

The Bureau of the Congress

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Candidates for the North-South Prize 2023

Action required : for decision

¹ This document is classified as confidential until it has been examined by the Bureau of the Congress.

North-South Prize 2023

The North-South Prize is awarded every year since 1995 to two candidates. They should be natural persons or organisations, preferably one from the North and one from the South and keeping the gender balance when possible. The Prize rewards their commitment to the defence and promotion of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law, as well as to the development of intercultural dialogue and the reinforcement of the North-South partnership and solidarity, in compliance with the principles and priorities of the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe. As an institutional stakeholder of the North-South Centre, the Congress is invited to propose two candidates for the North-South Prize 2023.

List of possible nominations (in alphabetical order)

Candidates representing the NORTH:

1. **Jacob BUNDSGAARD**, Mayor of Aarhus, Denmark

Jacob Bundsgaard is the current mayor of Aarhus since 2011. Before that, he worked as Councilor for Culture and Citizenship and Councilor for Children and Young People. Under his leadership, Aarhus was selected as the European Capital of Culture in 2017. Besides serving as Mayor of Denmark's second largest city, Mr. Bundsgaard also serves as vice chairman of Local Government Denmark, KL, which is the association of the 98 Danish municipalities. He is also chair of the boards for the Port of Aarhus, Aarhus Festival, and KOMBIT, among others. Mr. Bundsgaard is focused on addressing climate change, encouraging citizen participation, and countering violent extremism.

Aarhus aims to be carbon neutral by 2030 and has set sub-targets in many areas from sustainable wastewater management to energy efficiency. A group of scientists from several different countries, including Växjö in Sweden, Kaunas in Lithuania, and the European Union worked together to create the READY project, whose aim is to optimise energy consumption in residential buildings. Furthermore, the ReWater Project aims to establish the world's most efficient resource facility and knowledge platform for wastewater treatment in Aarhus. Thirteen water treatment plants were closed and replaced by four large plants; this decision resulted in a reduction in annual costs of approximately 50%.

Under the leadership of Mr Bundsgaard, Aarhus has also strengthened its long tradition of citizen involvement in decision-making. Mr Bundsgaard developed the "Dome of Visions" project, a place for citizens and grassroots organisations to work together on ideas and initiatives, with a focus on active citizenship and sustainability, for turning public ideas into reality. Moreover, a program called the "Aarhus Model" was developed to prevent radicalisation by working with at-risk citizens to enhance their possibilities for inclusion in society and to help them improve their skills.ⁱ As a result, the number of young people travelling to Syria to participate in the conflict was reduced and a dialogue was established with groups having a history of recruitment to violent extremism.

2. **Nargess ESKANDARI-GRÜNBERG**, Deputy Mayor of Frankfurt, Germany

Nargess Eskandari-Grünberg is currently serving as deputy mayor of Frankfurt in charge of multicultural affairs and anti-discrimination, among other areas. She acted as Mayor of Frankfurt from November 2022 until the mayoral election in March 2023. Dr Eskandari-Grünberg is of Iranian origin, and a vocal supporter of women's rights, inclusion and diversity. In 2022, she organised and led demonstrations in Frankfurt in support of Iranian women's rights and of the protests in Iran

following the death in police custody of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini, who had been detained for failing to properly wear her hijab.

Dr Eskandari-Grünberg has been an advocate for freedom, democracy and women's rights in Iran for over 40 years. As a young woman, she was arrested by the mullahs' regime and spent several years in Iran's Ervin prison without being brought before a judge. Upon her release in 1985 she fled to Germany, where she worked as a psychotherapist with the German Red Cross after earning a doctorate in this subject. In 2001 Dr Eskandari-Grünberg was elected at Frankfurt City Council for the Green Party, and between 2008 and 2016 she was the Head of Department for Integration in the city cabinet.

Dr Eskandari-Grünberg continues to speak up in support of protestors in Iran, and to advocate against discrimination, affirming that "When women's rights are violated, human rights are violated, and then there can be no democracy".ⁱⁱ Because of her support for inclusion and diversity, she has been the victim of hate speech and threats.

3. **Fatma ŞAHİN**, Mayor of Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality, Türkiye

Fatma Şahin is the current mayor of Gaziantep metropolis. In 2014, she became the first woman mayor of a metropolitan area in Türkiye, re-elected in 2019; in 2011, she became Minister of Family and Social Policies and, in 2018, she served as the first woman president of the Union of Municipalities of Türkiye, until 2023. At the international level, Fatma SAHIN was Vice-President of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), President of United Cities and Local Governments - Middle East and West Asia Section (UCLG-MEWA) as well as of the Asian Mayors Forum and served as Vice-President of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR). She was the first Turkish politician to participate in the World Economic Forum in Davos.

