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Item 2 of the provisional agenda
Second Forum of Mayors
Item 6 of the provisional agenda
Report on the outcomes of the second Forum of Mayors and related recommendations

Second Forum of Mayors: Background and recommendations

Note by the secretariat

Summary

At its 112th session, the Executive Committee (EXCOM) of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) mandated the Steering Committee (SC) of the Forum of Mayors to evaluate the 2020 session of the Forum and submit the results for the consideration of the Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management (CUDHLM) at its eighty-third session. The results of the evaluation are to provide the basis for the session's deliberations on the objectives, format and frequency of the Forum, if extended beyond 2022, with a view to submitting a proposal on the future of the Forum for endorsement by EXCOM in 2022 and/or by the seventieth session of the ECE Commission in 2023 (ECE/EX/2020/L.16).

To feed into the evaluation, and pursuant to a decision by the SC, the secretariat commissioned an independent expert to assist in drawing up a forward-looking scenario for the future of the Forum. The scenario should aim at supporting the realization of the ECE Mayors' shared vision and common aspirations as established under the Geneva Declaration of Mayors. It should be based on semi-structured interviews with mayors and high-rank officials from the ECE region participating in the Second Forum of Mayors as well as State representatives sitting at the ECE Steering Committee for the Forum of Mayors and representatives from the United Nations Regional Commissions. The scenario should also be based on a review of successful city-to-city collaboration experiences.

The interviews for the scenario were conducted by Dr. Lorenzo Kihlgren Grandi, Director of the City Diplomacy Lab at Columbia Global Centers, Paris, France, in late 2021, who used the results in preparing possible options for the future scenario. The scenario was submitted for the consideration of mayors from the ECE region on 15 February 2022 during an online briefing on the 2022 Forum. The scenario was revised to take into account the outcome of these deliberations as well as the written comments received by the secretariat of the SC. The scenario was submitted for a second round of deliberations during a subsequent online briefing for ECE mayors, which took place on 11 March 2022. The outcome of the second round of deliberations was duly incorporated by the secretariat and submitted for a third round of online deliberations on 28 March 2022. The revised version of the future scenario was then submitted for the consideration of the Second Forum of Mayors, held on 4-5 April 2022 in Geneva, Switzerland, back-to-back with the ECE Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (RFSD) as mandated by EXCOM (ECE/EX/2020/L.16).

This document contains the future scenario of the Forum, as informally approved at the Second Forum of Mayors. It reflects the views and suggestions of the participating mayors from the ECE region and is transmitted to the Committee for its consideration.

I. Introduction

1.   Cities are home to over half of the world's population and this share is projected to reach 70 per cent by 2050 as the trend toward urbanization continues to grow.[1] Cities are also a major source of wealth, with a growing share in the global gross domestic product estimated at 80 per cent in 2019. This convergence of population and wealth means that cities are also the source of 70 per cent of planet-warming emissions.[2] Eliminating these emissions is at the centre of the cities' agendas, which are acquiring greater levels of sophistication as mayors and local administrative bodies continue to perfect the art of striking a balance between meeting the needs and aspirations of their citizens and rising to the global challenges facing the world today.

2.   This art finds root in the continuously expanding transnational city-to-city collaborative networks, which bring together cities committed to finding common solutions to global challenges and pooling efforts through joint initiatives.[3] Most notable among these networks are the *United Cities and Local Governments;* the *Local Governments for Sustainability*; *C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group; Mayors Migration Council; International Association of Francophone Mayors; Urban 20; Global Parliament of Mayors; Council of European Municipalities and Regions; EuroCities;* and the *Balkan Cities Network*. These networks, numbering more than 200 in 2018,[4] have inspired many city initiatives for improving the quality of life for citizens across the globe, including during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic (see paragraph 9).

3.   These networks have also enabled cities to act as a bridge between the local and global levels, a practice that has come to be known as city diplomacy, which capitalizes on the agile institutions and direct engagement of cities with citizens. The outcome of city diplomacy finds its strongest expression in the numerous declarations, protocols, principles and codes of conduct signed among cities, or between cities and international organizations, including the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy; Mechelen Declaration on Cities and Migration; Aberdeen Agenda Principles on Good Practice for Local Democracy and Good Governance; and the Global Compact on Refugees. These instruments have enabled cities to effectively contribute to addressing global challenges and engage in international diplomacy alongside States.   Cities are active participants in a range of United Nations events, committees, task forces and agendas, including the two Earth Summits, in 1992 and 2002; conferences of the United Nations Human Settlement Programme; the annual Mayoral Forum on Human Mobility, Migration, and Development; the World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments; the World Human Rights Cities Forum; the Global Taskforce on Local and Regional Governments; the United Nations Advisory Committee of Local Authorities; the Local Agenda 21; the New Urban Agenda; the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction; and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11 "Sustainable Cities and Communities".

4.   Cities are also a robust means for achieving SDG 17 "Partnerships for the Goals". Their successful track record in global advocacy and joint action aside, cities have first-hand experience in putting the principle of policy coherence into practice. Cities are decisively focused on developing people-centred solutions, which integrate, by design, the social, economic and environmental dimensions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda). Many of the cities' declarations, protocols, principles and codes of conduct are instrumental in attaining the 2030 Agenda and United Nations conventions, including the Framework Convention on Climate Change.[5]

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[1] United Nations, "Population Dynamics", World Population Prospects 2019. Available at https://population.un.org/wpp (accessed on 30 March 2022).

[2] World Bank, "Urban Development: An Overview", 20 April 2020. Available at https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/urbandevelopment/overview.

[3] For more information, see, for example, Lorenzo Kihlgren Grandi, *City Diplomacy* (Basingtoke, United Kingdom, Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

[4] Benjamin Leffel and Michele Acuto, "Economic Power Foundations of Cities in Global Governance", *Global Society,* vol. 32, No. 3 (6 February 2018), pp. 281-301.

