

Special Report of the UCLG-CSIPDHR

The 12th Gwangju World Human Rights Cities Forum and the UCLG World Summit in Daejeon

October 2022 was a very important month for the UCLG-CSIPDHR, as it has been marked by two key events, both held in the Republic of Korea: the [12th World Human Rights Cities Forum – WHRCF](#) (10-13 October 2022) in Gwangju; and the [World Summit of United Cities and Local Governments](#) (10 -14 October 2022) in Daejeon.

The 12th edition of the WHRCH



The 12th edition of the WHRCH focused on “**Climate Crisis and Human Rights**” and explored the linkages between climate change and human rights, analyzing the **impact of ecological challenges on inequalities, discrimination and access to basic services**. The goal of Forum was to gather LRGs, international organizations and civil society to share innovative actions implemented at local level to fight climate change through human-rights-based approaches and to foster **international cooperation** with a particular focus on marginalized groups such as LGBTQI; persons with disabilities; women; youth and children. Through a wide-range of thematic sessions, the Forum also explored how to leverage Human Rights to enhance new models to strengthen social and circular economy; and the linkages between biodiversity, cultural diversity and social inclusion to contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Forum was opened by **Mr. Gijung Kang, Mayor of Gwangju**, who highlighted the importance of the legacy of Gwangju as a Human Rights City which allowed to make the annual WHRCF a unique international platform for dialogue amongst human rights cities, human rights organizations, associations and activists.



Mr. Gijung Kang, Mayor of Gwangju, @WHRCF

The UCLG-CSIPDHR – key partner of the Forum – and the UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR) organized a roundtable and a Plenary Session aiming at **identifying human rights-based practices at local level for mitigating and countering climate change**; and at **leveraging local experiences to feed global discussions**, declarations and decisions on climate change.

During the roundtable, **Ms Irací Hassler, Mayor of Santiago de Chile**, highlighted the necessity of **joint efforts between social, cultural and environmental organizations to enhance sustainability** and promote circular economy at local level; as well as the need to bridge people and planet under the broad notion of “**caring**”. The Mayor also pointed out that taking care of the environment is a catalyzer for more sustainable local action in different policy areas, ranging from initiatives to ensure the right to water or effective waste management involving the peri-urban areas, to local policies foster access to green spaces and cultural life.

Mr. Francisco Vera, a young Colombian climate activist, **defined climate change as a “crisis of no Future”** to stress that it is the only ongoing crisis which prevents the future of the entire humanity. He emphasizes the role of cities for mitigation, resilience and carbon neutrality, especially in light of the growing number of **climate refugees and increasing climate-induced migration, which particularly affects vulnerable groups like children**. Mr. Vera called LRGs to create spaces for **climate education** to provide their inhabitants with tools to act in this fight.

The Plenary Session of the Forum was opened by **Mr. Ian Fry, UN Special Rapporteur on Climate Change**, and **Mr. Ovais Sarmad, Deputy Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC**, who recalled the “triple planetary crisis” of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution which hampers the enjoyment and achievement of a wide range of human rights, including the “**right to a clean, safe and healthy environment**”, recently recognized by the UN General Assembly as a human right. They both reaffirmed the responsibilities of cities in global emissions; while also recognizing their importance in the promotion of human rights not only by fighting actively against climate change; but also by ensuring that mitigation and climate change responses do not negatively affect human rights.



Opening Ceremony of the Gwangju Forum @WHRCF

Participants highlighted that **climate crisis is affecting every city and territory**, from rural areas to big metropolis, but that **local governments experience diverse consequences of**

climate change on human rights, ranging from water scarcity to extreme natural events and migration, pushing LRGs to carve different solutions and mobilize a wide range of resources. Due to this, as highlighted by Mr. PARK Yongsu - Head of Democracy, Human Rights and Peace Bureau of Gwangju Metropolitan City - **the climate crisis both deepens existing inequalities within cities and exacerbates territorial inequalities across the planet**. In this regard, **Mr. Etonam James Flolu, District Chief Executive of Afadzato South District** and **Mr. Emile Gros Raymond Nakombo, Mayor of Bangui**, emphasized that climate change in Africa is not only a matter of urban planning of future, but that **it also threatens the existence of territories which entirely depend on natural resources**. This requires a deep but quick rethinking of local economic models, fostering human-nature interaction through culturally adapted approaches to foster the respect of biological diversity.

Ms. Linda Voortman, Co-Mayor of Utrecht and copresident of the Committee, underscored the “blind spot” of LRGs to examine well-established local actions on urban forestry, protection biodiversity, recycling, waste management, energy efficiency, circular economy, land policies and urban planning from an explicit human rights perspective, but rather from instrumental, engineering, financial and market-oriented one. A **“human rights perspective” on environmental policies would allow to combine outcomes for climate mitigation and resilience with the enjoyment of a full range of human rights** - from land-rights and non-displacement, to the rights to housing and health, to the rights of workers; **creating an enabling environment for responsible practices** from the very earliest stages of city-planning processes.

