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CONCEPT NOTE

20th International Observatory on Participatory Democracy International Conference

“Sustainable Cities/Territories and Participatory Democracy”

From July 20th to 22nd, 2020, in the city of Cocody/Abidjan, Ivory Coast

Estimated at 33% of the world population in 1960, urban population increased by 55% in 2018. According to the projection of the United Nations, it should reach 68% in 2050. Within 2030, cities of developing countries will be the main driving force of this growth and represent 95% of the world urban population growth.

The extent of the urbanisation in the world appears, without any doubt, as a major challenge regarding the construction of resilient and human rights respectful cities and a sustainable world.

This fast growth of urbanisation shakes up the established systems and organisations and transforms cities that are now at the core of debates about inclusive and sustainable development and worldwide resilience level.

In every dimension of urban life, new balances must be found with a common basis: the guarantee of human rights in the city and of the right to the city, so every inhabitant, whatever their sex, age, origin and socio-economic situation.

The 2030 Sustainable Development Goals agenda is built upon this end and ensures that cities and human establishments are open to all, safe, resilient and sustainable (SDG11). The SDG 16 invites cities to be safe from violence and conflicts, and promote a peaceful and fair environment.

Firmly dynamic, cities started to rebuild; some of them a few decades ago some. Cities organize and unify themselves, share their experiences and cooperate. Both at the national and international levels, there are always institutional and citizen initiatives, for which solutions are being found.

The International Observatory for Participatory Democracy (IOPD), created in 2001, today represents a network of more than 1000 cities, entities, organisations and research centres around the world. Gathered around a common will to discover, exchange and apply experiences of participatory democracy at the local level to create safe, inclusive, peaceful and sustainable cities and territories by 2030. November 2018, the IOPD General Assembly approves the [Agenda for Local Democracy](#), a joint resolution of IOPD members that aims to become a reference for local governments worldwide.

United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) is the world organization of local and regional governments and their associations, representing and defending their interests on the world stage. UCLG's network of members represents 70% of the world's total population and is present in all world regions: Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe, Eurasia, Latin America, the Middle East and West Asia, and North America; organized into 7 regional sections, 1 metropolitan section and 1 Forum of regions. This network includes over 240,000 towns, cities, regions and metropolises, and over 175 associations of local and regional governments in 140 countries. Among UCLG's key areas of political interest are: local democracy, climate change and environmental protection, the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, local finance, urban development and city diplomacy in peace building.

Each IOPD conference offers a wide space for reflection, sharing experiences, building new knowledge and innovations. Each conference represents a real opportunity to open up to the world, to meet and network.

After the city of Matola (Mozambique) in 2016, the commune of Cocody (Côte d'Ivoire) will host the second conference in the African continent, and the first of the decade of action for the creation of safe, inclusive, sustainable and resilient cities and territories. This 20th Conference will be resolutely oriented towards the search for the main levers for accelerating change around the theme.

“Sustainable cities/territories and participatory democracy”

Participatory democracy as a guarantee of the sustainable development of cities

The various frames of reference for public action, resolutions and manifestos taken by cities place participatory democracy at the heart of all strategies that bring about lasting, positive change for cities, human settlements and their inhabitants.

From their side, more and more citizens want to be increasingly involved in decision-making on the definition of their local or national development agendas. They are keen to be heard, informed and to participate in shaping their living environment. From this point of view, expectations can be summarized as follows:

- Citizens, a participatory civil society, compromise and get a “power to act” from the initial analysis to the final evaluation.

- Local governments are not the only relevant actor in decision-making and must foment participation, organise it, support it, guide it and take into account its benefits to build a sustainable and resilient city.
- National, international and private-sector stakeholders also take a part in local participation (international references, social entrepreneurship, etc).

New models of cities governance are being shaped

The IOPD Conference held in Montreal in 2017 highlighted the “multiplicity of concepts that are now implicitly included in the domain of participation. Direct democracy, consultation, co-building, citizen participation” and concluded with the transformation of the politician’s role model that goes from decision-maker to “sinergies leader and catalyst for local development”.