[5] See, for example, C40 (2016). *100 Solutions for Climate Actions in Cities*, available at: https://www.climaterealityproject.org/sites/climaterealityproject.org/files/CITIES100_2016.pdf

5.	Recognizing the transformative role of cities, and with a view to further transnational city-to-city collaboration, the United Nations and international organizations have been actively engaged in supporting thematic networks which connect cities seeking to address common global challenges. These efforts involved, among other things:

	(a)	Creating and, often, managing transnational city-to-city collaborative networks. Examples include the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) *Creative Cities Network*, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) *Child Friendly Cities* and the World Health Organization (WHO) *Healthy Cities*. WHO has also been supporting cities in ensuring healthy ageing population since 2010 through its *Age-Friendly World* online networking platform.

	(b)	Establishing direct multilateral consultative mechanisms with cities. This is the case of the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), the largest city-to-city network in the world. The UCLG (i) permanently holds ten of the twenty seats in the United Nations Advisory Committee of Local Authorities (UNACLA) and the President of UCLG chairs UNACLA; (ii) facilitates the work of the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments;[6] and (iii) convenes, on behalf of the Global Taskforce, the World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments, which is focused on enabling local and regional governments to engage in the follow-up and review of the New Urban Agenda.

	(c)	Creating transnational consultative mechanisms with mayors. This is the case of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) *Champion Mayors for Inclusive Growth*, which brings together a coalition of willing leaders who have committed to tackling inequalities and promoting inclusive economic growth in cities.

6.	It is against this background that the Forum of Mayors was launched in 2019, with a view to supporting city-to-city collaboration in the ECE region, inspired by the vision of the United Nations Secretary-General of "a stronger, more networked and inclusive multilateral system, anchored within the United Nations". This vision, which gave birth to UNACLA, is driving efforts to have an Advisory Group on Local and Regional Governments within the United Nations.[7] The Forum brings together mayors from across the ECE region to realize a shared, forward-looking vision and common aspirations set out in the Geneva Declaration of Mayors.[8] The Declaration contains the voluntary, self-enforced commitments of mayors to promote creative, people-centred approaches through sharing successful local solutions that enabled cities to simultaneously meet the needs and aspirations of their citizens, hedge against disasters and rise to the climate change challenge in a manner that ensures the successful implementation of the SDGs. This commitment to mutual learning is coupled with a determination to maximize impact through joint action and spreading the word, including through joining urban networks and initiatives (see box 1). The Forum is open to all ECE cities, including those that have not formally adopted the Declaration.

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[6] The Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments is a coordination and consultation mechanism which encompasses 27 major city networks.

[7] *Our Common Agenda – Report of the Secretary-General* (United Nations publication, 2021). Available at https://unfoundation.org/our-common-agenda.

[8] https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2021-03/Mayors%20declaration%20booklet%20-%20ver.4.pdf.

Box 1. The Forum of Mayors
A catalyser for realizing shared vision and common aspirations of ECE mayors

Vision
We, the Mayors of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) region, want to rebuild our cities into places where all of us can thrive, quality of life is the guiding principle, nature and biodiversity are an integral part of urban planning, sustainable economies generate wealth for all, solidarity among city-dwellers prevails, and inequalities are actively narrowed. We align ourselves with the initiative of the United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres to "build back better" and turn the recovery into a real opportunity for shaping a healthy and resilient future. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11 calls for action to work towards inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities – it is now in our hands to place the SDGs at the centre of our recovery efforts and create new urban realities for the benefit of all.
Aspirations
• **Strengthen the resilience of our cities** • **Take ambitious climate action** • **Make our cities greener** • **Accelerate the transition to sustainable energy** • **Ensure urban transport is sustainable** • **Ensure housing is affordable, healthy and adequate** • **Make cities more equitable and inclusive** • **Turn these aspirations into reality.**

Source: The Geneva Declaration of Mayors

7.   The Forum of Mayors is meant to serve as a flexible networking mechanism for fostering cooperation among cities in the ECE region as well as between ECE cities and the global level. The Forum is held within the context of ECE intergovernmental machinery, with the first day of the annual sessions of CUDHLM dedicated to the Forum (ECE/HBP/201). The Forum is supported by ECE, which is assuming the role of facilitator, drawing on its extensive experience in developing and supporting the implementation of demand-driven multilateral conventions, protocols, standards, charters and best practice recommendations and guidelines for achieving the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda. Since 2018, this experience has been strengthened with the nexus approach, which involves pooling expertise knowledge across the different ECE sub-programmes with the aim of bolstering impact. ECE identified *Sustainable and Smart Cities* as one of the four high-impact nexus areas, with the remaining areas focusing on *Sustainable Use and Management of Natural Resources; Sustainable Mobility and Smart Connectivity;* and *Measuring and Monitoring SDGs.*[9]

8.   The Forum is also supported by ECE member States, relevant United Nations and international organizations and experts in the thematic areas that form the focus of the Forum. Representatives from these groups hold memberships in the *ad hoc* Steering Committee that was established under CUDHLM to support the organization and management of the Forum alongside the Housing and Land Management secretariat and ECE nexus focal points (ECE/EX/2020/L.16). The Steering Committee also collaborates with the other regional commissions of the United Nations, which are actively helping cities implement the New Urban Agenda (see annex I).

9.   The COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted the importance of city-to-city collaboration as a critical element of effective disaster response. Cities, which accounted for over 90 per cent of reported COVID-19 cases,[10] were quick to launch initiatives for helping citizens of all ages cope with the pandemic. Examples include the free use of public spaces by food catering establishments, pioneered by the city of Vilnius, Lithuania; the extension of bicycle networks, pioneered by Bogotá, Colombia; urban polycentricity and proximity services in Paris under the slogan of the 15-minute city; and the methodology for bolstering public-private sector collaboration in the field of care services by Milan, Italy. Another example is the city of Ghent, Belgium which joined forces with *Gents Kunstenoverleg*, a

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[9] See ECE Informal Document No. 2018/12, presented to EXCOM at its ninety-eighth meeting, held in Geneva, Switzerland, on 18 May 2018.