Ms. Sonia Zdorovtsoff, Deputy Mayor of Lyon, and **Ms. Sonia Francine Gaspar Marmo, Secretary of Human Rights and Citizenship of São Paulo**, underlined the importance **engage citizens** to and to strengthen ownership of environmental issues in local agendas; and to ensure that LRGs leverage their powers on procurement and contracting to ensure that that **energy efficiency of buildings goes hand in hand with housing accessibility and affordability**. Several participants acknowledged the key role of **public spaces, sustainable mobilities and walkability to turn solutions to the climate crisis into broader local policies for social inclusion and international solidarity**. In particular, **Ms. Veronique Bertholle, Deputy Mayor of Strasbourg**, proposed to **address climate change through the notion of “Right to the City”**, leveraging environmental action to guarantee refugees welcome; to ensure an healthy environment, or to foster urban-rural linkages.

Ms. Amanda Fléty Martinez Coordinator of the UCLG- CSIPDHR and **Mr. Pradeep Wangle, OHCHR**, highlighted that thinking about human rights and climate change means questioning LRGs’ ability to design environmental policies through the lenses of *“caring”*, thus pushing a collective reflection on the impact of local action to fight climate change action on the dignity of all their inhabitants, but also on other territories and cities.

Participants also acknowledged that the **role of local governments goes beyond local action**: as global phenomenon, climate change also needs more coherent and comprehensive tools, frameworks to be adopted at local level. The recent recognition by the UN General Assembly of the “right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment” is an important step that will also trigger LRGs to **institutionalize existing policies and initiatives linking human rights and climate change**; while also strengthening in international solidarity with the most affected cities and territories.



Welcome lunch with the CSIPDHR Delegation and partners (OHCHR; RWI) @CISDP

The Forum included a Special Tour organized by Professor Gyonggu Shin, Executive Director at International Human Rights Training Center of Gwangju Metropolitan City to visit the most historical places of memory of the city to share the spirit of justice and community under which the citizens of Gwangju resisted against the oppression of the military regime in May 1980; which gave the impulse to the longstanding legacy of democracy and human rights promotion in Gwangju.



Representatives of Bangui; Santiago de Chile; Afadzato and Utrecht @CISDP

Some of the participants, including the Representative of the Observatory on Violence against Women of the Department of Seine Saint Denis, attended the special Thematic Session on **“The impact of the climate crisis on women and policies to respond to the climate crisis from a gender perspective”**. The session aimed at analyzing how **climate crisis exacerbates the existing gender inequalities**. It examined the deterioration of women's economic, work and care rights due to climate-induced migrations; as well as the threats to women's right to health, reproductive rights due to environmental pollution and lack of food security, which also leads to broader violations of human rights, notably **the increase of gender-based violence**.

The 12th edition of the Forum concluded with the **adoption of a Declaration** stating the commitment of LRGs to **integrate a human rights-based approach in the development of laws, policies and actions to fight the climate crisis**; and to **promote climate justice through citizens’ engagement and inclusive governance**. The Declaration also invites LRGs to **share relevant knowledge, resources and practices** through dialogue and cooperation at local and global levels through the use of existing international frameworks; but also through the **development of new local approaches and tools**.

Human Rights at the Center of the UCLG World Summit



The World Summit of Local and Regional Leaders (also “UCLG World Congress”) is the **largest gathering of mayors, presidents of associations, local elected officers, and practitioners from around the world convened by United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)**. The 2022 Congress - the first one after the COVID-19 pandemic -was organized in Daejeon under the motto **“Local and Regional Governments Breaking Through as One”**. The Congress gathered more than **3200 participants from more than 80 countries**; and included more than 90 sessions with approximately 350 speakers. It concluded with the adoption of the ***Pact for the Future of Humanity***, a key outcome document which will contribute to outline the agenda of the municipal movement of the upcoming decades. The Pact explicitly mentions **human rights as essential elements to deliver common agendas for People, Planet and Government** from a local perspective.

In this perspective, **human rights represented an important axis of the 2022 World Summit** and were the object of a Special Session and a powerful “media moment” related to the UCLG-CSIPDHR Global Campaign **“*10,100,1000 Human Rights Cities and Territories by 2030*”**.

