

2023 U7 Mayors Declaration

Delivering Peace, Democracy and Sustainability in the Urban World Through Sustainable Cities, Urbanization and Multilevel Cooperation

Introduction

The world in 2023 is facing the escalation of multiple crises. A year after the start of Russia's war in Ukraine, the impacts of the conflict can be felt around the world. Steep increases in energy and food prices affect people globally. Peace and democracy are challenged through aggression and rising threats of nuclear weapons in our cities, which should never be experienced again.

From the global climate emergency to biodiversity loss, our human activities are drastically changing the earth environment and the consequences can be felt in every corner of the globe.

At the same time, in an increasingly urbanizing world, cities have the potential to implement innovative urban development approaches and create tangible improvements and sustainable living environments for their inhabitants. However, in order to do so, they require enabling framework conditions.

Therefore, we, Mayors and leaders of the Urban7 (U7) Group, gathered through the networks of local governments of G7 nations and the European Union, applaud the G7's unprecedented recognition of the Urban7, cities, sustainable urban development and multilevel governance under Germany's G7 Presidency in 2022. We welcome the specific references in the 2022 G7 Leaders' Communiqué, as well as the ministers' communiqués and statements on Urban Development, Climate and Environment, Development Cooperation and Foreign Affairs.

We look forward to elevating these achievements during the 2023 Japanese G7 Presidency, recognizing the legacy of the first Environment Ministers and Mayors Forum during the 2016 Japanese G7 Presidency. We also recognize that decentralization, decarbonization and circularity are building blocks of the Japanese approach to sustainability. We warmly welcome the continuation of the G7 Sustainable Urban Development Ministers Meeting, which will be convened for the second time under the 2023 Japanese G7 Presidency. We welcome the Japanese Government indicating "peace" as one of the focus messages for the 2023 G7 Presidency. We remain committed to formulating our contributions to all the G7 agenda as an active engagement partner throughout the year.

We, Mayors and leaders of the U7 Group share our deepest and sincere condolences to the people and local governments of Türkiye and Syria, dealing with the earthquakes on 6 February 2023, resulting in unprecedented scale of loss of human lives, and extensive damage to housing, public infrastructure, roads and communication networks.

We, Mayors and leaders of the U7 Group, in anticipation of the priorities of the Japanese G7 Presidency, define the 2023 priorities of the U7 Group as follows:

- 1-Local governments as custodians of peace and democracy
- 2-Sustainable urban development as the engine for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and facing the global climate emergency
- 3-Role of cities in disaster preparedness, response and resilience
- 4-Engaging the U7 Group as an emerging actor in multilevel governance and urban diplomacy

1. Local governments as custodians of peace and democracy

We, the local governments of the G7 members, share common values, including respect for fundamental human rights, the rule of law, democracy and freedom of expression. In line with the Global Declaration of Mayors for Democracy, we recognize that cities “stand as a bulwark against the erosion of the rule of law.” Cities play a crucial role in fighting corruption, populism, and human rights abuses. We also facilitate the democratic participation of our residents. We recognize gender equality and women’s empowerment, youth empowerment and intergenerational justice as necessary foundations for a peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable world.

We, the cities, firmly believe that peace is necessary for a sustainable world and local governments have a crucial role to nurture the culture of peace among citizens. Russia's war on Ukraine has caused serious hardship and tragic human suffering for innocent Ukrainian citizens, as well as the urban poor and vulnerable communities around the world, in particular in the Global South. Local governments have a vital role to play in protecting socially vulnerable groups and providing shelter to those displaced as consequence of wars and conflicts, especially children, youth and women.

➤ The U7 Group calls the G7 to:

1. Acknowledge our role as champions of peace and builders of democracy.
2. Work as partners with cities in the planning for sustainable reconstruction of the urban infrastructure and civil society in Ukraine.
3. Facilitate access to public and private funding streams for sustainable, inclusive, and climate-resilient urban development in Ukraine.
4. To mobilize all their diplomatic efforts to achieve "a world without nuclear weapons", as recognized at the UN General Assembly in October 2022.

2. Sustainable urban development as the engine for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and facing the global climate emergency

We reaffirm that we will continue to transform our cities through integrated urban development processes based on participatory, multilevel and place-based approaches. From core infrastructure to water and wastewater to transit and recreation, cities are driving solutions that will help deliver on our SDGs. We continue to encourage more local and regional governments to actively work toward achieving the SDGs. We, the cities, will work actively to ensure the provision and maintenance of public services essential for sustainable development.

Good urban development policy is key to maintaining and creating safe, vibrant, sustainable, and livable cities. It is necessary to establish peaceful coexistence, more

sustainable living and economies, mitigation of and adaptation to climate change, better mobility and connectivity, and shaping digitalization.

