

**Meeting of the Executive Bureau of the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) – Strasbourg  
France, 25 May 2018**

## Speech by Gudrun Mosler-Törnström, President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities

*Check against delivery*

### **High-Level Dialogue: Linking Global Goals with the New Urban Agenda implementation**

**Strasbourg, France, 25 May 2018**

Mr President,  
Excellences,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to take part in this high-level dialogue as President of the Congress of the Council of Europe.

It is a pleasure because as we discuss linking Global Goals with the new Urban Agenda, as we discuss contribution of the local action to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, the motto “Think globally – act locally” rings ever more true.

It is a pleasure because this discussion represents an opportunity to join efforts between the UCLG, a global actor representing local authorities worldwide and a long-standing partner of the Congress, and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities representing more than 200,000 territorial communities of Europe. We both share common values and the ambition to develop and defend local governance.

Improving urban governance has been a key concern of the Congress for almost three decades. It is not surprising: more than half of the world’s population now lives in cities, and the city has become the major fact of the organization of our territories. Yet this urban “explosion” has caused numerous imbalances and serious collateral damage: firstly on the quality of our environment, and then the social fabric itself. In this too rapid expansion, our cities have often sacrificed the quality of collective life – falling victim to social segregation, financial segregation, generational segregation, and so on.

This is why, in 1992, we adopted the European Urban Charter, which established a series of principles for the social organization of the city. We sought to identify basic urban rights of the inhabitants, which must be acquired “without discrimination of age, origin, beliefs, social status economic or political, physical or mental handicap”.

In 2008, the Congress updated this text by adopting “Manifesto for a new urbanity: European Urban Charter II”. This new Charter has laid down four ‘ambitions’ to foster a new model of urban governance:

- building a “town for the people” centred on serving citizens’ needs and involving citizens in finding solutions to address those needs;
- building a sustainable and environmentally friendly town;
- building a town which is a symbol of modernity, knowledge and creativity;
- building a town of social cohesion, which actively combats division, exclusion and discrimination.

This “new urbanity” expresses the conviction that our mode of urban development must change. Our cities today need to regenerate. This marks the need to amend our policies. But the word ‘urbanity’ in French also means the good quality of relations between people, the concern of the other person in interpersonal relations. **We, local authorities, must put the citizen at the heart of our action and at the heart of our cities.**

Our cities have their own economic dynamics, but they also embody the inequalities that divide our societies. **This is why we need urban policies aimed at promoting greater solidarity and inclusion.**

This is especially true today, against the challenges of integration of migrants, fight against radicalisation and violent extremism, and fostering dialogue for diversity and inclusion in our cities. Local and regional elected representatives, as political leaders, have a central role to play in shaping how the society will react to these challenges.

This will require a strong political will and positive leadership that aims to respect the human dignity and rights of all. In the Congress we have developed Guidelines to combat violent extremism at grassroots level and a Toolkit for local authorities to use when organizing interreligious and intercultural dialogue with this purpose in mind.

Our policies must make the city accessible to all, especially in the areas of education, health, culture and housing. The essential condition to ensure such accessibility for all is social diversity.

Diversity is an advantage; yet ensuring that trust and solidarity among citizens of different backgrounds holds strong is not easy. Managing diversity means building shared spaces, offering to all residents opportunities to engage across difference and work towards common goals, while cultivating a pluralistic, inclusive identity with strong common civic values.

Segregated spaces cannot promote such solidarity between social groups, generations and people with reduced mobility – however, our cities, by the effects of concentration, are pathologically unequal. Only a strong political will can restore solidarity – and this political will must exist at all levels of governance. If we do not meet these challenges, our cities will lose their cohesion and quality of life. In short, **without inclusion, no cohesion**. This is the doctrine of our Urban Charter II.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We can trust our cities. They are a unique asset for our economies and for our societies. They should belong to their inhabitants; they are a collective good. They have the capacity to contribute to the prosperity of all. For their balanced development, it will take political will and long-term vision.

In these turbulent times, let us pool our efforts so we can provide our citizens with inclusive, safe and stable environments.