In 2016, Fatma SAHIN was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize for her commitment to helping Syrian refugees. One year later, she was awarded the Minerva Prize in the "Women in the World" section, the first Turkish woman to win the prize. In 2019, she received the "Metropolitan Mayor of the Year" award at the 10th Bukhara Media Awards. In 2021, she became the first mayor from Türkiye to be elected to the OECD Champion Mayors Initiative. She is actively involved in many policy areas, including the protection and social and economic integration of more than 400 000 Syrian refugees present in Gaziantep – through the Peace and Art Centre of Gaziantep and the prevention of child marriages. She has prevented the early marriages of 42 girls by allowing them to continue their education through the project "Don't Marry Her Off, Send Her to School" in collaboration with UNICEF. She is committed to promoting the social inclusion of children, young people, women and persons with disabilities in decision-making processes through informal municipal councils and assemblies. She is also engaged in fighting violence against women and providing awareness-raising trainings.

Gaziantep is also one of the 11 cities affected by the devastating earthquakes centred in Kahramanmaraş and Hatay. Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality has set up free social markets to meet the food and clothing needs of earthquake victims.

4. **Rafal TRZASKOWSKI**, Mayor of Warsaw, Poland

Rafal Trzaskowski is the current Mayor of Warsaw, a former member of the Polish Parliament in the lower house (Sejm) from the Civic Platform "PO" and a Deputy Chair of the European Union Committee. He is also a former Vice-President of the European People's Party (EPP), former Member of the European Parliament (2009-2013) and member of the Committee on Constitutional

Affairs (AFCO). He has also been a member of the European Committee of the Regions since 25 November 2019, and serves as treasurer of Eurocities.

In the context of Russia's war against Ukraine, Poland and the capital city Warsaw have been among the top destinations for tens of thousands of Ukrainian citizens forced to leave their country. Around 25,000 refugees – out of the 100 000 welcomed in Warsawⁱⁱⁱ - are legally employed in the capital and the municipal government has integrated more than 17,000 Ukrainian children and youth into schools and preschools, has opened up counselling centres, and raised food assistance funds.

During his tenure as mayor, Mr Trzaskowski has spoken out in support of LGBTQ rights. For example, he addressed the 2023 Equality March in Warsaw pointing out the importance of tolerance and called on all local officials to ensure that members of marginalised and ostracised minorities are supported.^{iv} In 2019, he signed a 12-point-declaration on LGBT+ rights,^v which sets out the municipality's position on a range of policy issues such as finding shelter for children thrown out of their homes by homophobic parents, and bringing sexual and tolerance education into local schools.^{vi}

Mr Trzaskowski has been steadfast in his support for the LGBTQ community, even though the topic has often been instrumentalised against him by his political opponents.^{vii} He has also been the target of hate speech and disinformation.^{viii}

Candidates representing the SOUTH

1. **Claudia LÓPEZ HERNÁNDEZ**, Mayor of Bogotá, Colombia

The Mayor of Bogotá, **Claudia López Hernández**, is the first female and openly lesbian mayor in the Colombian capital's history, and of a capital city in Latin America, which makes her a symbol in her country and the entire region. In her work as mayor, Claudia López Hernández puts an emphatic focus on the environmental and antidiscrimination agendas.

As far as the environmental agenda is concerned, before becoming Mayor of Bogotá in 2020, Ms Hernández was a Senator of the Republic of Colombia (2014-2018). In this position, she fought for the adoption of the Probici Law^{ix}, which aims to promote the use of bicycles as the main means of transportation throughout Colombia, as part of efforts to mitigate the negative impact of other types of transportation on the climate/environment. As Mayor of Bogotá, one of her main focuses is the preservation of Bogotá's nature reserves, which have been damaged by encroaching construction projects. She is also campaigning for the construction of a metro as a clean and green form of mass public transport, in an attempt to break the political deadlock which has been holding back this project in recent years.