[10] United Nations, *Policy Brief: COVID-19 in an Urban World*, July 2020. Available at https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sg_policy_brief_covid_urban_world_july_2020.pdf.

platform uniting the art scene in Ghent, during the lockdown period to marshal artists, musicians, cultural workers and organizations to reach out to the people in the streets and connect neighbourhoods through cultural initiatives, aimed at boosting the spirit of social solidarity.

10.   Cities also upscaled their networking efforts. More than 60 online networking platforms were set up during the first few months of the pandemic, often with the support of international organizations, to share best practices in crisis management. [11] These networks also developed joint action plans in the form of common declarations, such as the:

- UCLG Decalogue for the COVID-19 Aftermath for guiding the network's international advocacy, with an emphasis on supporting local and regional governments in greatest need.[12]

- C40 Mayors' Agenda for a Green and Just Recovery for a rapid, equitable recovery from the COVID-19 crisis rooted in the principles of the Global Green New Deal to deliver transformative economic, health and emission reduction benefits across the world.[13]

- URBAN 20 Communiqué to the Group of 20 (G20) calling upon the group's respective governments to recognize the essential role of cities in responding to crisis and to work with cities to build back better in cooperation with all levels of government, civil society, private sector, research, think tanks and academia. The Communiqué was endorsed by the leaders of 39 cities across the globe representing 155 million people.[14]

- The *Mayors Act Now* campaign of the Global Parliament of Mayors, launched shortly after the outbreak of the pandemic, facilitate the exchange of experiences and views on identified challenges and their solutions.[15]

11.   The role of cities in building back better was highlighted in the United Nations Secretary-General Report submitted to the United Nations on the occasion of its 75th anniversary, "Leading the Change We Need", which was launched to support the world's largest conversation about the current global challenges. The report, prepared with the support of the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments, captures the vision of local and regional governments of the "global future".[16] As shown in the next section, the long-term consequences of the pandemic, particularly for inequality and climate change, have also formed a focus of the ECE Forum of Mayors.

II.   Three years of mutual learning through the Forum of Mayors

12.   Consistent with the shared vision and common aspirations of ECE mayors, the consultations of the Forum of Mayors are structured around thematic areas. To date, mayors have discussed solutions for realizing two interrelated visions: "Smart Sustainable Cities" during the Day of Cities (2019) and "City Action for a Resilient Future" during the First Forum of Mayors (2020).

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[11] UCLG, World Association of the Major Metropolises and LSE Cities at the London School of Economics and Political Science Cities, "COVID-19 Monitors of Relevance to Urban and Regional Governance", *Emergency Governance Initiative for Cities and Regions Analytics Note*, No.1, June 20202. Available at https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/egi_analytics_uclg_metropolis_lse.pdf.
[12] The UCLG Decalogue for the COVID-19 Aftermath is available at https://www.uclg.org/en/node/31076.
[13] The C40 Mayors' Agenda for a Green and Just Recovery is available at https://www.c40.org/what-we-do/raising-climate-ambition/green-just-recovery-agenda.
[14] The 2020 Urban 20 Communiqué was shared with the 2020 G20 sherpa in October 2020 ahead of the virtual G20 Summit hosted by Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The *Communiqué* is available at https://www.urban20.org/u20summit/2020-riyadh.
[15] https://globalparliamentofmayors.org/mayorsactnow/
[16] UN Secretary-General's Report to UN75 (2020). *Leading the Change We Need: How Local and Regional Governments Envision the Global Future*, available at: https://www.un75localandregionalvisionreport.global-taskforce.org/.

13.   The discussions during the Day of Cities and the first Forum of Mayors highlighted how many cities in developing and transition economies are struggling with inadequate utility services, infrastructure and zoning regulations, resulting in high levels of pollution. Others are grappling with food insecurity, inadequate housing and inequality so that housing issues are compounded by the problem of affordability. For the majority, the lack of financial resources complicates addressing local challenges.

14.   The discussions also highlighted how these challenges are gaining increased complexity under the weight of expanding relations of interdependence characterizing the world today. Fuelled by the continuous advances in information and communications technology (ICT) and transnational transport corridors, these relations are linking cities in multi-layered social economic and environmental systems which, while carrying tangible opportunities, render achievements tenuous. Achievements can be swiftly undermined, if not dealt a blow, as negative shocks in one city set in motion reverberating effects to adjacent localities and beyond.

15.   Cities must address these challenges while being at the front line of disasters which, by virtue of undercutting all aspects of everyday life, overwhelm States. The COVID-19-induced crisis bears witness to the difficulties encountered by governments in addressing the multi-faceted economic, social and environmental needs of the different communities and neighbourhoods on their own. Cities played a central role in preparing for, mitigating and adapting to the pandemic. They went beyond complementing State efforts to becoming an integral part of the solution.

16.   How to build on this momentum and harness the multi-layered systems of interdependence linking cities towards strengthening their resilience and role as an engine of creative change have been a constant refrain of the mayors' discussions in the lead-up to the Second Forum of Mayors. The discussions saw the participation of 48 mayors and their representatives from across the ECE region (see annex II) and were informed by the proposed future scenario for the Forum, which addresses the following five imperatives:

- To be first and foremost an expression of the mayors' shared vision and common aspirations, and, as such, respond to their strong and explicit ambition to see their cities' strategic plans, actions and joint initiatives for addressing regional and global challenges formally recognized and integrated as part of the United Nations regional inter-governmental processes.

- To work in partnership with ECE member States and development partners as part of the broader common effort to create dynamic synergies for bolstering and increasing the efficiency of joint actions. The emphasis is on enabling the creation of multi-level collaborative models, whereby cities and States, working closely with ECE and other regional and international organizations, will jointly develop and enact intervention strategies targeting the local, national and global levels.

