

Urban 7 Declaration

A Case for Constructive Multilevel Multilateralism

May 2025

We, the Mayors and local government representatives of the Urban7 (U7), stand united in our call for constructive multilevel multilateralism. In an era of profound global change – geopolitical shifts, economic upheaval, climate change, rapid urbanisation – we require collaborative solutions that harness the full potential of all levels of government.

We believe that effective and equitable responses to the challenges of housing inequalities, democratic governance, conflict and displacement, and fast-paced technological development depend on the adequate institutionalisation of local governments and their role in shaping responses as the level of government closest to citizens. The local governments of the G7, through their direct Global South ties, can further contribute to strengthening the effectiveness of our shared responses to global challenges.

Only through close cooperation, rules-based international engagement, and strong partnership can we ensure peace, equal opportunities, thriving economies, and a healthy, prosperous, and liveable planet for current and future generations.

Recognising U7 as an official engagement group of the G7

Cities are engines of innovation, resilience, and inclusive growth. As representatives of local and

regional governments in G7 nations, we reaffirm our commitment to fostering sustainable urban development that enhances the quality of life for all. We believe in governance that is participatory, transparent, democratic and built on the principles of partnership and mutual respect. By strengthening cooperation across governance levels, we can drive progress towards social equity, economic prosperity, and environmental sustainability.

From the global climate emergency to biodiversity loss, our human activities are drastically and irrevocably changing the earth's environment, and the consequences can be felt in our cities, towns, and regions all over the world. As urban centres – responsible for 70% of global greenhouse gas emissions – continue to expand, they play a pivotal role in achieving global sustainability and prosperity targets. From advancing climate resilience and renewable energy to enhancing infrastructure and sustainable and accessible mobility, local governments are key actors in addressing pressing global issues. Their leadership and expertise must be harnessed, recognised and integrated into national and international decision-making processes to achieve meaningful and desirable progress for all citizens.

For those reasons, investing in resilient, inclusive, and forward-thinking urban policies will be instrumental in achieving the goals of the G7 and



the broader international community. And cities need to have an active role in shaping those. As such, we warmly welcomed the continuation of the G7 Sustainable Urban Development Ministers Meeting, under the German, Japanese and Italian G7 presidencies. In particular, we emphasise the crucial recommendation formulated in the 2024 Rome Communiqué of Urban Development Ministers to recognise the U7 as an official G7 engagement group. We emphasise the need for an enabling framework that provides cities with the necessary authority, financial resources, and technical capacity to implement impactful solutions. **Recognising the U7 as an official G7 engagement group is an essential first step** to ensuring a continued and meaningful dialogue between G7 ministers and local leaders. We are here to collaborate with the Canadian Presidency, G7 national governments, the international community, international organisations, and civil society on crucial issues for our communities. We stand ready and in anticipation of the Urban 7 being recognised as an official G7 engagement group, which will bring our real-life role and impact on par with G7 engagement procedures. Empowering cities is vital for reaching the Sustainable Development Goals, ensuring democracy and creating a better future for all. The path forward lies in shared responsibility and collective action – ensuring that cities remain key drivers of global progress for the well-being of all.

Cities, towns, and regions as promoters of peace, prosperity, and democracy at home, and across the world

Democracy is at risk; the state of law and human rights are under pressure. Cities are more than implementers of national and international policy – they are custodians of peace, democracy, and social cohesion. By fostering inclusive governance, civic participation, and cultural exchange, local governments are not only upholding democracy, but they are also actively helping build resilient societies and counter polarisation.

In addition, local governments are increasingly shaping responses to international conflicts. This is evident, for example, in many European cities providing humanitarian aid to partner cities in Ukraine, actively mobilising resources, capacity building and city-to-city partnerships for its sustainable and democratic reconstruction. Local governments play a crucial role in this process, exchanging practices on good governance, making sure that reconstruction efforts align with long-term sustainability and resilience goals. We believe that this engagement is fundamental not only for the future of Ukrainians, but for safeguarding peace across the globe and the values we uphold in the G7. We are entrusted with the protection of our communities, their democratic achievements and values providing everyone with a voice to determine their own future.

Cities serve as ambassadors for international cooperation, forging cross-border partnerships and cooperation and promoting mutual understanding. In a rapidly changing geopolitical landscape, we reaffirm our commitment to upholding democratic values and peace. The G7 and international partners must work closely with cities and regions to strengthen democracy, economic stability, and climate action in the G7 and beyond.

The crucial role of local governments in addressing climate change

The climate crisis is one of the most pressing challenges of our time. Cities play a decisive role in addressing it. It is our cities, towns and regions that are hit by increasingly violent and frequent extreme weather events, taking lives and wreaking havoc on infrastructure and livelihoods. Sustainable solutions increase liveability in our cities, reducing pollution and increasing public health.

It is without a doubt for us, the Urban 7, that decisive and targeted action is necessary and urgent. Cities are on the frontlines,



protecting communities from extreme weather events, responding to public health crises, and other emergencies. We are driving ambitious climate action through decarbonisation, renewable energy deployment, and sustainable mobility solutions.

At the sidelines of the Kobe conference and its declaration, commemorating the 30th anniversary of the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, we call for greater investment in local resilience strategies, strengthened disaster preparedness and response, early warning systems, and infrastructure that enhances adaptive capacity. A proactive approach to disaster risk reduction will safeguard lives, protect economies, and ensure the long-term viability of our urban centres.