Regarding antidiscrimination and social equity, she has repeatedly reasserted her commitment to combat issues such as racism, classism and homophobia in Colombian society. In March 2020, she implemented Bogotá's "Solidarity System", which aimed to provide a basic income to those unable to meet living costs as a result of the COVID-19 lockdown. The experience from this scheme will now be used to develop other programs to reduce the impact of poverty, particularly for women, and reduce inequalities within the city. In July 2023, Ms López Hernández celebrated the fact that more than 100 000 people joined the Pride in Bogotá, reminding that 40 years ago only 30 people had joined. She also advocates for a progressive law to be voted to give more rights to transgender people, who still suffer from serious institutional, social, and cultural barriers as well as high levels of violence in Colombia.

As the Mayor of Bogotá, she has proposed a Development Plan called "The New Social and Environmental Pact for the 21st century Bogotá", which relies on five pillars: building a new social contract with equal opportunities for social, productive and political inclusion; changing lifestyles to make Bogotá a greener city and adapt to and mitigate the climate crisis; inspire confidence and legitimacy to live without fear and to be an epicentre of civic culture, peace and reconciliation; establishing a multimodal, inclusive and sustainable mobility model; and ensuring open, transparent government and conscious citizenship.

She has received many awards and prizes to distinguish her efforts in the fight for more inclusivity and less discrimination.^x

2. **Elizabeth SACKY**, Mayor of Accra, Ghana

Hon. **Elizabeth Naa Kwatsoe Tawiah Sackey** became the first female Chief Executive of the Accra Metropolitan Assembly – Mayor of the city of Accra, in 2022. Previously, she had served as the Deputy Minister for Greater Accra Region from 2017 to 2021.

As Mayor of Accra, she is very active on the environmental agenda. She is pushing corporate bodies and individuals to support the greening and beautification of the city of Accra, and she calls for more collaboration between cities in the global south and global north to tackle climate change.

Most notably, Accra is part of the C40 Cities Steering Committee, the governing body providing strategic direction to the global network of 94 cities committed to taking bold climate action and cleaning up the air every citizen breathes. Accra is an active member of the C40 Sustainable Waste Systems Network and Food Systems Network and a regional leader in promoting sustainable waste systems. In partnership with C40 Cities, Mayor Sackey is building stronger partnerships with the

informal waste sector. The aim is to improve the support for waste pickers, to make it easier to keep Accra's streets clean and healthy, especially for children.

Moreover, in July 2023, the City of Accra welcomed a four-day C40 Cities Academy on climate finance and equity in waste management.^{xi} Mayor Sackey is currently implementing Accra's Climate Action Plan - which aims at promoting a low-emission and climate-resilient city.^{xii} The plan identifies the most important focus areas for all actors to adapt to changes already locked into the climate and environment, and to reduce emissions. It sets out a series of priority actions to be implemented which will place the city on a pathway towards resilient and sustainable development in 2050.

Elizabeth Sackey is also an advocate of the economic empowerment of women and a champion for the capacity and skills building of the youth.

3. Mohamed SEFIANI, President of the Chefchaouen municipality, Morocco

Mohamed Sefiani has been the president of the Chefchaouen municipality in Morocco for 14 years. He also holds the positions of President of the Moroccan Association of Eco-Cities, President of the United Cities and Local Government (UCLG) World Forum of Intermediary Cities, co-chair of the UCLG Africa Climate Task Force, and Regional Ambassador of the Global Covenant of Mayors. Mr Sefiani has focused on climate and environment initiatives, sustainable energy, waste management, and citizen participation.

Since his election in 2009, Mayor Sefiani has received strong political support in his quest to increase visibility for Chefchaouen at an international level. The International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives has played a crucial role in this effort by facilitating global opportunities for best practice and knowledge exchange for the municipality. In 2015, Chefchaouen won the Hassan II Prize for the Environment in the Local Authorities Initiatives category. In November 2018, the city came first in the "Climate Initiative Awards – African Local Government Authorities", in the category for the best intermediary city in Africa.

For the past several years, the Municipal Council of Chefchaouen has been officially prioritising the city's sustainable development in a range of areas, from enhancing biological diversity, to developing ecotourism. In 2023, the Ministry of Energy Transition and Sustainable Development, the Regional Council (CRTTA) signed a framework agreement with the municipality of Chefchaouen, among others, aiming to formalise the collaboration between these municipalities. They were selected to host the Sustainable Local Energy Communities (SLEC) project, and define the terms of partnership for its implementation, operationalisation, and long-term sustainability.

Mayor Sefiani has established a consultative energy council consisting of residents, economic associations, and local stakeholders to ensure local support and ownership of its policies.