- To contribute to achieving the vision of the United Nations Secretary-General of "a stronger, more networked and inclusive multilateral system, anchored within the United Nations". The Forum of Mayors is the only network that brings together cities, Member States and development partners in the United Nations system. As one interviewee puts it, ECE is "breaking through the open door" of city diplomacy, making an essential difference for cities and their networks by enabling them to participate in multilateral decision-making processes in collaboration with States and development partners. The regional dimension of the Forum is a strength, given the common global challenges facing cities in the ECE region. In this sense, the Forum represents a best practice for the other United Nations Regional Commissions to follow in supporting the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, a point that was also made by the representatives of the Regional Commissions during the interviews.

- To ensure the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Achievement of the SDGs depends heavily on progress made at the local level and in this context, increasing the role of cities is essential. United Nations Member States could greatly benefit from the involvement of local governments to effectively localize the SDGs. Local

governments could provide the capacity to ensure the successful implementation of development strategies and initiatives at the local level.

- To encourage a systemic stocktaking of the mayors' contribution to addressing global challenges based on a deep understanding of the different roles that mayors' networks could assume, their various strategic objectives and divergent impacts. Such issues as how best to define and capture the impact of transnational city networks should be considered when defining the success criteria for measuring the impact of the Forum of Mayors. For example, the Forum could serve as a channel for "uploading" the vision and policy aspirations of cities to ECE inter-governmental decision-making processes and for "downloading and translating" the commitments of the Forum as well as ECE and other United Nations norms and initiatives at the local level. City networks are already engaged in downloading and translating United Nations conventions, frameworks and initiatives at the local level, and the Forum could further this practice.

III. A five-point future scenario for the Forum of Mayors

A. Upgrade the format of the Forum to a recurrent event

17.   All the interviewed mayors as well as those who participated in subsequent discussions during the online briefings in February and March 2022 expressed a desire to see the Forum of Mayors consolidated as a recurrent event that is firmly integrated into the ECE intergovernmental processes. The mayors noted their expectations regarding the Forum's ability to build consensus among cities by channelling the experience of cities in designing and implementing people-centred approaches, and supporting ECE decision-making processes and initiatives for achieving the SDGs. The mayors also noted that the Forum provides the cities with an opportunity to strengthen synergies between the local, national and global policies and initiatives and proposed four action-oriented recommendations for consolidating the organizational aspect of the Forum.

A.1. Bolstering collaboration with ECE

18.   The proliferation of transnational city-to-city networks means that mayors will only participate in networks that enable them to maximize impact in a manner that is commensurate with their people-centred vision and policy aspirations. In this regard, several mayors highlighted the focus on contributing to the decision-making processes of international organizations as a way of contributing to efforts aimed at localizing SDGs and creating synergies with national policies, a pre-requisite for ensuring coherence and complementarity between the local, regional and global levels. To this end, the mayors recommended the following actions:

➢ *Strengthen the planning and decision-making processes of the Forum linked to the development of common declarations and solutions for addressing common global challenges with thematic working groups (see action point d).*
➢ *Formalize the link of the Forum with CUDHLM and/or*
➢ *Formalize the affiliation of the Forum to the ECE Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (an option that was followed in 2022), and/or with the ECE Commission Session (an option that was followed in the 2019 "Day of Cities"), as appropriate.*

A.2. Strengthening collaboration with ECE member States

19.   The mayors noted that the Forum provides them with opportunities to foster consultations and dialogue with diplomats in their countries. In this regard, they suggested organizing side events in the lead-up to, or during, the Forum dedicated to dialogues between mayors and State diplomats. This will allow for further exchange of views and the pooling of expertise knowledge, both of which are essential for a robust collaboration on global challenges. This is particularly useful since most ECE member States do not have institutions in charge of coordinating national and city diplomacy. One exception is France, with its National Commission for Decentralized Cooperation of France, a body aimed at creating this

dialogue and fostering coordination with respect to development cooperation. Another exception is the Netherlands, with its strategic mechanism "City Deals" serving as a vehicle for strengthening growth, innovation and quality of life in Dutch cities through concrete collaboration agreements between the cities, national government, partner governments, the private sector and civil society organizations.[17] To this end, the mayors recommended the following action:

➢ *Organize a formal or informal event in the lead-up to or during the Forum of Mayors to facilitate dialogues between participating mayors and State diplomats on global challenges forming the focus on the discussions of the Forum.*

A.3. Increasing the number of participating cities and articulating collaboration with city networks

20. Mayors recommended increasing the number of participating cities in the Forum by expanding the pool of cities per country, which at present is limited to one city per country. This is important for strengthening the planning and decision-making processes linked to the development of declarations and solutions for addressing common global challenges. The expanded list of participating cities will enable the Forum to take into account the different needs of cities while tapping into a broader range of successful solutions and expertise skills, which in turn would translate into deeper thematic discussions and proper factoring of implementation challenges into the planning processes.

21. Several mayors also expressed interest in collaborating with global and regional city networks engaged in thematic areas and issues of relevance to the agenda of the Forum as set out in the Geneva Declaration of Mayors. This would allow the Forum to create synergies with these networks and engage in joint action. The modalities for establishing this collaboration should be determined in consultation with these networks. To this end, the mayors recommended the following actions:

➢ *Increase the number of participating cities per country.*

➢ *Establish a strategy, with principles and modalities, for collaborating with regional and global city networks engaged in thematic areas and policy issues relevant to the Forum of Mayors' agenda as set out in the Geneva Declaration of Mayors.*

A.4. Organizing a public event around the Forum

22. Mayors were of the view that the organizational aspect of the Forum of Mayors could be strengthened by organizing a public event around the Forum on common topical global policy issues. Such an event could become a major city event and would allow for cross-fertilization between the Forum and participating national, regional and global city networks through the exchange of ideas and joint presentations. To this end, the mayors recommended the following action:

➢ *Make the Forum of Mayors part of a major city event, aimed at facilitating the exchange of views and cross-fertilization between the Forum and city networks as well as between the Forum and local stakeholders.*

23. Two groups of partners could be invited to participate in the public event, including organizing their own side events:

• Local stakeholders (e.g. representatives of municipal corporations, entrepreneurial and start-up associations, universities and schools, cultural institutions and philanthropic foundations) from the participating cities who are involved in the thematic areas forming the focus of the Forum.

