



Statement by Kadir Topbas, Mayor of Istanbul and President of UCLG

**World Humanitarian Summit
(Venue ICC, Monday 23 May time TBC to be confirmed by UN Habitat)**

**“Political Leadership to Prevent and End Conflicts” (Core responsibility 1.
Agenda for Humanity)**

***Provide strong leadership in addressing causes of conflict while
strengthening tools and partnerships to prevent conflicts from breaking
out, escalating or re-emerging.***

Local authorities, and cities in particular, have first-hand experience of conflict prevention and resolution as well as of peacekeeping. Indeed, regardless of the nature of the conflict (economic, political, religious or cultural), local governments have a responsibility to safeguard the well-being of their citizens and to promote sustainable development in their territories. Local governments ensure that services are delivered to citizens notwithstanding any crises that may unfold. They must therefore ensure there is order and cohesion within their territory and are required to manage various types of conflicts that may arise between different interest groups and communities.

Local governments promote and facilitate peace, freedom, democracy and prosperity by developing public policies that allow the territory to tackle any constraints (social, economic, natural, demographic/migratory) it experiences in a sustainable way.

The capacity of local governments to act is linked to their legitimacy and proximity to citizens. Local elected officials understand their citizens’ needs and are in a unique position to respond to them during crises.

City diplomacy is a viable and effective alternative to preventing violent conflicts and has led UCLG to identify the role that local governments can play in consolidating peace as a priority for the organisation. A committee dedicated to city diplomacy, cooperation and development has also been set up, and various initiatives have already taken place. In June 2008, UCLG organised the First World Conference on City Diplomacy, which led to the adoption of The Hague Agenda on City Diplomacy. UCLG also launched the first Peace Prize for local governments, to be awarded during the organisation’s Congress in Bogotá in October.

However, effective decentralisation and self-government are needed for local governments to implement public policies and strategies on territorial diplomacy and to allow them to play their part in consolidating peace.

Therefore, recognising the commitment of local governments and their associations in working towards peace, freedom and democracy and the fundamental role they play in peacekeeping and conflict prevention, management and resolution; and within the framework of the World Humanitarian Summit and Agenda for Humanity, with relation to “political leadership to prevent and end conflicts”, UCLG:

- *undertakes to support the leadership and political commitment of local governments at all stages in a crisis to prevent an outbreak or resumption of conflict;*
- *undertakes to tackle the root causes of conflicts and to work on reducing the vulnerability of cities by investing in the development of inclusive and peaceful societies;*

In addition, UCLG:

- *undertakes to promote the culture of peace and coexistence between communities through its members in all world regions and particularly in areas where certain countries are experiencing structural fragility;*
- *aims to further strengthen the role of local governments in promoting peace and stability and in preventing and resolving violent conflicts through advocacy, the sharing of best practices and peer-to-peer learning. These activities will be promoted within the Committee on Development Cooperation and City Diplomacy and as part of the Global Alliance for Urban Crises.*