

Local DeclarACTION on Youth and Sustainable Urbanization, Armenia (Q.), Colombia

Forum “Thinking, existing and living: let's create our cities of the future together”

Youth Week 2024

UN-Habitat, University of Quindío, Mayor's Office of Armenia

Cámara de Comercio, Armenia, Quindío, Colombia, August 28, 2024

We, representatives of the youth of Armenia and its surroundings, as well as allied organizations and entities, gathered at the forum “Thinking, existing and living: let's create our cities of the future together” at the request of the United Nations Human Settlements Program (UN-Habitat) and the University of Quindío, within the framework of the celebration of Youth Week organized by the Mayor's Office of Armenia and the Youth Participation Subsystems, from the Cámara de Comercio of Armenia, Quindío, Colombia, on August 28, 2024, in view of our right to think, exist and live in the city, and expressing our intention to work with all interested actors towards the meaningful inclusion of young people in sustainable urbanization, inclusive, safe, resilient and prosperous cities and communities for generations to come, and,

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT:

That youth, from our multiculturalism, diversity and differential approach, as indigenous peoples, black, Afro-Colombian, Raizal and Palenquera communities (NARP), victims of the Colombian armed conflict, women, population with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities (OSIGD), population with disabilities, neuro-divergents, religious communities, practices, organizations and social, cultural, environmental, political leaders, students, workers, entrepreneurs, farmers, floating population, displaced population, members of an ecosystem composed not only of human beings, but also of biotic and abiotic elements, interdependent and related to each other; in addition, especially important actors in urban settlements and that our dynamism, capacities, skills and commitment contribute to the construction of a better urban ecosystem future; that we have problems and challenges, which at the same time constitute opportunities to improve cities, such as:

I. Sustainable Mobility

Vehicle pollution due to overpopulation of vehicles and people; inefficient vehicle fleet, given the lack of vehicles that use renewable energy, cycle paths and the presence of deforestation caused by road expansion.

II. Waste Management

Pollution due to poor waste disposal, which in turn causes greater air pollution due to bad odors and diseases.

III. Renewable Energy

Smoke and gases from transport, industry and the use of toxic and environmentally harmful materials; highly contaminated wastewater that does not have a basic sanitation process, causing consequences such as rising temperatures.

IV. Green Spaces and Biodiversity

Deforestation in green areas; change in diet and domestication of wild species; lack of research on species and their health conditions in neighborhoods; prohibition of wildlife passage through mines and traps in rural areas; lack of monitoring and care of water basins, predation of birds by cats and of opossums by dogs in green areas; appropriation of green areas in the city; lack of monitoring of the care of species in parks and vacation centers adjacent to the city; limitation of the enjoyment of green areas through privatization; lack of knowledge, use and enjoyment of native plants; pollution; lack of green areas near homes; displacement of biodiversity in some areas.

V. Water Management

Invasions or irregular settlements without urban planning regulations, where there is illegal appropriation of land and causing health problems for its inhabitants; poor treatment of drinking water and management of water resources, seriously affecting the health of people, animals and the environment, deteriorating the ecosystem in general; the use and disposal of agrochemicals in agriculture and industry.

VI. Social Equity

Invisibility of communities settled in the peripheries, substandard housing or neighborhoods at high geographic risk through concealment by means of concrete walls; the areas with the highest perception of insecurity and geographic risk coincide with the peripheries or limits of the city, where most informal settlements are concentrated; state neglect of the populations that live in these situations.

VII. Adaptation to Climate Change

Heat island that is generated especially in the city center due to the lack of green areas and the presence of many buildings, this situation worsens on hot days and with vehicle pollution; water shortages through processes such as evapotranspiration; changes in rainfall patterns due to climate change, causing in some seasons floods, landslides due to excessive rainfall or prolonged droughts that affect water availability; population growth and increased demand for water and agricultural and industrial activities that use natural resources, leading to the depletion of water resources; structural and architectural problems in buildings in marginalized areas or substandard neighborhoods.