• Regional and global city networks, where the participating cities of the Forum are members.

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[17] https://agendastad.nl/city-deals/.

B. Assign a precise focus for the discussions of the Forum

24.   Several mayors stressed the need to strengthen the Forum with a thematic focus. In this regard, the mayors noted that this could be achieved through:

- Having a precise thematic focus within the CUDHLM programme of work. For instance, the Forum of Mayors could focus on housing and social housing or similar themes with limited coverage by multilateral city initiatives. Cities usually approach these issues on a bilateral basis.

- Further strengthening the connection with the 2030 Agenda, with the aim of fostering a formal link between strategic urban development plans produced by cities and municipalities and the SDGs. Mayors noted that they are not only the bearers of ideas but also can and must contribute to providing solutions for the various global challenges set forth in the 2030 Agenda. In this regard, cities consider that the Forum reflects their firm commitment to intensifying advocacy and joint action for ensuring the achievement of the SDGs.

25.   Irrespective of the topical issues forming the focus of the Forum, the participation of cities and their level of engagement will be proportional to their involvement in the decision-making of the Forum. Therefore, it is important that this specific focus is set in advance by the participating cities at the previous Forum. To this end, the mayors made the below recommendations.

B.1.   Defining a clear and detailed focus for each edition of the Forum well in advance.

B.2.   Entrusting the participating cities at each edition of the Forum with the task of defining of the focus of the subsequent edition.

C. Revise existing selection criteria for participating cities

26.   The Forum of Mayors has unique characteristics in terms of membership and participation, which is extended to all ECE cities. Nevertheless, the existing organizational criteria limits the number of cities presenting at the Forum. The criterion adopted so far is that of one city per ECE member State is to present at the Forum, along with guest cities selected by the other United Nations Regional Commissions in consultation with their member States. Participating cities change each year in order to give fair representation to each country's urban scene. There is no limit to the cities attending the meeting.

27.   The selection of cities participating in the 2020 and 2022 editions of the Forum was the result of consultations between the ECE secretariat and the member States. In line with the intergovernmental nature of ECE and the concept of Westphalian sovereignty, each member State has a proposal and vetting power regarding the potential participating cities from its territory. Mayors expressed concerns over this process, which leaves the door open for considerations outside of the thematic focus of the Forum, thereby making the participation of some cities less plausible. The mayors expressed:

- The desire to maintain and reinforce the unique nature of the Forum as an event fully embedded in the ECE intergovernmental process

- The desire to define more inclusive processes regarding the selection of participating cities.

28.   Two simple and feasible alternatives have been considered to allow for changes to the selection criteria for participating cities in a manner that responds to the wishes of the cities while remaining compatible with the operating criteria of ECE, that is, States validate the participation of their cities.

29.   The first focuses on the fact that participating mayors currently represent their own cities. However, it may be possible to envisage participating mayors acting as spokespersons for other cities in their countries. This option presupposes a form of coordination between participating mayors and their national stakeholders and partners prior to the Forum. The

second option combines the effectiveness resulting from continuity in participation and the equal representation deriving from the current rotation model of participation. Therefore, it is proposed to expand participation to two cities per member State, appointed in successive years for a two-year term, following a "departing, next" model. To this end, the mayors made the below recommendation.

C.1. **Increasing the number of participating cities to two cities per member State, with two-year term, elected in successive years (see section IV).**

30.   To implement this recommendation, the mayors proposed the following:

- The ECE secretariat issues a call for participation, in collaboration with national city associations, as appropriate, to collect applications from cities in each member country, including mayors and vice-mayors, following the established practice.

- The call for participation will be modulated to allow for the participation of small and medium-sized cities and ensure gender balance to the extent possible.

- The applicants should have a strong and demonstrable commitment to the issues at the heart of the Forum as established under the Geneva Declaration of Mayors.

- Applications should be accompanied by information on the city's activities and engagement in these issues.

- The secretariat will conduct a technical screening, taking into consideration the theme(s) of the following Forum, and submit a list of cities from which each member State will select its participant(s).

D.   Strengthen the planning and decision-making of the Forum of Mayors

31.   For years, a critical yet challenging element in the perception of the effectiveness of multilateral city initiatives has been their ability to express a coherent vision, a synthesis of the aspirations of participating cities. The fact that the membership of the Forum of Mayors belongs to mayors and that the mayors are committed to the Geneva Declaration of Mayors provides the advocacy of the Forum with a foundation of representation of local communities, which several representatives of participating cities felt was more substantial than that of initiatives and networks of municipal administrations.

32.   This unique aspect of the Forum can be further strengthened output-wise. The focus of the Forum is to support the creation of a multilevel synergy (local, national and multilateral) and the engagement of mayors in multilateral decision-making and planning processes as well as coordinated joint action. The interviewed mayors emphasized their interest in exploring opportunities for collaboration with ECE member States and deploying their competencies and unique expertise, which have made them indispensable contributors to the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

33.   It is highly desirable that starting in 2023, the declarations and recommendations of the Forum be developed within the context of negotiation and co-creation processes by working groups. Participation in the drafting alone represents a solid incentive to implement the recommendations on a city-wide basis. Inevitably, this process requires competencies for overcoming language barriers.

34.   Furthermore, it is suggested that the recommendations be complemented by reporting on the impact of the Forum. In this regard, it would be helpful to publish an annual mapping of local and national policies that have been adopted as a result of the declaration approved at the previous year's Forum.

