

“Governing the city by human rights objectives: Management concepts and instruments”

OUTCOME DOCUMENT

of “Human Rights Go Local: What Works” – Academy and Conference on Human Rights at the Local and Regional Levels, 1-8 February 2023.

7 February 2023

We, the participants of the third Academy and Conference on Human Rights at the Local and Regional Levels,

inviting all actors to commemorate in 2023 the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 30th anniversary of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action,

referring to work done by

the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, who has adopted the Global call against Racism, developed a Roadmap against Racism and Discrimination providing a strategic and operational framework using human rights-based approaches to design, plan, implement, and monitor antiracism and antidiscrimination efforts, organises the annual Global Forum against Racism and Discrimination that shapes the direction, implementation, and monitoring of efforts to thwart these social ills, and collaborates with a gamut of partners, including at the local level, through the International Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable Cities, where a series of policy dialogues related to legal and institutional antiracism and antidiscrimination frameworks is being conducted,

the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, who has promoted dialogue among local governments and their involvement in human rights mechanisms, fostered spaces for knowledge sharing, provided with guidance documents for promoting human rights in the public sector, including through governments budgets, increased efforts for raising awareness on human rights issues at the local level through advocacy notes and other resources, and contributed to building capacity of local authorities and other local actors on human rights, including through its field presences,



the United Nations Human Settlements Programme promoting socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities, reducing inequality, discrimination, and poverty, and fostering transformative change in cities and human settlements through knowledge, policy advice, technical assistance, and collaborative action, and by focussing particularly on the New Urban Agenda, Voluntary Local Reviews, the localisation of the Sustainable Development Goals, multi-level governance, and rights-based legislation,”

the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe in assisting local and regional governments in implementing a human rights-based approach to local governance by promoting awareness among elected representatives of their responsibilities with regard to human rights, by encouraging training for national, as well as local authorities in the field of human rights, and by disseminating information among citizens about their rights,

the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, who has developed a Framework for Human Rights Cities and an accompanying practical guidance on how to become and function as a human rights city, and who is convinced that implementing this framework can foster a culture of rights locally, assist mayors and local administrations in integrating human and fundamental rights in their work, increase participation of rights-holders, and encourage cooperation with civil society in human rights,

- a. aware that human rights standards and principles impose obligations on all tiers of government, which extend to public management processes and the way governments raise, allocate, and spend public funds, as well as evaluate their use,
- b. recalling that the international human rights framework, as well as the principles of effective governance, including transparency, responsiveness, rule of law, stability, equity, and inclusiveness, empowerment, and broad-based effective participation for all, should be the normative starting point for government bodies in the design and implementation of programmes, services, and budget allocations,
- c. recalling that human rights standards and principles are applicable to all public authorities' work, including to services that are contracted externally through service providers and procurement,
- d. recognising that discrimination, including racial discrimination, is one of the manifestations of the denial of human rights, and that governance should therefore integrate policies and mechanisms to combat discrimination in all its forms,
- e. recognising that robust legislative frameworks must match the prevailing urban reality, and that rights-based legislation is needed to create fair, predictable, and effective legal instruments that guarantee the inclusion of the interests, needs, and experiences of all city residents, particularly those at risk of marginalisation, while also providing a catalyst for local and national discourse,
- f. acknowledging that local governments are increasingly showing leadership in promoting human rights by adopting Human Rights City declarations and other

- commitments in line with their shared obligation with national governments to respect, protect, and fulfil human rights,
- g. recalling that cities, local and regional governments worldwide are using Voluntary Local Reviews as instruments to track and report on the Sustainable Development Goals progress which are powerful accelerators of the process of localising human rights,
 - h. acknowledging that embedding human rights in public management processes and instruments is an effective means for local governments to implement their human rights obligations and commitments,
 - i. recognising that such local implementation is enabled and enhanced if supported by national frameworks and coordinated among different territorial levels,
 - j. convinced of the importance of integrating human rights objectives into the governance practices of local authorities,
 - k. considering that embedding human rights in public management helps to mobilise locally elected representatives and staff of local administrations towards common goals,
 - l. convinced that embedding human rights in local public management requires building the capacity of locally elected officials and local government staff, and raising awareness of how they can promote human rights in their daily work,
 - m. convinced that the application of human rights-based management tools and approaches can help to make human rights an everyday management practice and improve the delivery and quality public services,
 - n. recognising that human rights-based management tools can help measure progress towards the realisation of human rights and thereby make it more visible,
 - o. emphasising that human rights-based management tools are a means of fostering transparency, tracking, and ensuring accountability for human rights, and, thus, helping to build rights-holders' trust in locally elected representatives and local administrations,
 - p. emphasising that decision-making approaches in local public management, including budgeting, are of particular importance, and ultimately determine whether and to what extent relevant human rights obligations are met or not,
 - q. recalling that the concepts of progressive realisation and non-retrogression, appropriate and adequate allocation for immediate realisation, and the use of maximum available resources are essential for human rights realisation,
 - r. recalling that the local budget is an essential element for assessing the local government's efforts to realise human rights,
 - s. convinced that a human rights-based budgeting strategy will assist governments to effectively use their resources, including by setting priorities appropriately, for the realisation of human rights at the local level,

