



## Declaration of Rio de Janeiro

### 22nd IOPD Conference

### Participatory Democracy for Diverse, Inclusive and Transparent Cities

The 22nd IOPD Conference, the World Summit on Local Participatory Democracy, was held in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) from 6-8 November 2023. Its topic was "**Participatory Democracy for Diverse, Inclusive and Transparent Cities.**" It brought together around 375 local and regional leaders: mayors, councillors, secretaries, government representatives, international organisations as well as representatives of civil society and academia to exchange experiences, discuss current trends and propose solutions to the identified challenges.

The Conference was structured in four thematic areas: **Citizenship and Democracy; Participation and Deliberation; Inclusion and Diversity; Transparency and Open Government**, to explore democratic innovations in cities and the challenges in terms of coexistence, conflict and urban development.

Committed to the **2030 Agenda**, and the role of local and regional governments in its implementation - which of the issues addressed at the conference relate directly to the SDGs - SDG 16 "Peace, justice and strong institutions," SDG 5 "Gender equality," SDG 11 "Sustainable cities and communities," and SDG 17 "Partnerships for achieving the goals."

Committed to **UCLG's Pact for the Future**, which should be regarded as a reference for the transformation of our cities and territories, with the premise of leaving no one and no territory behind. The Pact for the Future places local democracy at the heart of action and highlights the importance of representation and participation:

- Governing in partnership - renewed impetus to decentralisation;
- Placing citizens and communities in all their diversity at the heart of decision-making;
- Fostering an informed and empowered citizenship;
- Building trust between citizens, institutions and communities.



### **The present delegations note that:**

- Democratic values, the United Nations Charter and International Humanitarian Law, are increasingly under stress in countries from the Global North and South and have been directly violated by parties in regional wars such as the Russia-Ukraine and Hamas-Israel conflicts. In this regard, we support the recent UN resolution for a ceasefire in Gaza and a peaceful resolution of the conflict, as well as support for the UN institution and its Secretary General.
- Citizens are increasingly distrusting the efficiency and fairness of partisan politics and governmental action - local and national - eroding the very basis of representative governance, a process that hinders diverse, transparent and open governments.
- The spread of fake news and deep fakes by individuals and institutions using Social Media and Artificial Intelligence - profiting from the lack of transparency of its algorithms - polarise and stress the public opinion increasing the risks of independent thinking, partisan politics, participatory democracy and professional journalism, vital activities within - and for - open societies.
- Social rights, basic infrastructure, public goods and services - encompassed by the New Urban Agenda and the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals - are challenged by climate change and lack adequate public and private funding, especially in the Global South, further harming the fiscal and political soundness of local governments.

### **Commitments by cities and other stakeholders**

The local and regional governments and other delegations taking part in this conference undertake, within the framework of their competences, to :

- Promote a democratic and participatory culture - within the fields of culture, education, training, empowerment, civic, pro-democratic leadership - and ensure a sustainable and responsible democracy for future generations.
- Deploy mechanisms for effective citizen participation, collective intelligence, and the inclusion of all collectives.
- Include all groups, taking care of "the quality of equality" by paying special attention to vulnerable groups (migrants, youth, children, women...).
- Promote transparency and open government.



- Promote more respect for human rights.
- Contribute to the IOPD network to reinforce its capacities for action.
- Strengthen collaboration between cities, local and regional governments, bringing back the spirit of solidarity and hope.

### **Advocacy towards international organisations and national governments**

- The local and regional governments that have participated in this Conference urge national governments and international organisations to promote actions in the different fields:
- Promote multilevel governance - inclusive, participatory and accountable.
- Foster mechanisms of participatory and deliberative democracy at the national and international level.
- Finance and provide resources for projects to exchange experiences and disseminate good practices.
- Promoting the necessary regulations for large social networking platforms to function in promoting a debate on the role of social media in the global economy.
- Push for the necessary regulations to ensure that large social media platforms enable balanced public debate, and to prevent algorithms from favouring the spread of extremist ideas.
- Encourage regulations to guarantee freedom of expression, opinion and information, avoiding the use of algorithms to spread extremist ideas.

**Rio de Janeiro, 8 November 2023**