35. To this end, the mayors proposed the below recommendations.

D.1. Creating one thematic working group from each participating city of the Forum to prepare documents that will be approved at the meeting of the Forum. The working group will convene online intersessional meetings, as needed. Additional working groups shall be created, as appropriate, upon the request of the Forum.

D.2. Issuing an annual report featuring a list of local and national policies and initiatives that have been adopted as a consequence of the previous meetings of the Forum in collaboration with the Geneva Cities Hub (GCH).

E. Establish an online platform for the Forum

36. Several interviewees stressed the importance of having an online platform with informative material and best practices. This proposal is compatible with the recently launched Mayors' Action Platform of GCH, which is likely to receive considerable visibility in the next edition of the Forum. This platform can include an inventory of the policies implemented by the cities as a result of the declarations approved in the previous editions of the Forum. To this end, the mayors made the below recommendations.

E.1. Establishing a partnership with GCH with a view to formalizing the integration of the GCH Mayors' Action Platform as a communication tool for the Forum.

E.2. Expanding the content of this platform to include reporting of local and national policies implemented as a result of the declarations and recommendations adopted at the Forum.

IV. Succession plan

37. A running theme throughout the results of the interviews with mayors is a concern about the capacity of the Forum to deliver and the sustainability of its achievements to date. The successful local experiences shared during the thematic discussions at the Forum raised numerous issues, which require the involvement of architects, engineers, ICT specialists, urban planners, economists and other social scientists at different stages of implementation. This intersectionality means that implementation must necessarily involve a lengthy process; one that is not without challenges. Cities are to carve their own solutions in a fundamentally interdisciplinary, multi-stakeholder and bottom-up approach to meet the needs and aspirations of their citizens, and local solutions must be inherently global in outlook to ensure compliance with internationally recognized standards. These seemingly dichotomous imperatives can only be reconciled through deep and comprehensive collaboration with other cities, and this collaboration must necessarily go beyond twinning. When it comes to implementing solutions that are intimate to citizens, the importance of paying strong attention to details cannot be over-emphasized. Providing the required framework for such collaboration is impossible under the current arrangements, whereby the selected contribution of the cities is linked to the annual meetings of the Forum of Mayors.

38. The above summarizes the mayors' concerns which formed the focus of the informal preparatory briefing for the second Forum that was held online on 15 February, 11 March and 28 March 2022, with the participation of 48 mayors and their representatives (see annex II). The mayors were anxious about the sustainability of the outcomes of the Forum, noting that the current arrangements render a limited engagement not only in terms of duration (one year) but also in terms of thematic areas. The constant change of mayors makes it difficult to ensure that there is no pause in the work of the Forum of Mayors and sets the limits to creating multiplier effects through joining relevant initiatives. Above all, these arrangements work against replicating successful experiences through deep and comprehensive collaboration.

39. At the same time, the current selection system, whereby the number of cities is limited to one city per member State, undermines the outreach and ability of the Forum to take into account the diverse experiences of ECE cities. ECE cities have different development

trajectories, with marked differences in terms of natural resources, challenges and growth potentials, which must be addressed if the Forum is to deliver on its vision to "build back better" and on the imperative of the 2030 Agenda of leaving no one behind.

40.   The point was made that the sustainability challenge could be best addressed through complementing the current arrangements with a succession plan. Such a plan should be geared to allow for building on the achievements of the Forum, ensuring an agile response to current challenges and for proactively addressing the numerous issues linked to the vision and common aspirations of the Forum.

41.   The current arrangement could be strengthened by increasing the number of selected cities to two cities per member State. The two mayors/vice-mayors will serve for a period of two years, and both are invited to speak at the Forum to share successful local solutions. At any given year, the mayor/vice-mayor will take the lead in preparing for the Forum, while at the same time familiarizing the national counterpart with the different aspects of the Forum and the Geneva Declaration of Mayors. At the end of the Forum, the mayor/vice-mayor will pass the torch to the national counterpart (mayor or vice-mayor), thereby maintaining the country's institutional memory, and a new selection process will be launched to replace the departing mayor.

42.   In this way, the two mayors/vice-mayors will operate on a rotating basis, so that the outcomes of the Forum are passed on from the departing mayor/vice-mayor (old mayor/vice-mayor) to the next mayor/vice-mayor who will be automatically invited to speak at the next Forum (and, thereof, becomes the present mayor/vice-mayor).

43.   This system not only enables cities to attend to the lengthy process associated with implementing creative successful local solutions, but it will also transform the Forum into an agile mechanism for spreading the word and helping cities develop the required skills and know-how to engage in city diplomacy. To ensure due diligence in capturing the specific experiences and development trajectories of ECE cities, both the cities and member States will be approached to select mayors (see paragraph 44).

44.   Below is a revised procedure for selecting mayors which incorporates the proposed succession plan:

- Two cities per ECE member State will be selected to join the Forum for a duration of two years.

- In selecting the cities, the size of the countries will be taken into account and rotation needs to be adapted to the number of cities. Thus, for countries with a limited number of cities, rotation implies their participation will be more frequent than in other cities.

- The two cities are invited to speak at the annual meeting of the Forum.

- The secretariat prepares a list of mayors and vice-mayors who will join the Forum, with some alternatives for each country, and lists them in the order of preference.

- The list of mayors and vice-mayors who will join the Forum is prepared according to specific criteria, including relevant projects and initiatives as well as existing ECE activities in the city.

- The list of selected mayors/vice-mayors/cities is shared with the Permanent Missions in Geneva as well as with the mayors/vice-mayors for their feedback. Missions and mayors/vice-mayors can confirm the choice, choose a mayor/vice-mayor from the alternatives provided by the secretariat, or choose a completely different mayor.

- Once all the mayors/vice-mayors are selected, the secretariat sends invitation letters.

- This process allows member States and cities to select the mayors/vice-mayors of their choice.

