

# Urban Peace Dialogues

## When Mayors Become Architects of Peace

### An official UNECE Forum of Mayors side event

The United States Mission to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva, the City Diplomacy Lab at Columbia Global Centers | Paris, the Nicosia Initiative promoted by the European Committee of the Regions, and the European and French Chapters of Mayors for Peace are hosting an official side event to the 2023 UNECE Forum of Mayors.

The "Urban Peace Dialogues: When Mayors Become Architects of Peace" round table is scheduled for October 3 from 13:15 to 14:45 at the H200 auditorium at the Palace of Nations in Geneva. As the title suggests, the event's primary goal is to initiate a global conversation to identify and discuss the unique added value of mayors and municipalities in achieving and maintaining peace and stability.

"Cities bring unique contributions to peace that complement those of nations, international organizations, as well as academia and the not-for-profit and business sectors," said Columbia Global Centers | Paris Director Brunhilde Biebuyck.

City Diplomacy Lab Director Lorenzo Kihlgren Grandi said: "Everywhere in the world, more and more cities are no longer just theaters of confrontation and armed violence, but laboratories in which the culture of peace is embodied in participatory actions of dialogue, stability, and reconciliation. In a global context of seemingly inexorable geopolitical deterioration, cities provide the necessary evidence that the will for peace is deeply embedded in urban communities worldwide."

"The world faces challenges of enormous complexity that require a global and multidisciplinary approach. Cities play a decisive role in this process. Their closeness to citizenship, their experience of networking with civil society organizations, and their deep knowledge of urban settings where they can

perform concrete actions make them the ideal scenario to promote a culture of peace," said Alba Barnusell, Mayor of Granollers (Spain) and Chair of Mayors for Peace's European Chapter. Mr. Philippe Rio, Mayors of Grigny and Chair of Mayors for Peace's French Chapter, declared: "Mayors and local decision-makers are closest to the issues facing their residents and can choose to spread the culture of peace and ensure the safety of their constituents."

The coordinator of the Nicosia initiative, Benedetta Oddo, reported from experience in Libya: "The cities demonstrate that any kind of conflict and divergence can be contained by the complicity that is created around common interests, rather than by solidarity, which always implies a kind of inequality between peers. The pragmatism suggested to mayors and local administrators by their proximity to people's problems is a powerful vaccine for preventing violence".

Moreover, the event intends to kickstart a global review of the role of cities in the achievement of SDG 16 and their consequential integration in international efforts for peaceful coexistence.

The goals of the event include:

- To foster multilevel dialogue on urban violence and conflict prevention.
- To raise awareness related to the innovative value of conflict prevention practices in urban areas.
- To create a united front of cities actively involved in participatory conflict prevention practices.

## **Program**

Date: October 3, 2023, at 13:25 – 14:35 CEST

Place: H200 Auditorium, Palace of Nations, Geneva

Opening remarks:

- **Mr. Peter B. Kahn**, Associate Deputy Assistant Secretary, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

Round table:

- **Ms. Alba Barnusell**, Mayor of Granollers and Chair of Mayors for Peace's European Chapter
- **Mr. Mathias De Clercq**, Mayor of Ghent and Vice President of Eurocities
- **Mr. Albertino Ramaël**, Deputy Mayor of Vitry-sur-Seine and representative of Mayors for Peace's French Chapter
- **Mr. Ricardo Rio**, Mayor of Braga
- **Ms. Katrin Stjernfeldt Jammeh**, Mayor of Malmö
- **Mr. Erion Veliaj**, Mayor of Tirana (TBC)

Q&A session, opened by **Ms. Benedetta Oddo**, Coordinator, Nicosia Initiative

Closing remarks:

- **Dr. Lorenzo Kihlgren Grandi**, Founding Director, City Diplomacy Lab

Language: English

To participate, please register at: [forumofmayors.unece.org](https://forumofmayors.unece.org)

This event stands in continuity with the "[Cities: From Theaters of War to Actors for Peace](#)" roundtable, an official parallel event of the 2022 Forum of Mayors (Palais des Nations, Geneva, April 5, 2022), co-hosted by the U.S. Mission and the City Diplomacy Lab, among others.

