

The Bureau of the Congress

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## **Proposed Congress candidates for the North-South Prize 2022**

Action required : for decision

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

## North-South Prize 2022

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 2022.

### List of possible nominations (in alphabetical order)

#### Candidates representing the NORTH:

##### 1. Association of Ukrainian Cities

The Association of Ukrainian Cities (AUC) is the most representative association of local authorities in Ukraine, which advocates for the interests and rights of local authorities and participates on their behalf in the policy dialogue with state authorities at all levels. Since its creation in 1992, the AUC has been actively fostering a decentralisation reform and amalgamation of communities. It was engaged in strengthening the legislative framework for local self-government and has been providing organisational and consultative assistance to its members.

As a result of the conflict in the regions of Donetsk and Luhansk and of recognising the importance of the inclusion of Internally Displaced People (IDP) in host communities, the AUC provided necessary support to its members in view of ensuring better integration of IDPs and in addressing socio-economic challenges. The Association also provided valuable contributions to legislative provisions on the political rights of IDPs, which resulted in the adoption of the Electoral Code of Ukraine that provided for full participation of IDPs in the local elections held in 2020.

In the context of the Russian Federation's war against Ukraine, the AUC has a prominent role in collecting information about the urgent needs of municipalities to co-ordinate humanitarian aid and ensure targeted support to the most vulnerable communities. Moreover, it co-operates with the civil-military administration and ensures that draft laws regulating the functioning of local authorities during the period of armed conflict in Ukraine, including under the Martial Law, are fully aligned with the provisions of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, thus upholding democratic values even in times of war. The Association took a leading role in raising the awareness of international stakeholders and voicing the need to secure the release of Ukrainian community leaders abducted by the Russian military. Moreover, the AUC's commitment to ensuring that humanitarian aid reaches those most in need, ensured the success of the cities4cities matching platform. The platform is a place to match the demands and needs of Ukrainian cities and regions with the capacity, know-how and supply of other European Cities and Regions. The platform has more than 150 Ukrainian communities registered in the first two months since its launch.

The war in Ukraine shows once more the interdependencies that exist in the current world. Hence, awarding this Prize to the AUC would not only be a tribute to their efforts and resilience but also a strong message of solidarity to those most affected, such as migrants, refugees and all persons suffering harsh conditions.

##### 2. Andreas BABLER, Mayor of Traiskirchen, Austria

**Andreas BABLER** (born 25 February 1973 in Mödling, Austria) is an Austrian politician (SPÖ) and mayor of the municipality of Traiskirchen. The municipality is home to the Traiskirchen refugee camp which is subject to political and media debate. Mr BABLER repeatedly campaigned for the improvement of conditions in the refugee camp, especially in 2015. Moreover, Mr Babler helped in

developing the "eco-social integration project" for refugees in his municipality. Refugees from all over the world, especially from Afghanistan, Syria and the Sahel zone are employed to grow fruit and vegetables on site. With this project the goal is to give a jump start to people who want to work while waiting for their asylum decision and wish to integrate the local community. The project was a success and served as a role model for other cities in Austria.

Other humanitarian efforts of Mr BABLER include handing over an ambulance to the city of Bihać in Bosnia and Herzegovina in January 2022 and visiting the refugee camps in the country. During the visit, the decision of a humanitarian town twinning was agreed and promoted by Mr BABLER. The initiative of humanitarian town twinning, which was launched by the mayors with the NGO "SOS Balkan Route", has the goal of including several more Austrian municipalities in the future.

Regarding the background of Mr Babler, in 1989, he joined the Socialist Youth (SJÖ) and soon became regional secretary of the SJ in Lower Austria. He has been a member of the municipal council of Traiskirchen since 1995, eventually becoming a city councillor and mayor of Traiskirchen in April 2014. In his first election, he achieved the best election result for the SPÖ in Traiskirchen since 1945.