Annex I

United Nations Regional Commissions work in support of urban development

1.   Alongside ECE, the other United Nations Regional Commissions have upscaled their engagement with local and national governments - their partners in implementing sustainable development, equity, and resilience policies. The Regional Commissions for Africa (ECA), Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), and Western Asia (ESCWA) all have dedicated units for supporting urban development, including research and capacity-building activities tailored to the specific contexts of the respective regions. Their work involves a twofold objective, namely, fostering dialogue with and among municipal authorities and supporting action.

2.   As for the dialogue, one of the most significant initiatives is the Asia Pacific Urban Forum of ESCAP. This multi-stakeholder event is organized every 4-5 years and involves a platform for urban policymakers in the region to discuss emerging and critical urban development issues. On its part, ECLAC has created the Urban and Cities Platform, a digital space for facilitating peer-to-peer exchange among cities and between them and ECLAC.

3.   The Asia Pacific Mayors Academy is the recent capacity-building activity of ESCAP, a training platform (initially, conducted in person and then virtually during the COVID-19 pandemic) created with partners to provide newly elected/appointed mayors with the knowledge and skills needed for implementing sustainable urban development solutions.

4.   The five Regional Commissions support their respective cities in preparing Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) and the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. Examples include the VLRs of Yaoundé (Cameroon), Subang Yaya (Malaysia), and the one soon to be achieved in Amman (Jordan). In addition, the Regional Commissions publish numerous reports, studies and best practice guides, often in collaboration with partners, to support urban planning. Recent examples include the *COVID-19 in African cities impacts, responses and policies*; *The Future of Asian and Pacific Cities*; *Smart sustainable cities and smart digital solutions for urban resilience in the Arab region: Lessons from the pandemic*; and the *Metropolitan Governance in Latin America: an overview of contemporary experiences from a comparative perspective*.

Annex II

Interviewees and participants in the informal consultations

A.   List of interviewees

The following were interviewed for preparing the proposed future scenario of the Forum of Mayors:

1.   Susan Aitken, Councillor, Leader of Glasgow City Council (8 December 2021)

2.   Sukaina Al-Nasrawi, Social Affairs Officer, Urban Development Lead, ESCWA (24 January 2022)

3.   Diego Aulestia Valencia, Head of the Human Settlements Unit, ECLAC (4 February 2022)

4.   Giampiero Bambagioni, Representative of Italy, ECE Steering Committee for the Forum of Mayors (14 December 2021)

5.   Esteban Benavides, International Affairs Advisor and Coordinator of the International Observatory of Mayors on Living Together, City of Montreal (24 November 202)

6.   Paola Deda, Director, Forests, Land and Housing Division, ECE (8 November 2021)

7.   Curt Garrigan, Chief, Sustainable Urban Development Section, ESCAP (28 January 2022)

8.   Nicolas Gharbi, Principal Advisor, City Diplomacy and International affairs, City of Madrid (24 and 30 November 2021)

9.   Nina Hachigian, Deputy Mayor of International Affairs, City of Los Angeles, Zachia Nazarzai, Director of International Relations, Policy, and Protocol, and Erin Bromaghim, Director of Olympic and Paralympic Development in the Office of the Mayor of Los Angeles, City of Los Angeles (7 December 2021)

10.   Lisa Helps, Mayor of Victoria, Canada (13 December 2021)

11.   Kamelia Kemileva and Anh Thu Duong, co-directors, Geneva Cities Hub (14 December 2021)

12.   Dávid Korányi, Senior Advisor to the Mayor on City Diplomacy, Head of City Diplomacy Unit, City of Budapest (8 December 2021)

13.   Marie-Pierre Meganck, Representative of France, ECE Steering Committee for the Forum of Mayors (15 December 2021)

14.   Vitandrea Marzano, Head of International Cooperation, City of Bari (5 January 2022)

15.   Felip Roca i Blasco, Director of the Department of International Relations, Barcelona City Council (1 December 2021)

B.   List of participants in the informal consultation of 15 February 2022

(a)   Member States

1.   Tiziana Vecchio, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Italy

2.   Giampiero Bambagioni, Representative of Italy, ECE Steering Committee for the Forum of Mayors

3.   Cristina Pérez Vàzquez, Andorra

4. Jeremy Murray, Permanent Mission of the United States of America to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva, Switzerland

5. Florian Antohi, Permanent Mission of the United States of America to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva, Switzerland