➤ The U7 Group calls the G7 to:

1. Recognize the role of local governments in the implementation of the sustainability agenda and embed them in the post-SDG agenda. We invite G7 Leaders to collaborate with the U7 Group and actively engage at the SDG Summit and UN Climate Action Summit in September 2023 in order to launch global initiatives for multilevel action to support, advance and deliver SDGs and transform into climate emergency mode of action, to be designed as an input to 2024 UN Summit of the Future.
2. Exchange regularly on these topics beyond the G7 Sustainable Urban Development Ministers Meeting, at fora such as the G20 and Second UN Habitat Assembly.
3. Strengthen local self-governance to provide the legal and fiscal frameworks that support and address the local needs and realities of local governments and to encourage greater procedures and processes of multilevel governance.
4. Enhance access of local and regional governments to global and national finance including through increasing collaboration with the private sector, as well as multi-lateral development banks (MDBs).
5. Actively use information technology to promote the digitization and smartening of public services to underpin the delivery and maintenance of sustainable, quality public services.
6. Establish financing mechanisms that are more flexible and responsive to place-based climate neutrality strategies and investment plans from local governments with a mid-to-long term perspective.
7. Engage local governments actively in the global stocktake of the Paris Agreement towards and at COP28 in Dubai as an opportunity to embrace multilevel climate action as the new normal in the 2nd Phase of the Paris Agreement and rapidly raise ambitions regarding Nationally Determined Contributions through the transformative power of sustainable urbanization.
8. Support the institutionalization of Ministerial Meetings on Urbanization and Climate at UNFCCC COPs regularly and endorse partnerships for multilevel action such as the SURGe Initiative launched at COP27 in Sharm El Sheikh.
9. Demonstrate leadership in operationalization of the funding arrangements and the fund for responding to loss and damage by engaging actively in the transitional committee toward COP28.
10. Promote the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity to improve human health and support biodiversity-friendly urban planning, and implement the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework adopted at Biodiversity CBD COP15, through collaborative action with local and regional governments, taking into account its Target 12 on urban green space and its Plan of Action on Subnational Governments, Cities and other Local Authorities for Biodiversity 2021-

2030.

11. Highlight the role of local and regional governments and circular development in the design of the new global plastics treaty.

3. Role of cities in disaster preparedness, response and resilience

As we have seen repeatedly through wars and natural disasters, municipal governments have abundant know-how and human resources to deal with these crises, and we are ready to actively support recovery and reconstruction efforts. In recent years, the damage caused by disasters has been increasing in many parts of the world, nullifying all efforts on SDGs and investing in disaster risk prevention is becoming as urgent as strengthening disaster response. Close cooperation and coordination between the local, regional and national levels is imperative to promote the establishment of sustainable local disaster management systems to prepare for increased disaster risk, as already enshrined in the legacies of the UN conferences in Yokohama in 1994, in Kobe in 2005, and in Sendai in 2015.

➤ The U7 Group calls the G7 to:

1. Strengthen significantly international cooperation and provide sustained support to countries, especially in the Global South, in coordination with local governments.
2. Support the prevention of new disaster risks and the reduction of existing disaster risks in countries, especially in the Global South through international cooperation.
3. Prevent and reduce the creation of disaster risks through “Build Back Better” strategies and increased education on and awareness of disaster risks during the post-disaster recovery and reconstruction phases.
4. Devolve authority and financial resources to sites closer to the people in order to strengthen the capacity of local governments and local communities to reduce disaster risks.

4. Engaging the U7 Group as an emerging actor in multilevel governance and urban diplomacy

Effective solutions for global challenges cannot be found without the active engagement of cities. This is why we call for a shift toward a true multilevel governance system where local governments are a political level that develops and decides on policy programming on an equal footing with our national counterparts through transferring necessary authority and financial resources. In an increasingly urban world, urban diplomacy holds considerable potential for achieving the goals of the G7 and the global multilateral system. In this regard, we welcome the establishment of a Special Representative for Subnational Diplomacy at the US Department of State as a good practice and encourage other G7 governments to consider similar efforts. We believe the U7 Group could further contribute to efforts of the G7 countries to face global challenges, if we are provided with enabling framework conditions.

➤ The U7 Group commits to:

- 1- Institutionalize the U7's vision towards regular engagement with G7 as a good practice in multilevel collaboration. The U7 Secretariat, ICLEI and the Global Parliament of Mayors, will facilitate the integrity of the process whereas national associations will lead annual engagement and direct city input.

2- Strengthen multi-stakeholder cooperation through collaborating with all engagement groups involved in the G7 process, as well as in the Global South.

The U7 Group proudly announced this 2023 U7 Mayors Declaration at 2023 U7 Mayors Summit on 2 March 2023 as a powerful and pioneering contribution of local governments to the work of G7 national governments and G7 engagement groups.

Announced at the 2023 U7 Mayors Summit in Tokyo, Japan on 2 March 2023 by:

U7 Group:

- Canada: Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) – [Taneen Rudyk, Councillor of Vegreville; FCM President]
- France: France Urbaine (Urban France) – Johanna Roland, Mayor of Nantes Metropolis; France Urbaine President
- Germany: Deutscher Städtetag (Association of German Cities) – Markus Lewe, Mayor of Münster, DST President
- Italy: Associazione Nazionale Comuni Italiani (ANCI, National Association of Italian Municipalities) – [Antonio Decaro, Mayor of Bari; ANCI President]
- Japan: Japan Designated City Mayors' Association (JDCMA) – HISAMOTO Kizo, Mayor of Kobe City; JDCMA President
- UK: Core Cities UK – Marvin Rees, Mayor of Bristol; Core Cities Chair
- USA: The United States Conference of Mayors (USCOM) – Frank Cownie, Mayor of Des Moines; USCOM Trustee Board Member; ICLEI President
- European Union: EUROCITIES – Dario Nardella, Mayor of Florence, Italy; EUROCITIES President

Network Partner:

- United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) – Berry Vrbancic, Mayor of Kitchener, Canada; UCLG Co-President

U7 Secretariat:

- ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI) – Minna Arve, Mayor of Turku, Finland; ICLEI First Vice President
- Global Parliament of Mayors (GPM) – Peter Kurz, Mayor of Mannheim, Germany; GPM Chair