Chefchaouen has also produced Vision Chefchaouen 2030 which outlines the city's plans to localise and implement the Sustainable Development Goals. Its main priorities are sustainable energy (energy efficiency and renewable energy), e-mobility, and waste (waste management, recycling and waste-to-energy). To ensure that it transitions to be a veritable green city, the municipality of Chefchaouen has formulated various actions and policies to reduce its energy consumption.

APPENDIX

Previous editions: Candidates submitted by the Congress and laureates of the North-South Prize

	CANDIDATES SUBMITTED BY THE CONGRESS	LAUREATES
2022 Edition	The Association of Ukrainian Cities (AUC)	<u>The Association of Ukrainian Cities (AUC)</u>
	Leïla MUSTAPHA, Joint Mayor of Raqqa, Syria	The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)
2021 Edition	Marvin REES, Mayor of Bristol and British Labour Party Politician Network of Locally Elected Women of Africa (REFELA) - Réseau des Femmes Elues Locales d'Afrique (REFELA)	The Covax Mechanism Ms Zarifa GHAFARI, former Mayor of Maidan Shahr, Afghanistan
2020 Edition	Mrs Yvonne AKI-SAWYERR, Mayor of Freetown, Sierra Leone Mr Carlo SOMMARUGA, Councillor of States for the Canton of Geneva, Switzerland	International Commission against the Death Penalty (ICDP) Network of Mediterranean Experts on Climate and Environmental Change (MedECC)
2019 Edition	Mrs Nabila HAMZA, Vice President of La Marsa City Council, Tunisia Mr Leoluca ORLANDO, Mayor of Palermo, Italy	<u>Mrs Nabila HAMZA</u> , Vice President of La Marsa City Council, Tunisia <u>Mr Leoluca ORLANDO</u> , Mayor of Palermo, Italy
2018 Edition	Mrs Célestine KETCHA COURTES, Mayor of Bangangté, Cameroun Mr Damien CARÊME, Mayor of Grande-Synthe, France	Mrs Jaha DUKUREH, Founder and CEO of the Non-Governmental organisation "Safe Hands for Girls", Gambia <u>Mr Damien CARÊME</u> , Mayor of Grande-Synthe, France
2017 Edition	Ms Abia AL HALAIA, Municipal councilor of Tafila, Jordan Mr Hans BONTE, Mayor of Vilvoorde, Belgium	Ms Kristiina KUMPULA, Secretary General of the Finnish Red-Cross, Finland Dr Abbas GULLET, Secretary General of the Society of the Red-Cross in Kenya, Kenya

2016 Edition	Ms Giuseppina Maria NICOLINI , Mayor of Lampedusa, Italy Mr Giorgios KAMINIS , Mayor of Athens, Greece	<u>Ms Giuseppina Maria NICOLINI</u> , Mayor of Lampedusa, Italy Ms Mbarka BRAHMI , member of the Tunisian Parliament and founder of the “Brahmi Center for solidarity and peace”, Tunisia
	Ms Giuseppina Maria NICOLINI , Mayor of Lampedusa, Italy Mr Mustapha ABDI , Mayor of Kobané, Syria	Ms Lora PAPP A, founder of METAdrasi, Greece Mr Joaquim Alberto CHISSANO , founding member of the liberation front of the FRELIMO, Mozambique

Endnotes

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- i [Mayor Bundsgaard's inspiring fight for a greener and safer Aarhus | Mayors of Europe](#)
- ii [DW, Nargess Eskandari-Grünberg: Don't stop reporting on Iran.](#)
- iii [Ilu uchodźców z Ukrainy mieszka w Polsce? Znamy najnowsze dane](#)
- iv [Warsaw mayor accents tolerance in speech to Equality March participants](#)
- v [Co jest w Deklaracji i w jaki sposób zmieni życie osób LGBT+ w Warszawie?](#)
- vi [Poland's ruling party plays the LGBTQ card](#)
- vii See for example: *Duda macht Wahlkampf gegen LGBT*, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 06.07.2020, Nr. 154, P.5.
- viii [War of the worms: Polish politicians give each other a mouthful over edible insects](#)
- ix <https://www.suin-juriscol.gov.co/viewDocument.asp?id=30027024>
- x [Claudia López Hernández: Alcaldesa Mayor de Bogotá](#)
- xi [AMA hosts C40 cities to discuss climate finance and equity in waste management](#)
- xii [Accra Climate Action Plan \(2020-2025\)](#)