

The UCLG Annual Retreat 2021 Session on MEWA Priorities

18 February 2021, Thursday

Location: Online via Zoom (Registration link below)

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdigSPIqHk71sF-0wiuFFWxSLYNsKn4_bxc9yvY-2CMKGWJMw/viewform?gxids=7628

Context of the Event

The UCLG Annual Retreat is a week-long gathering that provides an opportunity for the keynotes of the organization and partners to define synergies and develop actions in line with the work plans set out by the governing bodies. The 2021 UCLG Retreat will take place on 15 - 22 of February 2021, marking the first edition to be held virtually. This year's Retreat will be dedicated to highlighting how UCLG is **A Global Community that Cares**, discussing how to capitalize on this window of opportunity, to exchange on how our communities are working for the people, for the planet, for government, and for the future.

Within the context of the UCLG Retreat, UCLG-MEWA will organize a session on "**MEWA Priorities**" on Thursday, **January 18** from 10.00 to 11.30 am CET (Click [here](#) to convert to your time zone). The session will focus on priorities, visions, and concerns of the MEWA region, and the way UCLG-MEWA will feed the global agenda. After several rounds of discussions, the shared wisdom of the UCLG-MEWA Presidency, UCLG-MEWA General Secretariat, members, and stakeholders has determined 5 main priorities of the MEWA region as follows: **Disadvantaged Groups and Equality, Migration and Social Cohesion, Fighting Against and Adapting to Climate Change, Urban Resilience, and Local Development and Governance**. These priorities will be the basis of our future activities.

With the participation of UCLG-MEWA members, the session will explore further into the main priorities of the MEWA region and a dynamic space will be open for participants to join the session. In this way, participants will be able to contribute by having an interactive discussion, proposing solutions, and brainstorming to identify points to be included into UCLG-MEWA strategic plans and activities.

Agenda

Time	Item
10:00 – 10:05	Welcome and framing the work of the session Moderator: Mehmet Duman, UCLG-MEWA Secretary General
10:05 – 10:15	Regional Overview Mohamed Saadie, President of Union Municipalities of Dannieh, President of UCLG-MEWA and Vice President of UCLG
10:15 – 10:45	High Level Dialogue on MEWA Priorities • Disadvantaged Groups and Equality Nicola KHAMIS, Mayor of Beit Jala-Palestine • Migration and Social Cohesion Hussein Bani Hani, Mayor of Irbid, Jordan * Zeydan Karalar, Mayor Adana, Turkey* • Fighting Against and Adapting to Climate Iraj Shahin Baher, Mayor of Tabriz, Iran* Yücel Yılmaz, Mayor of Balıkesir, Turkey • Urban Resilience Musa Hadid, President of Association of Palestinian Local Authorities (APLA) and Mayor of Ramallah, Palestine • Local Development and Governance Mansur Yavaş, Mayor of Ankara, Turkey
10:45 – 11:30	Dynamic Space: Open discussion and brainstorming Moderator: Salim Korkmaz, UCLG-MEWA General Coordinator
	Closing UCLG-MEWA General Secretariat

*To Be Confirmed

High Level Dialogue on MEWA Priorities

Disadvantaged Groups and Equality

UCLG-MEWA operates in a region where certain groups of people experience a higher risk of poverty, social exclusion, discrimination, and violence than the general population, including, but not limited to, people with disabilities, isolated elderly people, women, and children.

For this reason, aiming to reduce the suffering of the disadvantaged groups and working to ensure equality in the MEWA region, UCLG-MEWA has identified “disadvantaged groups and equality” as one of its strategic priorities.

Migration and Social Cohesion

The importance of social cohesion is particularly evident when individuals move from one society to another and live in a new culture, including a new lifestyle, a different form of social structure, education, religion, customs, and values that can be expressed differently from society to another and from one culture to another.

The Middle East and West Asia (MEWA) has been witnessing a lot of human-induced and natural disasters. Migration, in particular, has now become one of the constant realities of MEWA region in constant motion. Here in UCLG-MEWA, we identify the issues related to the migration of people who seek safe shelter and decent life. Although migration management primarily falls under the working area of central governments, global challenges that unfold at the local level have necessitated local governments to assume an effective role in the issue. In this regard, UCLG-MEWA identified migration and social cohesion as one of its strategic priorities for the period 2019-2022.

Fighting Against and Adapting to Climate

Global climate change was defined as the greatest threat to the world in 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, all of which are the greatest agreements adopted in the recent history. Ecological balances that got disrupted with the climate change made the living conditions more challenging for both the current and future generations around the globe.

As UCLG-MEWA, it is among our priorities to ensure that cities are included in the fight against and the adaptation to climate change. In this context, our goal is to strengthen the UCLG-MEWA network that has an active role within the scope of global climate change, to contribute to the adoption and dissemination of environmental policies at the local level, to increase the support for local government policies in fighting against and adapting to climate change.

Urban Resilience

In MEWA Region, thousands of people are deprived of their basic rights due to natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods, and storms as well as due to drought, poverty and conflicts, and environmental, social, and economic instability increases in the regions that are exposed to these crises. In this context, the situation in Yemen for

instance, a country that is faced with the greatest famine of recent times as well as the destructive effects of wars and conflicts, in the Gulf countries that deeply feel the water scarcity, and severe earthquakes and other natural disasters frequently observed in the countries across the region show that the Middle East and West Asia is one of the regions that needs urban resilience efforts the most.

For this reason, UCLG-MEWA, which aims to reduce the environmental and social vulnerabilities of the cities in the MEWA region, has determined one of its strategic priorities as “urban resilience”.

Local Development and Governance

Local development, one of the strategic elements of national development, would meet the expectation to the extent that it is integrated with the “governance” strategy that requires the active participation of stakeholders in management. Today, the shift in local government paradigm demands municipalities not only to meet basic infrastructure requirements, but also to be responsible for social and economic needs, and it has turned municipalities into one of the most important stakeholders of local development.

Although the implementation process of the UN Millennium Development Goals, another global agenda adopted in 2000, has been quite successful in the areas of sustainable development and the fight against poverty, many social layers that are defined as target groups have remained outside of the process. UCLG-MEWA, which contributes to the shaping of the agenda from a regional perspective by actively taking part in the Local and Regional Governments Global Task Force in the preparation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, will follow up local implementations in the field of sustainable development. In this context, Local Development & Governance is one of the priority areas among the activities of UCLG-MEWA for the period 2020-2022.