

Mexico City Statement on Sustainable Learning Cities

Preamble

We – ministers, vice-ministers, mayors, vice-mayors, education executives, education experts and representatives of UN agencies, the private sector, and regional, international and civil society organizations from ninety-five countries – have gathered here in Mexico City from 28 to 30 September 2015 for the 2nd International Conference on Learning Cities (ICLC). Over 650 participants comprising men and women of all ages from all five UNESCO regions have come together to share their expertise, learn from each other's experience, forge partnerships, create synergies and enhance lifelong learning in communities all over the world.

We met at a critical moment in the process of safeguarding world peace and human rights, reducing poverty and creating a global sustainable development agenda. At the recent United Nations Sustainable Development Summit 2015, Member States agreed on seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that will shape the next fifteen years of human development. We express our wholehearted support for all of the SDGs, but in particular for SDG 4 ('Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all') and SDG 11 ('Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable'). We agree that education, lifelong learning and the citizens of the world's cities have a crucial role to play in achieving sustainable development in all three domains: the social, the economic and the environmental. We therefore welcome the 2nd ICLC's focus on sustainability.

We acknowledge that cities all over the world face difficult challenges. These include poor governance, corruption, poverty, hunger, ill health, social inequities, inadequate water supply and sanitation, gender inequality, unemployment, conflict, violence, unsustainable patterns of consumption and

production, environmental degradation and the consequences of climate change. Yet cities also have the facilities and services to engage citizens in lifelong learning. We therefore believe that today's dynamic, intercultural and innovative cities – now home to more than half of the world's population – are in a strong position to promote lifelong learning as a means of tackling development challenges.

Taking stock

We celebrate the progress that has been made in promoting lifelong learning in cities across the world since the 1st ICLC, which took place in Beijing in 2013. We welcome the fact that a growing number of cities are adopting the learning city approach as a means of pursuing sustainable development. We laud the innovative lifelong learning strategies implemented in cities in order to empower citizens and enable them to reach their full potential; improve social cohesion, solidarity and equality; increase economic and cultural prosperity; boost health and well-being; and protect the environment. We note in particular the achievements of the twelve recipients of the inaugural UNESCO Learning City Award.

We appreciate the guidance provided by the two outcome documents of the 1st ICLC: the *Beijing Declaration on Building Learning Cities*, which affirms the vital importance of lifelong learning for the future of urban communities, and the *Key Features of Learning Cities*, which serves as a checklist of actions needed to build learning cities. We also welcome the support provided by the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities. This network promotes policy dialogue and peer learning among member cities; forges links and partnerships with the private sector, academia and international and civil society organizations; provides capacity development; and develops instruments to encourage and recognize progress made in building learning cities.

Strategic directions for sustainable learning cities

We acknowledge that much remains to be done to implement the *Beijing Declaration on Building Learning Cities* and the *Key Features of Learning Cities*. We have therefore identified the following ten strategic directions for building sustainable learning cities:

1. Ensure that the development of education and lifelong learning promotes a sense of global solidarity as well as individual and societal responsibility. This involves encouraging citizens to contribute to social integration by taking action to make their communities safer, more resilient and more inclusive. It also involves increasing civic engagement, empowering people to participate in decision-making and holding responsible stakeholders accountable for their commitments and actions.
2. Implement lifelong learning strategies that foster environmental stewardship by motivating citizens to protect the natural environment, combat climate change and adopt sustainable patterns of production and consumption.
3. Offer innovative, diverse and flexible education and lifelong learning opportunities that enhance citizens' knowledge and understanding of health issues, thereby empowering them to take better control of their health conditions and develop caring and supportive attitudes towards others. In addition, ensure that structural and environmental conditions are in place that make a positive contribution to the health and well-being of citizens.
4. Ensure that citizens have adequate access to public utilities such as clean water, sanitation and energy, as these are prerequisites for participating in education and lifelong learning.
5. Enable all citizens to benefit from and drive sustainable, inclusive economic growth by providing them with accessible and affordable education and lifelong learning opportunities. These should make effective use of ICTs and other modern learning technologies in order to develop the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that citizens need to find productive and fulfilling work and participate fully in society.
6. Involve all citizens, especially vulnerable people such as indigenous groups, women, persons with disabilities, refugees and displaced people, and place them at the heart of learning city initiatives. Foster social, economic and political inclusion by ensuring that all citizens, irrespective of age, sexual orientation or economic, cultural, religious or ethnic background, acquire the literacy and basic skills they need to assert their rights.
7. Reach out to different sectors, including health, education, arts and culture, sports and recreation, transport, social welfare, urban planning, housing and tourism, and build partnerships between governments, the private sector and civil society.
8. Include youth as an active and meaningful stakeholder in the creation of learning cities.
9. Embrace and reflect – in both words and actions – fundamental ethical values such as respect for people and nature, and promote the human rights of citizens, migrants, refugees and residents of neighbouring cities alike.
10. Incorporate culture and the arts as important pillars of learning cities and ensure that these engage all residents of and visitors to cities.

Call to action

We are committed to pursuing the strategic directions outlined above and to ensuring that lifelong learning is a driver of social, economic and environmental sustainability in cities throughout the world. To support the building of sustainable learning cities, we call upon:

1. The participants of this Conference to be ambassadors for lifelong learning, and learning cities to continue to offer each other support and guidance.
2. UNESCO to continue expanding the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities and to ensure that membership of the network is inclusive, diverse and open to all cities in UNESCO Member States that wish to implement the *Key Features of Learning Cities*. In addition, we call upon the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities to synchronize its actions with other UN initiatives on urban development, such as UN-Habitat (the UN programme for human settlements) and the UNESCO Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development, and to make use of indicators developed by other organizations, such as WHO indicators on well-being and health.
3. UNESCO to monitor the progress of learning cities, to recognize the diversity of learning cities' experiences, to acknowledge excellent lifelong learning activities and to confer a biennial UNESCO Learning City Award on cities that have made outstanding progress in implementing the *Key Features of Learning Cities*.
4. Governments and cities that follow the *UNESCO Guidelines for Building Learning Cities* to establish legislative frameworks that support the development of learning cities, create coordinated structures across all sectors and allocate budgets at all levels to strengthen quality education and lifelong learning that is accessible to all.
5. Governments to support the involvement of youth in building learning cities.
6. Regional education organizations to collaborate with the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning on building regional and international networks and partnerships between learning cities.
7. The private sector to give priority to lifelong learning as part of its corporate education responsibility, and civil society organizations to contribute to the provision of quality education and training and lifelong learning opportunities for all.
8. All citizens to become active learners, to contribute to the learning process and to play an active role in transforming their communities into learning environments that provide free and open access to digital and printed reading materials as well as access to culture and the arts.

The Conference commends Mexico City's dedication to building a learning city. It also highly appreciates the commitment announced by the Mayor of Mexico City to play a key role over the next two years in furthering the learning city agenda and providing a platform for learning cities all over the world, with support from the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning and the UNESCO Office in Mexico.

We express our deep appreciation to the Government of Mexico and the Government and people of Mexico City for their hospitality and support in hosting the 2nd ICLC.

Mexico City, 29 September 2015

UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities
'Lifelong learning for all is our city's future'

For more information on the UNESCO GNLC's
work and joining the network,
please visit
learningcities.uil.unesco.org
or contact us directly:
learningcities@unesco.org

UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning
Feldbrunnenstr. 58
20148 Hamburg
Germany
Tel.: +49 40 44 80 41 12
Fax.: +49 40 41 077 23



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Educational, Scientific and
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