- t. highlighting the need for local authorities to be equipped with adequate resources to fulfil their responsibilities,
- u. emphasising that human rights-based management tools, such as participatory budgeting mechanisms, that impact on the formulation, approval, implementation, and evaluation of the local budget are specifically suited to help improve programme development and service delivery,
- v. acknowledging that many local governments have already gained valuable experience in implementing management approaches that are explicitly based on human rights or build on human rights principles,
- w. welcoming in particular those management approaches that have a tangible impact on the allocation of the local budget in all areas of local government,
- x. acknowledging that those local governments that already have human rights embedded in their public management systems are a source of inspiration, best practice, and experience sharing for other local governments around the world,
- y. underlining that local authorities that place human rights at the core of budgetary and further managerial decision-making position themselves as human rights leaders,
- z. underlining that according to increasing practice the benefits of human rights-based management tools outweigh their additional administrative effort,
- aa. noting that management structures and procedures vary at the local level, and efforts to embed human rights therein are diverse, and, thus, require a tailored approach,
- bb. noting that local authorities are the governance units closest to the residents, and, therefore, in an excellent position to effectively embed human rights in their management processes and instruments in a context-appropriate manner,
- cc. convinced that seeking and using rights-holders' knowledge and solutions will increase ownership and, ultimately, the sustainability of local interventions,
- dd. acknowledging that effective participation is a foundation to human rights-based public management,
- ee. recognising that local ownership and the sharing of specific knowledge and solutions can only be ensured if the voices of those most at risk of being excluded from decision-making are adequately considered through inclusive and participatory governance processes,
- ff. highlighting the necessity to consider the interests and views of young people by promoting inclusive and participatory governance processes,
- gg. recognising that an ever-growing number of international city networks or associations of cities are coming together to work collaboratively, and to learn from one another, and are becoming powerful global agenda setters, elevating and amplifying the voices of city leaders, and city residents, in the promotion of human rights,

- hh. acknowledging the strong support provided by organisations and actors to local governments to develop and adopt human rights-based management approaches, such as the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, UN-Habitat, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the World Organization of United Cities and Local Governments,
- ii. affirming that a multi-level governance approach is crucial in governing by human rights objectives locally,
- jj. intending to strengthen cooperation between existing efforts of local governments worldwide, including the creation of appropriate platforms, to base local public management on human rights standards and principles in a spirit of global solidarity,

encourage local level governments worldwide to

1. embed and highlight human rights in their public management systems with a view to govern by human rights objectives and fulfil their human rights obligations,
2. make an informed and explicit commitment to a human rights-based public management system that shall provide a continuous basis for respecting, protecting, and promoting human rights and good governance in local administrative practice,
3. seek inspiration and practical guidance from other actors at the local, regional, national, and international levels on how to integrate human rights objectives into local public management systems,
4. draw on the findings of human rights research on the local level, on inputs provided by civic and youth engagement, as well as on lessons learnt of all tiers of government to find the most appropriate solution on how to incorporate human rights into local public management, and share promising practices among peers, at regional, national, and international levels, as well as within networks and international fora,
5. train the representatives of local governments, the local governments' future leadership, local administration, as well as front-line public servants in contact with rights-holders in the appropriate use of human rights management tools, and inform the civil society, the youth as the next generation experts, as well as the public on their role and function in human rights-based governance,
6. provide for inclusive and participatory local governance and respective capacity building in order to leave no one behind, to guarantee meaningful participation of rights-holders, and to duly consider the views and perspectives of the youth,

7. empower children and the youth to make their voices heard in local governance processes through citizenship and human rights education in formal and informal settings,
8. integrate a human rights-based approach in the decision-making processes on the raising, allocation, and spending of funds, as well as in the procedures for auditing and evaluating the budgets,
9. establish transparent administrative procedures that openly communicate to the public the outcomes intended by the local policies, specify in which way human rights are taken into consideration, and indicate which resources are used for their achievement,
10. include in the public management system accountability procedures that allow for an assessment of the efforts and achievements in the realisation of human rights,
11. seek the support of civil society, academia, National Human Rights Institutions, youth as the next generation of human rights experts, community leaders, and other relevant actors to review and assess the achievements of human rights-based local governance, and to further refine existing approaches as appropriate,
12. apply a multi-level governance approach and build alliances at local, regional, national, and international levels, foster knowledge-sharing, join existing networks, and seek exchanges with peers, regional, national, and international actors and organisations, as well as with civil society, academia, and actors of the private sector, with a view to base local public administration more strongly on human rights standards and principles worldwide.