The Special Session on **“Local action and human rights: building the future of the Human Rights Cities Movement”** built on the idea of “Human Right City” to lay the ground for joint actions led by LRGs to strengthen their role in the promotion of fundamental rights; but also to

open a new reflection on **human rights as fuels for dignity, participation and innovation, to be fully integrated in the municipal movement.**



LRGs gathering in the Agora to stand-up for Human Rights @CISDP

The Session was opened by **Nada Al-Nashif UN Acting High Commissioner for Human Rights**, who recalled the increasing recognition of Local Governments' role in the promotion of human rights at international level, including through **Human Rights Council Resolutions**. She pushed **LRGs to embrace the human rights-based approaches in their local policies** and encouraged the creation of **international spaces for exchange** to actively support LRGs in the design and implementation of local policies, programmes, practices for human rights protection and to scale up their efforts.

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea in Geneva – one of UN Member States supporting the last Human Rights Council Resolution on "[Local Governments and Human Rights](#)" adopted in October 2022 - also sent a video message to highlight the two main focuses of the new Resolution: **capacity building of LRGs and their increased engagement of in international mechanisms on human rights.**

Mr. Philippe Rio, Mayor of Grigny and co-president of the UCLG CSIPDHR, and Ms. Gissela Chalá, Vice-Mayor of Quito opened the debate by outlining key priorities to provide new impetus to the Human Rights Cities Movement, notably by putting **ecology, feminism, peace and care at its center**. The Vice-Mayor of Quito also mentioned the need to **combine human with territorial rights**, especially by enhancing **intercultural dialogue to fight against racism**.

Throughout the session, LRGs exchanged on how **human rights translate into political priorities in different contexts at local level**. **Mr Andreas Wolter, Deputy Mayor of Cologne**, underlined the importance of the **inclusion of migrants and of the LGBTQI community**; as well as of the dialogue and cooperation with civil society. **Mr. Pascal Smet, State Secretary of the Brussels-Capital Region**, underlined that **memory and recognition are also part of human rights** of and that sustainable development also implies address colonial past and recognize histories and identities of all local inhabitants.

Ms Irací Hassler, Mayor of Santiago de Chile and Ms Susana Araceli Ángeles Quezada, Mayor of Tizayuca, emphasized **security and safety** as essential to lay the ground for the full

enjoyment of human rights by building “cities with no fears” able to create a favorable and inclusive environment for all. In this regard, **women’s safety and the fight against violence against women in the public and private spaces** through stakeholders’ cooperation was highlighted by several participants such as **Ms. Lucia Beamud, Coucellor of Gender Equality of the City of Valencia**.

The session concluded by an open discussion on joint initiatives at local level that could strengthen the human rights cities movement in the upcoming years. **Shams Asadi, Human Rights Commissioner and head of the Human Rights Office of the City of Vienna**, pushed towards the definition of common frameworks, tools and mechanisms **based on the existing notion of “Human Rights Cities”**. **Mr. Morten Kjaerum, Director of the Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law**, emphasized the need to reinforce **international dialogue and cooperation strategies** to leverage local action on Human Rights to both enhance **policy coherence** and to develop **crosscutting approaches** to better address the social, economic, and environmental challenges.

Some of the participants highlighted the **great potential** of the recent Global Campaign launched in the context of the UCLG-CSIPDHR activities “10, 100 1000 Human Rights Cities and Territories by 2030” to stir political commitment to human rights and better identity challenges and priorities for the upcoming years.

Indeed, another important event related human rights in the UCLG Congress was represented by the media moment on the Committee’s Global Campaign. The event aimed at presenting the international call launched by the cities of Barcelona, Grigny, Gwangju, Mexico City, Utrecht and Vienna, **to invite 1000 cities and territories to commit to human rights through this unique Campaign**, with a view to strengthen the global movement of Human Rights Cities and Territories by 2030. The first step of the Campaign was to gather the first pioneer cities and territories that are working on or wishing to act on human rights on the occasion of the UCLG Congress in Daejeon.

The media moment was moderated by **Ms. Linda Voortman, Co-Mayor of Utrecht and copresident of the CSIPDHR**, who presented the first list of cities joining the Campaign and kicked off an interactive exchange with more than 40 LRGs Representatives attending the event. The discussion contributed to **raise awareness on the linkages between key policy areas at local level and human rights**; and to promote outreach on the Campaign by **sharing strategies and modalities in which it could support local action on human rights at the international level through political engagement and international solidarity**.

The high attendance of the event showcased an **important mobilization and commitment of LRGs to human rights**; which culminated in a moment for open exchange on stage and in a group picture and during which most of the participants expressed their interest in joining the Global Campaign. The media moment concluded by the distribution of communication material and information on the initiative, and with the publication of an [article](#) on the UCLG Municipal Times.



Media moment of the UCLG-CSIPDHR Global Campaign @CISDP

Other thematic priorities: Women, Housing and Participatory Democracy

In addition to the sessions on human rights, the UCLG-CSIPDHR organized other sessions related to relevant **thematic priorities** of the work of the Committee.