It is necessary to strengthen links and alliances between the different actors involved in the development of the city of Armenia, as well as in the world, in order to create networks of exchange and action. These actors include:

1. Individuals.
2. Families.
3. Communities.
4. Local leaderships.

5. Foundations.
6. Collectives.
7. Citizen oversight groups.
8. Local Administrative Boards (JAL).
9. Community Action Boards (JAC).
10. Educational Institutions of Preschool, Primary Basic, Secondary Basic, Middle, Higher Education and Tertiary Education.
11. University of Quindío.
12. La Gran Colombia University.
13. EAM University Institution.
14. Mayor's Office of Armenia.
15. Education Secretariat of Armenia.
16. Planning Secretariat of Armenia.
17. Transit Secretariat of Armenia.
18. Government of Quindío.
19. Municipal Council of Armenia.
20. Departmental Assembly of Quindío.
21. Administrative Department for Social Prosperity.
22. National Government.
23. Quindío Energy Company (EDEQ).
24. Quindío Regional Autonomous Corporation (CRQ).
25. Strategic Public Transport System (SETP).
26. San Juan de Dios University Hospital.
27. Municipal Office of Armenia.
28. Colombian Institute of Family Welfare.
29. Chamber of Commerce.
30. Business sector.
31. Industrial sector.
32. Cultural and sports sector.

That the coordinated participation of local and national governments to promote innovative and revolutionary agendas for young people is of fundamental importance;

That the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals is an opportunity to encourage and make visible the action of youth with the purpose of “leaving no one or any territory behind”;

That the New Urban Agenda is one more pillar towards the integral development of young people that can be achieved with their participation;

That in order to achieve the above purposes it is necessary to enhance the strength of each young person, their organizations and practices, to advance with concrete actions towards a future in which all people can benefit and prosper, regardless of their ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability status, neuro-divergence, victim status, displaced person or socioeconomic situation;

We have created this space, the Forum “Thinking, existing and living: let’s create our cities of the future together”, to openly discuss crucial issues identified by youth, organizations and allied entities, in order to find sustainable and inclusive solutions in our city systems.

WE MAKE THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT:

1. We accept that the city should be a stage for improving youth opportunities in consolidating life projects.
2. We understand that citizen participation in territorial planning is essential for sustainable development, social inclusion and environmental protection in our city.
3. We recognize that collaborative governance is essential for the social development of communities.
4. We assume that improving the quality of life in the city depends on the quality of life in the countryside and ecosystemic relationships.
5. We reaffirm the capacities of youth to transform realities, especially through articulation with transparent and horizontal collectives and organizations.
6. We will promote environmental responsibility in local consumption dynamics and in the educational and productive processes of the population.
7. We will promote urban health solutions and initiatives with an emphasis on youth, also understood as physical, mental and environmental public health.
8. We will promote healthy, inclusive, clean, safe, sustainable and biodiverse public spaces.
9. We will take advantage of technological development to redefine traditional productive structures and transform access to goods and services based on sustainability.
10. We will work wisely to train and be trained as integral and professional people, prepared to take on current global challenges from co-responsibility.
11. We will seek generational change in decision-making spaces and in the exercise of new democracies.
12. We will seek to inform in a uniform manner and be informed of the challenges and challenges that the city presents in order to exercise conscious citizenship.
13. We will listen attentively and actively involve those who are willing to act, without any type of discrimination or violence.
14. We will consolidate scenarios for open dialogue and assertive communication between youth, civil society, local and national government, intersectoral organizations, the private sector and the United Nations, regarding public issues that affect Sustainable Urban Development, in order to reach fair and concrete agreements.

15. We will strengthen community power and create support networks with families, friends, neighbors, leaders and social managers to carry out our ideas and consolidate citizen oversight.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS:

To meet these commitments, we believe that the whole of society must be united. In this space, we identify some actions that each key actor must take to support young people in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Young people must:

1. Increasingly involve themselves in citizen participation scenarios, such as Youth Participation Subsystems, Local Administrative Boards, Community Action Boards, Youth Public Policies and Community Environmental Management Plans;
2. Exercise democracy and politics in a conscious and responsible manner, taking an interest in the city ecosystem and its political, environmental and economic dynamics;
3. Build inclusive communities through youth participation and the strategic use of social networks;
4. Act with vocation, responsibility and discipline in any initiative with social impact;
5. Fearlessly express revolutionary ideas and proposals, demanding that they be heard from a position of self-care;
6. Accept the constant learning process and learn from the experiences of our ancestors, articulating intergenerational visions.

