24th Conference of the International Observatory on Participatory Democracy (OIDP)

"Connect, Integrate and Humanize: Cities facing the challenge of generating Community"

The city of Córdoba has been an example and symbol of commitment to a living, inclusive, and creative local democracy, reaffirming—in line with Pope Francis—that "participation requires transparency and sincere dialogue, oriented toward the common good and ensuring the involvement of all social actors." (*Laudato Si'*, *183*)

From here, we renew our conviction that only through strengthening the bond between citizens and institutions can we build more humane, resilient, and democratic communities.

Córdoba Declaration, Argentina. 23 May 2025

Gathered in the city of Córdoba, Argentina, within the framework of the 24th Conference of the International Observatory on Participatory Democracy (OIDP), more than 500 participants from local governments, civil society organizations, academic institutions, and international networks convened on 21, 22, and 23 May 2025 under the theme **"Connect, Integrate and Humanize: Cities facing the challenge of generating Community"**.

In a global context marked by geopolitical tensions, climate challenges, democratic backsliding, and persistent inequalities, **we reaffirm the importance of citizen participation as a fundamental tool to build trust, social cohesion, and sustainable solutions at the local level**.

The participants of the 24th Conference of the International Observatory on Participatory Democracy, gathered at a time when democratic regimes face multiple and growing threats, take on a firm and collective commitment to **defending democratic values, human rights, and the strengthening of local communities**.

We reaffirm that the best way to protect and revitalize democracies is to deepen them, by **promoting inclusive and meaningful public participation processes**

that ensure active listening and the public involvement of the diverse voices present in our societies. In this regard, we emphasize the importance of deliberately involving traditionally underrepresented social groups, ensuring that everyone has a real opportunity to contribute to defining the policies that shape their present and future.

We also commit to **defending human rights, social rights, and the right to the environment**, recognizing the central role of local governments in their protection and promotion. We reaffirm our commitment to the **enhancement and improvement of public services** as fundamental instruments for reducing inequalities, promoting social justice, and building healthier and more cohesive communities.

Lastly, we recognize that the **strengthening of local communities**, through public policies that promote their capacity for self-organization, cooperation, and collective action, is essential to address contemporary challenges. We believe that strengthened communities are more resilient to hate narratives, populism, and divisionism, and that they form the foundation of a vibrant and sustainable democracy.

This strengthening of communities must be accompanied by the deployment of political and administrative **decentralization** toward spaces of proximity—from national governments to regional and local governments, and within municipalities toward proximity territories.

With this spirit of shared responsibility and active hope, we endorse this commitment, convinced that participatory democracy remains a solid path toward more just, inclusive, and supportive societies.

In defense of **democracies**, local governments commit to:

- promote permanent mechanisms for public participation that ensure the active involvement of citizens in the definition, monitoring, and evaluation of local policies,
- develop specific initiatives to involve traditionally underrepresented groups, ensuring equity in access to decision-making spaces,
- strengthen democratic culture and citizenship education, especially among younger generations, through educational programs, participatory workshops, and actions in collaboration with schools and civil society organizations,
- defend transparency and accountability in public action by promoting open data, accessible reports, and effective channels for listening and responding to the population,
- cooperate in the implementation of safe digital spaces and jointly envision the development of artificial intelligence for the benefit of democracy, people, and the planet.

In defense of **human and social rights**, local governments commit to:

- ensure the universality, accessibility, and quality of local public services, recognizing them as pillars of well-being, equity, and social cohesion,
- protect the rights of minorities and combat all forms of discrimination and stigmatization through inclusive policies and the creation of safe spaces for all identities and forms of expression,
- adopt municipal budgets and plans with an approach based on social rights, prioritizing essential areas for individual and collective life,
- ensure policies and programs that protect natural ecosystems and biodiversity, implement systematic actions against climate change, protect environmental defenders, and promote access to environmental justice,
- promote, encourage, and disseminate equity, fiscal federalism, and equality in the right of municipalities and local governments to collect taxes: whether in the form of fees, contributions, or taxes.

In favor of strengthening **local communities**, local governments commit to:

- support the creation and consolidation of community initiatives and networks of citizen self-organization, recognizing their contribution to the common good,
- develop public policies based on active listening to communities, promoting co-design and co-management of local solutions,
- strengthen bonds of solidarity and territorial belonging, combating social isolation, exclusion, and divisive discourse,
- value and disseminate innovative local practices that promote democracy in daily life, such as participatory budgeting, local councils, citizen assemblies, and co-management platforms, among others.