We urge national governments and international institutions to strengthen multilevel cooperation to accelerate the energy transition and climate adaptation efforts. The ambitions for COP30 need to be high. Local governments stand ready to take climate leadership, but we need to be provided with the adequate resources and regulatory frameworks to meet global climate goals and ensure a just transition for all communities.

A sustainable and affordable future for all – Tackling the housing crisis and the urban-rural divide

A shortage of qualitative and affordable housing combined with skyrocketing rental, property and energy prices, the pressure on urban centres is steadily growing, turning into a major concern for local governments. Access to adequate, affordable, and sustainable housing in urban centres is fundamental to social cohesion, economic stability, inclusive urbanisation, environmental responsibility and the safety of our cities. Access to safe and proper housing for everyone must be a priority for the international community and their engagement with local leaders.

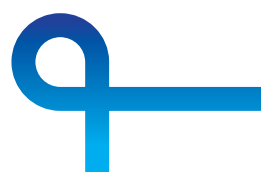
The urban fabric is not limited to the municipal borders, but often stretches to suburban and rural areas, part of the greater metropolitan area. That ecosystem must be sufficiently connected to remain attractive. It is the backbone of providing opportunities for all, secure food supply and sustainable agriculture.

From implementing and financing rapid retrofitting to sustainable new construction, from attracting skilled workforce, upskilling and reskilling to biodiversity protection, responsible land-use, swift but adequate permitting procedures, and safeguarding cultural and historical centres, the challenges are enormous.

We call for stronger financial, capacity and regulatory support for local governments to implement housing, infrastructure and urbanisation policies that balance affordability with sustainability, integrating climate-resilient design and ensuring equitable access to housing, mobility and opportunity for all. We need to adopt a truly long-term perspective and cooperate with all actors along the construction value-chain, private and public, to innovate and finance the future. While simplification of regulations and processes is inevitable for solving the issue, we need to make sure that the infrastructure we build today, is climate-proof and fit to last the next decades.

Tackling global challenges through local cooperation – True partnership towards common goals

Cities are confronted with structural unemployment and exclusion. A strong multilevel cooperation is essential for ensuring long-term stability and prosperity. Cities contribute significantly to economic growth and international cooperation, fostering business innovation, cultural exchange, and sustainable investment. Strengthening city-to-city collaboration allows cities to be more resilient through sharing knowledge and local



solutions that benefit communities, science and businesses, including municipal public enterprises worldwide.

In this regard, we wish to highlight the importance of strengthening urban cooperation not only between the G7 and the Global South, but among all cities globally. Local governments are uniquely positioned to exchange experiences, learn from one another, and support each other in addressing shared challenges, as highlighted in the Joint Statement of the Kobe Global Conference. This is essential for achieving G7 objectives on sustainable urbanisation, climate resilience, and economic development. As rapid urban growth continues, cities in the Global South are at the forefront of tackling shared global challenges – from infrastructure and housing to climate adaptation and innovation. Strengthening urban partnerships between the G7 and the Global South fosters solution exchange, supports climate and economic resilience, and unlocks new markets and technological solutions. By investing in sustainable urban development and city cooperation, the G7 can help shape a more inclusive, stable, and prosperous future in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Artificial Intelligence revolution – The role of local governments in a new technological era

Artificial Intelligence (AI) presents both significant opportunities and complex challenges for the private sector, but also the public sector, including local governments. Cities are important hubs of innovation and creativity. We see AI as a game-changing tool that can help us enhance public services for our citizens, improve urban planning, and support us in optimising resource management. From predictive analytics for traffic management to AI-powered public services, these technologies can streamline operations, increase accessibility, and improve decision-making and help us become more efficient, sustainable, and

responsive to citizens' needs. However, we also must be conscious of data privacy concerns, proper ethical use, transparency, the fairness of algorithms, and the digital divide. In addition, many local governments face challenges in providing staff with the necessary expertise to harness AI while protecting sensitive information and preventing biases that could disadvantage vulnerable communities. AI adoption requires strong, ethical governance frameworks, and adequate funding and human resources.

To harness AI's full potential, we must set clear ethical guidelines, and develop inclusive strategies that ensure AI benefits everyone equitably, allowing us to stay ahead of the curve. Public accessibility and transparent control mechanisms are essential to prevent privatisation and creating knowledge monopolies.

Rolling up our sleeves for a rules-based, prosperous, sustainable global community

We, the Mayors of the Urban7, reaffirm our dedication to shaping a prosperous, fair, safe and sustainable future alongside the G7. Through constructive partnerships, rules-based cooperation, and an inclusive approach to governance, we are here to collaborate with the Canadian Presidency, G7 national governments, the international community, international organisations, and civil society on crucial issues for our communities. We stand ready and in anticipation of the Urban 7 being recognised as an official G7 engagement group, which will bring our real-life role and impact on par with G7 engagement procedures. **It is our firm belief that elevating the U7 to the status of a G7 engagement group will greatly support our work and reach G7 objectives.** Empowering cities is vital to safeguarding democracy and creating a better future for all. The path forward lies in shared responsibility and collective action – ensuring that cities remain key drivers of global progress for the well-being of all.

