accessed by all" **Aromar Revi**, Founding Director, Indian Institute for Human Settlements (IIHS)

"We need to work to define finance roadmaps for LRGs, outlines who does what, how we address market and political failures. If we don't get it right, we all fail." **Barbara Samuels**, Executive Director of the Global Clearinghouse for Development Finance

"Reforming the multilateral system needs mechanisms to ensure the inclusion of the meaningful voice of local and regional governments." **María Fernanda Espinosa**, President of the 73rd session of the United Nations General Assembly

"Our goal with the Pact is about having no discrimination. The cultural expression of what we are as a humanity lies in all the diversity that humanity has". **Farida Shaheed**, Former UN Special Rapporteur on Cultural Rights



Grounding rights with the communities.

To kick off the discussion, the meeting started with local and regional leaders who brought to the table their challenges for the COVID-19 era: Urban transformation to carry out an ecological transition, investing in renewing mobility and ensuring that the lessons learned during the pandemic can lay the groundwork for a new generation of rights, restoring trust between communities and institutions, valuing public goods, and integrating rural and urban development as we enter the urban era were all identified as crucial challenges for the recovery.

The pact for the future, representatives of local governments agreed, in this regard needs to tackle these challenges and be forward-thinking. It needs to help update the international human rights system and ground them with the communities. This, it was argued, can be done through a welfare system with strong social services and with an eye towards the future.



A Pact for People: "The next phase of the international municipal movement is not only about being listened to but also about listening."

Listening to civil society, to youth, to professionals, to entrepreneurs, and of course, listening to thinkers, who are offering fresh and knowledgeable advice were underlined as being crucial when discussing the way in which we see rights in the post-pandemic world.

Advisors in this regard underlined that listening meant getting a better grasp on what are commons are; on how do we relate to each other; and on what a truly territorial perspective entails. Listening and putting people at the forefront of our policy would be the key first step towards allowing us to define our priorities within social protection and within the pact.

It was further stressed that a brainstorming exercise like this one and the work of the network in consolidating solutions in the recovery would work towards building the sense of society needed to confront the crisis. The pact in this regard can do just that, ensure we are all working from a common societal baseline.



A pact for planet: Harnessing innovation to ensure resilience: "While we focus on health, we cannot lose sight of some of the planetary challenges that await us"

With regard to the planet, the advisors underlined the importance of innovation in ensuring society safely overcomes the current crisis while ensuring resilience and future prosperity. Ensuring that we invest now in our future will allow us to protect our planet as well as our communities and technology and infrastructure are crucial in that regard.

Here the notion of open source technology came up strong as well as the issue of access to innovation. Moreover, advisors agreed here that education would be key in ensuring that a next generation of rights is established and that only through knowledge and learning can we mitigate the effects of climate change and inequality. A topic directly linked with the way we will relate to technology and innovation moving forward.



A Pact for government: ensuring all spheres are accounted for: The voice and the agency of Local and Regional Governments needs to be part and parcel of how we retool our global agreements”

When addressing the axis of the Pact for Government, the advisors highlighted the importance of rebuilding trust between communities and the institutions that represent them. The UBUNTU board highlighted the importance of local democracy as a tool to strengthen and rebuild rights by ensuring local service provision to all communities. The idea of “reconciliation” was understood by advisors as a critical tool in the recovery. Reconciling communities with institutions, building bridges between communities through cooperation and solidarity is the way to ensure that we recover better.

Advisors highlighted the opportunity of 2021 being the year for profound change for the United Nations and the international system, which can provide an opportunity for our movement to include the voices and a mechanism for representation for local and regional governments.



Concrete proposals to the municipal movement.

With the world transforming at such a rapid pace, members of the UBUNTU board provided concrete ideas and actions for the future of the municipal movement. Below are some of the key proposals offered by the members.

Edgar Pieterse addressed the idea that UCLG could contribute to “breaking” some of the concepts that are stuck in the 20th century. Outdated national-level research and development by developing and imagining what city-level innovation systems mean. Environmental action, he argued, needs to include how people think of themselves in the current climate. UCLG-led advocacy, he argued, can contribute to rethink and re-center citizenship around communities, beyond the imaginary of the nation-state, in order to drive a global shift in how we assess the climate, COVID, and social crises.

Aromar Revi addressed the opportunities for connection that the pandemic had brought. He called for cross-pillar partnerships across countries, regions, and local governments to address key issues such as land ownership and wealth distribution, which is the way to rethink, as well, our governance frameworks.

Barbara Samuels brought to the table local finance as a key issue, calling on UCLG to carry out advocacy around allocations for locally-led projects. She highlighted opportunities such as blended finance and working with institutions as critical for contributing to build local finances.

Ana Falú highlighted the importance of committed leaderships from the local level in order to inspire change at all levels. Bringing diverse leadership to the table is critical to ensure that diverse communities are represented in decision-making processes.

Jorge Pérez Jaramillo signaled the importance of UCLG being able to channel a strong connection with Academia, as a way to establish a global network around research that can contribute to educate the citizens of tomorrow and allow us to generate knowledge about the future of urbanization.

Farida Shaheed argued for the importance of cultural expressions during the outbreak. The SALT approach (Stimulate, Appreciate, Learn, and Transfer), she highlighted, can to understand how communities see each other, and to stimulate collective learning about the future of humanity and can be a valuable tool for the world organization.

Maria Fernanda Espinosa argued that, in a year of profound change for international institution, it is imperative to push for a built-in voice and mechanisms for the municipal movement within the organs of the United Nations by advocating that it is local and regional government who can contribute to rebuild trust among institutions and communities and redefine public action.

Debra Roberts argued that UCLG has been, and continues to, be a critical actor in bridging science and policy, and that 2021 brings opportunities to both feed into the COP processes and to influence scientific assessments.



What comes next? Steps for the upcoming UBUNTU meetings

The meeting finished with commitment from the constituency and the UBUNTU advisors in contributing towards the Pact for the Future and helping formulate and promote the next generation of human rights. It was moreover stressed that bringing actors together to foster this agenda is key and explore spaces to find solutions to these complex problems. To be able to navigate this complexity, it has been proposed that the UBUNTU advisors:

1. Propose a session with the aim of deepening the work of UCLG on topics critical to the agenda of the Pact for the Future.
2. Propose specific partners that could contribute to the Pact and that have not been identified yet
3. Propose specific advocacy actions to carry out jointly.

Participants embraced the complexity of the exercise and adopted the commitment to develop the instruments to ensure it can shape the Pact for the Future.