With a view to resume and strengthen the long-standing work of the Committee and its partners from CSO and academia on [Right to Housing](#) in light of the COVID-19 pandemic; the UCLG-CSIPDHR co-organised a session on “**Cities for Adequate Housing: from present emergencies to a future of housing justice**”. The session highlighted how the COVID-19 pandemic made evident the **gaps that housing systems have** for protecting populations, and notably, the urgency for local and regional governments (LRGs) to foster **comprehensive housing strategies** that include concrete solutions for the most marginalized inhabitants.

As the emergency housing policies adopted during the COVID-19 pandemic come to an end, speakers from Habitat International Coalition (HIC); the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights; the DPU - University College of London; as well as LRGs such as Brussels, Makeni, Sao Paulo, New Westminster and Vienna shared their understanding on the political factors that allowed the implementation of such policies. Participants built on this knowledge to discuss on how **they could be sustained and deepened beyond the pandemic and the key elements, values and practices that should be up-taken for a future agenda of local policies committed to housing justice**, including with the support of UCLG.

Another important axis of Congress was related to **gender equality**. In this framework, the UCLG-CSIPDHR and the Department of Seine Saint Denis, co-president of the Committee, organized a session on **violence against women**. The session aimed at showcasing the complexity and scale of women’s violence –a phenomenon that has always been addressed mostly at national and civil society levels – **which increasingly call on LRGs worldwide to commit to this fight to prevent violation of women’s rights** through local public policies to raise awareness, but also to ensure women victims’ protection, full recovery and empowerment.

The session was opened by **Ms. Reem Alsalem, UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women and Girls**, who suggested the priorities to strengthen the fight against women's violence, including the commitment to a **clear political will**; the importance of preserving the **centrality of human rights standards**; the need for **disaggregated data** and **evidence-based mechanisms**; **specific budget allocation**; **training and capacity building**.

Ms. Pascale Labbé, Vice-President of the Department of Seine Saint Denis for equality between women and men presented the international programme "[Territories caring women victims of violence](#)" (2021-2024) launched in November 2021 by the Department of Seine-Saint-Denis and UCLG-CISDPHR, which aims at highlighting the role of LRGs in the fight on violence against women and at promoting **networking, training and learning tools**; as well as to provide **visibility and foster advocacy for the implementation of public policies at local level**.



Session on Violence against Women in Daejeon @CISDP

Participants from **Valencia, Diputació de Barcelona, Quito, Santiago de Chile and Ngazidja** explore specific areas of focus on violence against women from local perspective that could be leveraged for international advocacy such as **proximity; children's care; education and non-discrimination; but also the deep linkages between "Human Rights Cities" and "Caring Territories"** for women victims of violence. The session concluded by a call for joining the international programme of the Department of Seine-Saint-Denis and UCLG-CISDPHR to **connect the initiatives and scale up the efforts of LRGs at the international level** as an essential element to advance in this fight worldwide, and to build "caring territories" protecting women victims of violence. This session also contributed to raise awareness on the importance of the topic of violence against women within the [UCLG Municipal Feminist Agenda](#).

The UCLG-CISDPHR also contributed to a **Special Session on Local Democracy** – organized by the International Observatory on Participatory Democracy (IOPD) - to explore innovative examples of participatory democracy to create spaces for urban innovation and citizens' co-creation. Lastly, the Committee contributed to the session for the launch of the [GOLD VI Report "Pathways to Urban and Territorial Equality: Addressing inequalities through local transformation strategies"](#) - to which the UCLG-CISDPHR [actively contributed](#) - and to the one

organized by Cités Unies France (CUF) and the Governors Association of the Republic of Korea (GAROK) on "Social Inclusion post-Covid19 : which actions ?" to share the Committee's perspectives on the **linkages between the notions of "inclusion" and "caring"**.

Next steps

During the UCLG World Summit, the CSIPDHR hold an informal meeting to exchange with the executive secretariat, the co-presidency, members and partners of the Committee on the work plan of the Committee for 2023. The exchanges focused on **follow-up of the Global Campaign "10,100,1000 Human Rights Cities and Territories by 2030"**, especially in terms of **mobilisation of the first 100 participating cities**; of outreach and communication; and in relation to the key areas of focus emerged by the forms submitted by the cities. The participants also exchanged on of **thematic priorities and areas of cooperation for the upcoming year**, such as **environmental rights; violence against women; antiracism; human mobility and inclusive citizenship; local democracy; inclusion of LGBTQI community; and Right to Housing**.

The outcomes of these preliminary discussions and the outcomes of the 12th WHRCH and the UCLG Congress will be object of the next UCLG-CSIPDHR Meeting.