### **3. Ximo PUIG, President of the Valencian Autonomous Region, Spain**

**Joaquín Francisco PUIG FERRER** (known as Ximo Puig) is a Spanish politician who is the President of the Valencian Government since June 2015. Journalist by profession, he has worked for local newspapers, was the mayor of his town for 17 years, and also served in various positions in the Valencian regional government.

The Valencian Region is a territory committed to human rights and sustainable development. The region has been implementing cooperation projects all around the world for more than 30 years, working towards the eradication of extreme poverty and famine, gender equality, the improvement of citizens participation, the adaptation and mitigation of climate change, and many other projects embedded into human rights defence and protection.

Moreover, the Valencian authorities are extremely responsive to emergency situations, having showed that they are committed to welcoming refugees. For instance, the region welcomed hundreds of Afghan refugees, and recently the regional government has approved an extraordinary budget of almost 1M€ to help partner organisations give a proper response to the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine. These funds are deployed for sanitary needs, food, education, basic needs, and legal tasks projects.

Moreover, the Generalitat Valenciana closely cooperates with the municipality of Valencia, which promotes the need to combat climate change and the rise in pollution through the implementation of projects to create a healthy, prosperous and sustainable city.

## **Candidates representing the SOUTH**

### **1. Yvonne AKI-SAWYERR, Mayor of Freetown (Sierra Leone)**

**Yvonne AKI-SAWYERR** became the second woman mayor of Freetown on 7 March 2018. In 1999, she co-founded the Sierra Leone War Trust (SLWT), which supports disadvantaged youth in Sierra Leone. She became involved in the Ebola crisis in Sierra Leone as a planning officer at the National Ebola Response Center (NERC). For this commitment, she was awarded the Ebola Gold Medal in December 2015 by the President of Sierra Leone, Ernest Bai Koroma, and was made an Officer of the Order of the British Empire by Queen Elizabeth II in 2016.

This experience enabled her to react quickly to the Coronavirus pandemic and ensuing sanitary crisis. She remained confined 14 days after a trip to the United Kingdom to set an example, then went to markets to distribute masks and sanitary products to give her citizens, half of whom had no

access to running water, means of prevention. The city has also set up special handwashing facilities in public places. Yvonne AKI-SAWYERR is also trying to reduce the financial burden on the poorest through tax breaks and several food security measures. She is a member of the Mayors Migration Council, where she advocates and works towards the creation of resilient cities that offer opportunities for all, in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Moreover, under her mandate, the City of Freetown is committed to tackle global warming by targeting two sectors that emit greenhouse gases: sanitation and transport.

Freetown was awarded Champion City of the Bloomberg Philanthropies Global Mayor Challenges for the work on the #FreetownTheTreeTown. The initiative highlights the need to tackle deforestation, so that Freetowners know that the survival of trees is integral to their own survival.

In January 2022 Ms AKI-SAWYERR established the YAS Girl's Leadership Foundation and rolled out its first project, the "Give Her Wings, Watch Her Fly" school tour. Through it she will be engaging girls on the topics of leadership, the power of female voices, and addressing health and mental wellbeing challenges. The Foundation will also award scholarships to the top performing students of the participating schools.

Ms AKI-SAWYERR is also the Vice-Chair of the Steering Committee of C40 Cities, a global network of 97 cities committed to addressing the climate crisis.

## **2. Climate partnership: City of Brusque (Santa Catarina), Brazil and the Karlsruhe Landkreis, Germany**

Established in 2012, the **Climate partnership of the City of Brusque in Brazil and the Karlsruhe Landkreis in Germany** focuses on environmental and economic cooperation, and school exchanges. The background of this historically and culturally communal friendship relationship is the emigration of many Baden families from the present area of the Karlsruhe district to southern Brazil in the mid-19th century. The families, most of whom live in the states of Paraná, Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul, have preserved the German language, the culture, many traditions, but also numerous personal contacts with the people of Baden for over 150 years.

The contacts with Brusque and Guabiruba are supported by the Baden-South Brazilian Society based in Karlsdorf-Neuthard.