So, let’s ask ourselves, can citizen and private sector participation transform cities’ governance and have a significant impact of results production expected for the SDGs 11 and 16 in the next ten years? Thus, on the basis of this problematic, the conference will be axed around the aim to demonstrate and enhance the benefits of the SDGs as a lever for local governance transformation and the co-building of safe, inclusive, peaceful, sustainable and resilient cities.

The expected results of the Conference are:

- **The 2020 Cocody Declaration**, designed through consensus and participation during the IOPD General Assembly, and adopted and read during the closing ceremony.
- **The 2020 Cocody Declaration** translates a strong compromise from the local governments to defend, strengthen and promoting participatory democracy as a strategy for the Cities and Regions Sustainable Development program.
- The conference being the frame of the prize-giving ceremony of the “Best Practice and Citizen Participation” Award. This award is organized every year by the IOPD.
- The municipality organiser and the IOPD compiling written and multimedia materials recounting the process, debates and results of the conference.

The outcomes will be published and spread to promote sustainable cities and territories and participatory democracy, and pursue exchanges after the conference.

Conference format

“Cocody 2020” is organized with the aim of promoting exchanges and interactions at every level. Its program will offer experience- and practice-exchanging workshops, roundtables and conferences.

Meetings at the margins of the conference between participants, women, young people and customary authorities will be held in different areas of the city.

Spaces for bilateral meetings will be arranged.

Parallel and networking activities will be proposed and organised by IOPD members, academic organizations, politicians, and municipal organizations.

Main thematic axis

Axis 1: Local economic development

All united against poverty and for the creation of decent jobs, wealth for inhabitants, entrepreneurs and territories. Citizens, local governments, researchers and the private sector are an indispensable complementarity for innovation and economic dynamism of the cities/territories.

Axis 2: Environment and citizen participation

Improvement of conditions and quality of life in the sustainable city, citizen participation and environmental issues management.

Access to housing and services, biodiversity preservation, waste management.

Axis 3: Right to the city

Cities that are livable at all stages of life; citizen participation, engagement and gender as vectors for the promotion of human rights, social cohesion and innovation and sustainable peace.

Axis 4: Participatory democracy implementation

The stakes and conditions for the implementation of a genuine participatory democracy capable of creating the positive change expected for the realisation of the Agenda 2030.

The Cocody 2020 conference will see the effective participation of actors which are interested in the practice and improvement of participatory democracy at the local level; representatives of Governments and Legislative Assemblies; local authorities, activists and people involved in social movements, members of civil society organisations, the private sector, researchers and members of research centres from different countries around the world.

The official languages of the conference are English, French, Spanish and Portuguese.

Host municipality :

The Commune of Cocody was created in January 1978 and was elevated to the rank of a full-fledged Commune. Mr. Jean-Marc YACE is the fifth Mayor since October 13, 2018. With a surface of 132 square km, the Commune has an estimated population of 800,000 inhabitants (46.39% men, 53.61% women) and is managed by a Municipal Council of 50 elected councillors including 15 women.

Out of the thirteen Communes of the Autonomous District of Abidjan, Cocody has the biggest potential at all levels as well as several attractive features among which we can cite the Bay of Cocody, the lagoon banks, which extend over about 6 km, its large hotel capacity to host local and international ceremonies of small and great importance, its high level of security and the diversity of its cultural and tourist heritage.

Cocody has eleven villages including seven Atchan villages, occupied by the Southern Lagoon Peoples and four Attié villages, people of Eastern Côte d'Ivoire. The social organization of these villages is based on the traditional system of chieftaincy and notability.

The presence of precarious and unhealthy neighbourhoods provides a contrast to the urban landscape of the commune where all classes of Ivorian society rub shoulders on a daily basis.

The Commune of Cocody, its Municipal Council, its technical teams and its populations have the pleasure and the honour to welcome you to the 20th IOPD Conference, from 20 to 22 July 2020.