Local governments must:

1. Ensure real incentives for young people to participate in decision-making, from local to the highest levels;
2. Create and implement public policies around Sustainable Urban Development that recognize and respond to the needs and diversity of youth, including those in vulnerable situations;
3. Promote sustainable practices, such as integrated waste management, the use of renewable energy and the creation of green and safe public spaces;
4. Promote the use of public transport, improve road infrastructure and promote active mobility to reduce pollution and improve quality of life;
5. Promote access to digital technologies and promote digital literacy to reduce the digital divide and strengthen citizen participation;
6. Promote social cohesion and the development of youth projects through strategic alliances and the allocation of specific resources.

National governments must:

1. Redefine traditional productive structures and encourage the organic insertion of new generations into the national labor market;
2. Simplify youth citizen participation processes at a national level, avoiding technicalities and excessive formalities;

3. Dignify and professionalize social work and youth volunteering processes through compensation mechanisms;
4. Consolidate clear routes for the implementation of environmental responsibility policies in all sectors, and especially from environmental education;
5. Renew the regulatory framework for sustainable mobility in the country and develop awareness campaigns;
6. Improve and systematize water management policies at a national level.

Intergovernmental organizations must:

1. Be interlocutors in the search for solutions of common interest between the public and private sectors and the population in relation to Sustainable Urban Development;
2. Promote international cooperation and the harmonization of regional policies around sustainable urban planning and collaborative governance;
3. Encourage the exchange of knowledge and experiences between different countries, regions and cities;
4. Mobilize financial resources and provide technical assistance to support local projects, especially for the youth population.

United Nations must:

1. Provide technical and financial support and advice on sustainable urban planning to public administrations, civil society and the private sector;
2. Ensure the inclusion of youth in city systems, especially those located in subnormal neighborhoods or on the outskirts, by promoting their human rights;
3. Promote the creation of international networks of sustainable cities, where the city can share experiences and learn from others;
4. Lead global initiatives for the exchange of good practices in sustainable urban planning and facilitate access to financing for youth projects;
5. Facilitate access to international funds for youth projects of social and environmental innovation;
6. Promote and strengthen projects such as the Young Gamechangers Initiative (YGI) in its outreach capacity.

Civil society must:

1. Promote mobile and interactive cities, articulating spaces for meeting, dialogue and decision-making throughout the city, such as Community Development Centers (CDC);
2. Seek respect for the various population groups and the recognition of their positions in city systems;
3. Naturalize environmental care from daily activities and a sense of belonging;
4. Mobilize community initiatives with socio-environmental impact, which recognize ecosystemic connections in the city, and influence the participatory budget;
5. Consolidate itself as a key partner in the co-creation of public policies around urban planning, from the design phase to its implementation and evaluation;
6. Collaborate on applied research projects with the Academy and train professionals capable of facing urban challenges.

Private sector must:

1. Comply with the parameters and regulations regarding sustainability and incorporate them into their industrial, productive and organizational processes, to protect the city ecosystem through the implementation of environmental policies;
2. Incorporate the skills and abilities of the new generations into organizational dynamics;
3. Encourage alternative mobility through innovation and re-education;
4. Incorporate resilient practices into urban projects;
5. Apply digital tools that facilitate comprehensive development such as agriculture, transportation and planning;
6. Make socially responsible investments, with the creation of green jobs and the adoption of sustainable consumption practices.

CLOSURE:

As a consolidation, the recommendations and objectives of the youth are presented to localize the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda in Armenia, Quindío, Colombia. We are ready and willing to partner with our local governments and other stakeholders to join forces in building more inclusive and sustainable cities and communities. We call on local governments and authorities to take urgent action to ensure that our voices are heard and actions are taken seriously. As young and responsible citizens who have already been working hard to improve our cities, we commit to continue being part of the implementation of the action points outlined in this “DeclarACTION”.

PRESENTED BY:

Participants of the Forum “Thinking, existing and living: let’s create our cities of the future together” in Armenia, Quindío, Colombia.