**Note to editors** <https://unece.org/housing/committee>

### **About the U.S. Mission to the United Nations in Geneva**

The United States Mission to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva advances U.S. policy on the front lines of multilateral diplomacy at over 100 international organizations in Geneva. U.S. Mission personnel engage daily on issues as diverse as refugee crises, global health, international law, economic development, trade, the environment, arms control, and human rights.

For further information on the U.S. Mission to the United Nations in Geneva, please visit <https://geneva.usmission.gov/>

## **About the City Diplomacy Lab**

Launched in September 2021, the City Diplomacy Lab is a special project of Columbia Global Centers | Paris. The Lab fosters the understanding and practice of city diplomacy, intended as a collaborative tool to promote sustainable development and peace.

The Lab's work, which includes applied research, capacity building, and event organization, has been officially recognized by the United Nations Regional Commission for Europe (UNECE) and awarded the designation of Center of Excellence on City Diplomacy and Sustainable Urban Development.

For further information on CDL, please visit <https://www.citydiplomacylab.net/>

## **About Columbia Global Centers | Paris**

For nearly sixty years, Columbia University students and faculty have come to study, teach, or pursue their research at Reid Hall, an exceptional space in the world of international education and cultural exchange. Our public events draw on the rich resources of the Columbia campus and our local partners, creating a "third space" of intellectual exploration and research that resists easy categorization. Our workshops, lectures, and performances bring together a diverse audience to address pressing issues through creative, rigorous, and open dialogue.

Today, Reid Hall is home to several Columbia University initiatives: Columbia Global Centers | Paris, Columbia Undergraduate Programs, M.A. in History and Literature, Columbia's architecture program, and the Institute for Ideas and Imagination. This unique combination of resources is enhanced by our global network, whose mission is to expand the University's engagement the world over through educational programs, research collaborations, regional partnerships, and public events.

For further information about Columbia Global Centers | Paris, please visit <https://globalcenters.columbia.edu/paris>

## **About the Nicosia Initiative**

Initiated at the ARLEM (Euro Mediterranean Assembly of Regional and Local Authorities) Plenary session in Nicosia in January 2016, the Nicosia Initiative is the European Committee of the Region's platform aimed at strengthening local administrations in Libya, in times where they play a key role in providing basic services to their citizens helping Country stability in its delicate transitional phase. With the financial support of the European Commission and other partners (including the key contribution of the Italian Ministry of Interior and the Region of Flanders), the Nicosia Initiative matches the needs of Libyan municipalities with support offered by European cities and regions, with the aim of creating mutually beneficial and sustainable partnerships and improving living conditions of Libyan citizens by strengthening administrative capacity, improving the delivery of public services, and fostering economic development at local level.

For further information on the Nicosia Initiative, please visit <https://cor.europa.eu/en/our-work/Pages/Libya.aspx>

## **About Mayors for Peace — European and French Chapters**

Mayors for Peace is a worldwide organization of more than 8,250 member cities devoted to achieving peace, disarmament, and the elimination of nuclear weapons. The Mayors for Peace Secretariat is led by President Matsui Kazumi, Mayor of Hiroshima, and Vice President Shiro Suzuki, Mayor of Nagasaki.

It is registered as an NGO in Special Consultative Status with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

Mayors for Peace Europe was established in 2019 in order to promote local government cooperation in Europe, regional advocacy, and knowledge sharing towards peace, disarmament, and human rights. It is led by the Executive Board, and the Secretariat is based in the City of Granollers (Spain).

Mayors for Peace France was established in 1997 as the first national branch of the network. As a network of local authorities, Mayors for Peace France aims to promote the emergence of a Culture of Peace in the French public arena. Today, its Chair is Philippe Rio, Mayor of Grigny.

For further information on Mayors for Peace, please visit:

<https://www.mayorsforpeace.org/en/>

<https://afcdrp.com/>