6. Paloma Taltavull, Chair of the ECE Real Estate Market Advisory Group, Spain

(b) **Municipalities**

1. Mojca Finc, Kranj, Slovenia

2. Tassos kriekoukis, Athens, Greece

3. Łukasz Gawronski, Katowice, Poland

4. Andjela Lekic, Podgorica, Montenegro

5. Agata Krause, Trondheim, Norway

6. Tiziana Vecchio, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Italy

7. Alexandra Ister, Bratislava, Slovakia

8. Sarah Delputte, Ghent, Belgium

9. Sólveig Ólafsdóttir, Reykjavík, Iceland

10. Susanne Nolden, Bonn

11. Galina Bukovska, Riga, Latvia

12. Iva Vasadze,Vilnius, Lithuania

13. Rekajenei, Debrecen, Hungary

14. Albert Samarra, Comuandorra, Andorra

15. Nicolas Gharbi, Madrid, Spain

16. Ernst Woller, Vienna, Austria

17. Ieva Dirmaitė, Vilnius, Lithuania

18. Åsa Bjering, Helsingborg, Sweden

19. Jurga Pociute-mikutiene, Vilnius, Lithuania

20. Kristian Mjoen, Trondheim, Norway

21. Patricia Tontcheva, Italy

22. Tudor Drambarean, Alba Iulia, Romania

23. Tomaz Lanisek, Kranj, Slovenia

24. Alec von Graffenried, Bern, Switzerland

25. Janez Černe, Kranj, Slovenia

26. Marko Hocevar, Kranji, Slovenia

27. Pekka Timonen, Lati, Finland

28. Filip Chvátal, Brno, Czech Republic

29. Heili Luik, Tallinn, Estonia

30. Zukalová Lydie, Brno, Czech Republic

31. Andria Basilaia, Tbilisi, Georgia

32. Andrei Bardin, Moscow, Russian Federation

33. Krista Kampus, Tallinn, Estonia

34. Erlijn Mulder, Utrecht, the Netherlands

35. Carita Santos, Loulé, Portugal

36. Vitandrea Marzano, Bari, Italy

37. Mārtiņš Staķis, Riga, Latvia

38. Rasmuss Filips Geks, Riga, Latvia

39. Reka Jenei, Debrecen, Hungary

40. Tomaso Rossini, San Marino

41. Rasmuss Geks, Riga, Latvia

42. Łukasz Gawroński, Katowice, Poland

(c)   **Non-governmental organizations and academia**

1. Kamelia Kemileva, Geneva Cities Hub, Switzerland

2. Nikolaus Summer, Urban Innovation, Austria

3. Lorenzo Kihlgren Grandi, Director of the City Diplomacy Lab at Columbia Global Centers, France

4. Helena Beunza, Urban planning, housing, and public administrations expert, Spain

5. Alexandra Soquet-Boissy, EU Careers, EPSO

C.   List of participants in the informal consultation of 11 March 2022

(a)   **Member States**

1. Tiziana Vecchio, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Italy, Italy

2. Jeremy Murray, Permanent Mission of the United States of America to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva, Geneva, Switzerland

3. Florian Antohi, Permanent Mission of the United States of America to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva, Geneva, Switzerland

4. Paloma Taltavull, Chair of the ECE Real Estate Market Advisory Group, Spain

(b)   **Municipalities**

1. Reka Jenei, Debrecen, Hungary

2. Cilem Honca, Gaziantep, Turkey

3. Derman Kahraman, Gaziantep, Turkey

4. Aleksis Zoldners, Riga, Latvia

5. Davit Jaiani, Tbilisi, Georgia

6. Javid Sadikhov, Azerbaijan

7. Manfred Bischof, Vaduz, Liechtenstein

8. Sólveig Ólafsdóttir, Reykjavik, Iceland

9. Tassos Kriekoukis, Athens, Greece

10. Alexandra Ister, Bratislava, Slovakia

11. Mojca Finc, Kranj, Slovenia

12. Susanne Nolden, Bonn, Germany

13. Galina Bukovska, Riga, Latvia

14. Samantha Morgan, Bristol, United Kingdom

15. Sarah Delputte, Ghent, Belgium

16. Krista Kampus, Tallinn, Estonia

17. Tomaz Lanisek, Kranj, Slovenia

18. Seamus Coghlan, Cork, Ireland

19. Nicolas Gharbi, Madrid, Spain

20. Meerim Kydyralieva, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

21. Sólveig Ólafsdóttir, Reykjavík, Iceland

22. Ernst Woller, Vienna, Austria

23. Ieva Dirmaitė, Vilnius, Lithuania

24. Jurga Pociūtė-Mikūtienė, Vilnius, Lithuania

25. Åsa Bjering, Helsingborg, Sweden

26. Kristian Mjoen, Trondheim, Norway

27. Cristina Pérez Vàzquez, Andorra

28. Alec von Graffenried, Bern, Switzerland

29. Janez Černe, Kranj, Slovenia

30. Marko Hocevar, Kranj, Slovenia

31. Pekka Timonen, Lahti, Finland

32. Filip Chvátal, Brno, Czechia

33. Lydie Zukalová, Brno, Czechia

34. Andria Basilaia, Tblisi, Georgia

35. Andrei Bardin, Moscow, Russian Federation

36. Erlijn Mulder, Utrecht, the Netherlands

37. Vitandrea Marzano, Bari, Italy

38. Mārtiņš Staķis, Riga, Latvia

39. Tomaso Rossini, San Marino

40. Albert Samarra, Comuandorra, Andorra

41. Łukasz Gawronski, Katowice, Poland

42. Cristina, Avornic, Republic of Moldova

43. Ambros Alexandru, Ungheni, Republic of Moldova

44. Municipality of Yerevan, Armenia

(c)   Non-governmental organizations and academia

1. Kamelia Kemileva, Geneva Cities Hub, Switzerland

2. Lorenzo Kihlgren Grandi, Director of the City Diplomacy Lab at Columbia Global Centers, Paris, France

3. Helena Beunza, Expert, urban planning, housing, and public administrations, Spain

4. Alexandra Soquet-Boissy, EU Careers, EPSO

D. List of participants in the informal consultation of 28 March 2022

(a) Member States

1. Tiziana Vecchio, Permanent Mission Italy to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva, Geneva, Switzerland

(b) Municipalities

1. Alec von Graffenried, Bern, Switzerland

2. Susanne Nolden, Bonn, Germany

3. Yoachim Flai, Israel

4. Deborah Kinghorn, Bristol, United Kingdom

5. Heili Luik, Tallinn, Estonia

6. Krista Kampus, Tallinn, Estonia

7. Kiril Pecakov, Ohrid, North Macedonia

8. Municipality of Yerevan, Armenia

9. Liisa Minkkinen, Lahti, Finland

10. Wiala-Zimm Regina, Vienna, Austria

11. Reka Kulugy, Debrecen, Hungary

12. Sarah Delputte, Ghent, Belgium

13. Tassos Kriekoukis, Athens, Greece

14. Tudor Drambarean, Alba Iulia, Romania

15. Tomas Lanisek, Kranj, Slovenia

16. Vitandrea Marzano, Bari, Italy

17. Andjela Lekic, Podgorica, Montenegro

18. Júlio Sousa, Loule, Portugal

19. Carita Santos, Loule, Portugal

20. Asa Bjering, Helsingborg, Sweden

(c) Non-governmental organizations and academia

1. Anh Thu Duong, Geneva Cities Hub, Switzerland

2. Lorenzo Kihlgren Grandi, Director of the City Diplomacy Lab at Columbia Global Centers, France