Essential pillars of the previous contacts between the district and Brusque are the exchange of experiences between the administrations of both entities and the regular youth exchange with students of the vocational high schools in Bruchsal and Bretten since 2012.

As a new sustainable field of cooperation, the district of Karlsruhe and the city of Brusque are participating in an international, government-funded climate protection project. This program of the German Federal Ministry for Development and Cooperation, which is scheduled to run for several years, is aimed especially at German municipalities with an existing partnership with South American municipalities and regions.

The aim of cooperation in the "Climate Partnership" project is the joint development of projects related to climate and environmental protection and their sustainable implementation. The funding program supports the participating municipalities for over a period of around two years by providing thematic advice, offering regular networking events, and financing and supporting meetings of experts to formulate concrete projects.

The city of Brusque and the district of Karlsruhe are working intensively on the implementation of the climate-relevant packages of measures of the jointly agreed action program within the framework

of the project "Fifty Municipal Climate Partnerships". Climate protection is to be systematically integrated into the existing municipal partnership work. The project is carried out by the "Service Agency Communities in One World (SKEW)" of "Engagement Global" in cooperation with the "Landesarbeitsgemeinschaft Agenda 21 NRW (LAG 21 NRW)". The German Association of Cities and Towns, the German Association of Towns and Municipalities and the German Association of Counties support the project.

The cooperation project also won the "Global Partnerships – Municipal Partnerships" award which is presented as part of the [German Sustainability Day](#) and recognises outstanding cooperation between German cities, towns, districts and local authorities on the one hand and municipalities in the global South on the other.

### **3. Irací HASSLER, Mayor of the municipality of Santiago de Chile, Chile**

**Irací Luiza HASSLET JACOB** is a Chilean politician and economist who serves as the Mayor of the Commune of Santiago since 2021. Born in 1990, she is one of the youngest mayors in South America, and she is popularly described as "the new face of feminism and environmentalism" in Chile.

Among the vast programme that her team is implementing, three major areas are key. First, promoting the strengthening of active citizenship participation is essential, and the city council is carrying this out through the Constituent Town Hall (Alcaldía Constituyente). For instance, in March 2022, the first Feminist 'Cabildo' was organised, in which more than 200 women gathered to discuss gender equality issues and potential policies to tackle them. The municipality evaluated this first meeting as a success, because participants were from different ages and neighbourhoods, and other local, regional, and national level representatives also attended the meeting. The Spanish Minister for Equality, Irene MONTERO, attended the gathering as well.

Apart from the promotion of citizen participation and gender equality, Santiago de Chile is also highly committed to cooperation in combatting climate change. The municipality was praised in 2021 by the International Organisation against Climate change for its Recycling Programme. To show an even stronger commitment towards climate change mitigation, the municipality declared itself in climate and ecologic emergency during the III Environmental Cabildo. Furthermore, Ms. Hassler was highlighted among the 100 Latin persons most committed towards climate action. She is also the vice-president of the Capital Cities of the Americas against Climate Change (CC35), a platform that aims to accelerate the commitment of Capital Cities of the Americas to face the climate emergency, mainly through achieving an interregional climatic dialogue through local and regional diplomacy and cooperation.

Ms HASSLER closely and frequently cooperates with Spanish female politicians, promoting the creation of bonds while sharing good practices on gender equality programmes from both countries (Chile and Spain) and on different governmental levels (local, regional, and national).

### **4. Leïla MUSTAPHA, Joint Mayor of Raqqa, Syria**

**Leïla MUSTAPHA** is a civil engineer who has been joint president of the Raqqa Civil Council (RCC) since its creation in 2017 when ISIS was defeated. To rebuild Raqqa both physically and socially, the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria formed the Raqqa Civil Council to run the civilian affairs of the city. Leila MUSTAFA is one of two Co-Chairs leading the Council. She has been a consistent and significant figure in Raqqa's rebuilding and revival, remaining in office since 2017.

