

The Hangzhou Statement of the Members of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities

Preamble

We, the mayors, deputy mayors, educational executives and representatives of the member cities of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC) have gathered here in Hangzhou, China, on 15 and 16 November 2016 on the occasion of the First Members' Meeting of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities. We recognize the crucial role that cities and local communities play in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as outlined in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11 ('Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable').

We acknowledge that lifelong learning is fundamental to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Education and lifelong learning are at the centre of SDG 4 ('Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all'); however, it also intersects the sixteen other goals in the Agenda. Putting education and lifelong learning at the centre of building inclusive sustainable cities and local communities will therefore not only improve local living conditions, but contribute to sustainable nations and regions and to global development.

Reaffirming our commitment to the UNESCO GNLC

We acknowledge the important role the UNESCO GNLC plays in helping cities to effectively mobilize sector-wide resources to promote lifelong learning for all citizens. As members of the UNESCO GNLC, we believe that learning from other cities, sharing and collaborating are central to advancing our agendas in implementing lifelong learning for inclusive and sustainable development in our communities. We are committed to staying up-to-date with our progress, sharing success

stories, collectively dealing with challenges encountered and lessons learned, collaborating on common issues, and advocating the continuous implementation of lifelong learning in our countries and regions.

Our road map

As we reflect on the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities Guiding Documents¹, which consist of the Beijing Declaration on Building Learning Cities and the Key Features of Learning Cities, and the Guidelines for Building Learning Cities, we reaffirm our commitment to pursuing the strategic approaches and recommended action points that support their implementation.

We also reaffirm the Mexico City Statement on Sustainable Learning Cities² (2015), which outlines the directions that need to be taken to maintain a sustainable learning city and the important role learning cities play in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

We recognise the relevance of learning cities to the New Urban Agenda, which was adopted at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) on 20 October 2016 in an effort to formulate a global direction towards achieving sustainable urban development.

We will draw on the progress we have made and the lessons we have learned to implement concrete actions in the areas that were specified in the meeting; these include:

¹ UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities Guiding Documents: <http://www.uil.unesco.org/lifelong-learning/project/unesco-global-network-learning-cities-guiding-document>

² Mexico City Statement on Sustainable Learning Cities: <http://www.uil.unesco.org/lifelong-learning/project/mexico-city-statement-sustainable-learning-cities-o>

Distributing learning resources evenly between urban and rural areas

Many people living in rural areas, especially those on the outskirts of major cities, experience a lack of systematic and collaborative approaches to learning; consideration should therefore be given to ensuring they have access to quality educational opportunities. Points to consider in this respect include infrastructure; citizens' mobility; increased availability of education providers and learning centres; and provision of delivery systems for learning materials, including information and communication technology (ICTs).

We will engage with and encourage cross-sector stakeholders to provide equal and quality learning opportunities to citizens in rural areas, a step towards guaranteeing the universal right of every resident to learning opportunities.

Monitoring progress in developing learning cities

Building a sustainable learning city requires a pragmatic and multidisciplinary approach. Monitoring and reporting on the progress of building a learning city is necessary to transform political and theoretical discourse into concrete strategies and approaches and to evaluate the benefits of the strategies put into place. Performance indicators are essential to this process; together with other stakeholders, universities can play a key role in the monitoring process. We also call upon UNESCO to support this process.

The list of Key Features of Learning Cities is a normative instrument for measuring the development of learning cities. The Key Features of Learning Cities also provide a valuable reference that can support the implementation of the SDGs at a local level, particularly from the lifelong learning perspective. We will use this tool to transform our political commitments and good intentions into effective actions and measures.

Better use of ICTs to develop learning cities

Learners need equal access to learning resources. Flexible and accessible learning opportunities, including ICTs, can facilitate this and transform communities into knowledge-building hubs. ICT and online learning can motivate learners, promote quality and effective learning, and help deliver services more efficiently.

We are determined to develop ICT-based learning tools such as online tutorials, electronic libraries, mobile courses and participatory planning. Collaboration and sharing good practice enables us to meet the learning needs of all citizens, in particular those of marginalized groups, and to transform our communities into learning and innovation hubs.

Developing a legal framework for the learning city

Using a legal framework to integrate and strengthen national education policies enables countries to better implement lifelong learning at the national, provincial and municipal levels. The engagement of national governments in promoting learning cities is therefore crucial for success.

A legal framework on any level can be the turning point in making lifelong learning a general organizing principle for formal, non-formal and informal learning. Cities can use the framework to develop various lifelong learning opportunities and resources.

We are determined to work collaboratively and on multiple levels across sectors to build legal and strategic frameworks for mobilizing lifelong learning resources and providing learning opportunities.

The way forward

In addressing the above points, we will work towards our major milestones collectively through the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC).

We undertake to:

- regularly report our progress and achievements; we welcome representatives from the member cities to use the third International Conference on Learning Cities (ICLC) in Cork, Ireland, in 2017 as the initial opportunity to do this;
- initiate intersectoral approaches to local lifelong strategies; and
- further strengthen the network using regional, sub-regional and partner city-led approaches to cooperation.

We acknowledge Hangzhou as the host city of the meeting and recognize its innovativeness and achievements in promoting sustainable development through lifelong learning and transforming a remarkable historical and cultural city with stunning scenery into a learning city.

We are grateful for the generous hospitality by and great organizational work of the Hangzhou Municipal Government in hosting this meeting. We would also like to express our appreciation to the National Commission of the People's Republic of China for UNESCO for its great support in organizing this meeting, and to UIL for its continuous engagement in supporting growth activities for the learning city network.

In conclusion, we pledge to provide our full support during the preparations for the third International Conference on Learning Cities and to embrace it as a compelling platform for learning cities as strong transformers in the realization of sustainable development.

Hangzhou, 16 November 2016

UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities

'Lifelong learning for all is our city's future'

For more information on the UNESCO GNLC's work and joining the network, please visit

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