She has showed extraordinary energy and leadership by continuing to build coalitions of people not only to rebuild Raqqa, but to help create a civil society grounded on democracy and re-conciliation. She embraces the fact she must work across complex traditional, tribal, cultural, and religious boundaries and conflicts, considering that this intersectional approach might enable people of

different parts of society to collaborate. Ms MUSTAPHA also played an important role in pointing out the priorities of the city in terms of its reconstruction, stating that ensuring safety was essential in moving forward towards any other developments, such as rebuilding infrastructure including bridges and roads.

In 2022, there are clear signs that Raqqa's buildings and infrastructure have already been largely rebuilt and that civil society and communities are once again functioning. The population continues to grow as most of the 350,000 inhabitants that had to flee Raqqa have returned. Approximately 13,000 new job opportunities have been created with the re-opening of basic infrastructure and facilities, such as schools or hospitals, as well as the launching of new businesses and other places of work.

In the current context of the ongoing war in Ukraine, the great determination, effort, and success showed by Ms MUSTAPHA in rebuilding a destroyed city and creating new opportunities for its citizens represents a good practice from which we all could learn.

## APPENDIX

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

CANDIDATES SUBMITTED BY  
THE CONGRESS

## LAUREATES

2021 Edition	<b>Marvin REES</b> , Mayor of Bristol and British Labour Party Politician	<b>The Covax Mechanism</b>
	<b>Network of Locally Elected Women of Africa (REFELA) - Réseau des Femmes Elues Locales d'Afrique (REFELA)</b>	<b>Ms Zarifa GHAFARI</b> , former Mayor of Maidan Shahr, Afghanistan
2020 Edition	<b>Mrs Yvonne AKI-SAWYERR</b> , Mayor of Freetown, Sierra Leone	<b>International Commission against the Death Penalty (ICDP)</b>
	<b>Mr Carlo SOMMARUGA</b> , Councillor of States for the Canton of Geneva, Switzerland	<b>Network of Mediterranean Experts on Climate and Environmental Change (MedECC)</b>
2019 Edition	<b>Mrs Nabila HAMZA</b> , Vice President of La Marsa City Council, Tunisia	<b>Mrs Nabila HAMZA</b> , Vice President of La Marsa City Council, Tunisia
	<b>Mr Leoluca ORLANDO</b> , Mayor of Palermo, Italy	<b>Mr Leoluca ORLANDO</b> , Mayor of Palermo, Italy
2018 Edition	<b>Mrs Célestine KETCHA COURTES</b> , Mayor of Bangangté, Cameroun	<b>Mrs Jaha DUKUREH</b> , Founder and CEO of the Non-Governmental organisation "Safe Hands for Girls", Gambia
	<b>Mr Damien CARÊME</b> , Mayor of Grande-Synthe, France	<b>Mr Damien CARÊME</b> , Mayor of Grande-Synthe, France
2017 Edition	<b>Ms Abia AL HALAIA</b> , Municipal councilor of Tafila, Jordan	<b>Ms Kristiina KUMPULA</b> , Secretary General of the Finnish Red-Cross, Finland
	<b>Mr Hans BONTE</b> , Mayor of Vilvoorde, Belgium	<b>Dr Abbas GULLET</b> , Secretary General of the Society of the Red-Cross in Kenya, Kenya
2016 Edition	<b>Ms Giuseppina Maria NICOLINI</b> , Mayor of Lampedusa, Italy	<b>Ms Giuseppina Maria NICOLINI</b> , Mayor of Lampedusa, Italy
	<b>Mr Giorgios KAMINIS</b> , Mayor of Athens, Greece	<b>Ms Mbarka BRAHMI</b> , member of the Tunisian Parliament and founder of the "Brahmi Center for solidarity and peace", Tunisia

2015 Edition

<b>Ms Giuseppina Maria NICOLINI</b> , Mayor of Lampedusa, Italy	<b>Ms Lora PAPP</b> A, founder of METAdrasi, Greece
<b>Mr Mustapha ABDI</b> , Mayor of Kobané, Syria	<b>Mr Joaquim Alberto CHISSANO</b> , founding member of the liberation front of the FRELIMO, Mozambique