

“Accountability in Action: Human Rights Action Plans of Local Governments”

OUTCOME DOCUMENT

of “Human Rights Go Local: What Works” – Academy and Conference on Human Rights at the
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We, the participants of the fourth Academy and Conference on Human Rights at the
Local and Regional Levels,

referring to the work done by

the *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)*, which,
in line with the Global Call against Racism and the UNESCO Roadmap against Racism
and Discrimination, promotes antiracism and antidiscrimination efforts based on human
rights principles and standards and a stronger science-society-policy nexus through inter
alia the annual Global Forum against Racism and Discrimination – a multistakeholder
space to foster dialogue, experience-sharing and effective solutions to these social ills –,
the International Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable Cities, the Network of Anti-Racism
and Anti-Discrimination Officials, the Writers against Racism Network, and the new
Programme on freedom and safety of scientists,

the *Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)*, 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 government 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 and
regional authorities and other local actors on human rights, including through its field
presences,



the *United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)* mandated by the UN General Assembly to promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities, being the focal point for all urbanization and human settlement matters within the UN system, working with partners to build inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities and communities, promoting urbanization as a positive transformative force for people and communities, reducing inequality, discrimination and poverty, and working in over 90 countries using a human rights-based, gender-responsive approach to promote transformative change in cities and human settlements through knowledge, policy advice, technical assistance and collaborative action,

the *Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe*, that adopted a Human Rights Strategy in October 2023 that promotes full enjoyment of human rights by all citizens in European cities, communities and regions; as well as adopted a recommendation on the localisation of Sustainable Development Goals in March 2023, which can be used as a tool to promote human rights at local level, fight against discrimination and for gender equality, promote and strengthen local and regional governance, public ethics, citizen participation, migration management and social inclusion,

the *United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCLG Africa)*, being the umbrella organization for African Local and Regional Governments (LRGs) and gathering 54 National and Regional Associations of LRGs from all regions of Africa, as well as 2,000 cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants, representing over 350 million African citizens, building on its founding values, namely respect for human dignity, equality and promotion of human rights and liberties, respect for the equality of peoples, gender equality, respect for democratic principles, the rule of law and good governance, and respect of the principle of social justice, pursuing its vision to build African Unity, and acting on its main pillars of action, namely advocacy, capacity building, and human capital empowerment through its Academy ALGA, technical assistance, knowledge sharing, resource mobilisation, and promotion of partnerships with all actors and stakeholders, including with the International Centre for the Promotion of Human Rights at the Local and Regional Levels under the Auspices of UNESCO since 2017,

- a. *recalling* that the obligations stemming from international human rights treaties and customary international law are a common concern and shared responsibility of all levels of government,
- b. *echoing* the call of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights for a human rights economy seeking to redress root causes and structural barriers to equality, justice, and sustainability, by prioritizing investment also in economic, social and cultural rights,
- c. *underlining* that human rights action plans can demonstrate a local governments' commitment to its international obligations and respect for the rule of law, also



showing both domestic and international audiences that it takes the New Urban Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals seriously,

- d. *stressing* that human rights action plans can offer a sound framework for holding local governments accountable to their decentralized human rights obligations,
- e. *reiterating* the critical role of international city networks, such as UNESCO's International Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable Cities (ICCAR) and its 'Ten Point Action Plan' in fostering local government accountability,
- f. *welcoming* that local governments are increasingly playing a leading role in bringing about positive and sustainable changes in society by adopting human rights action plans in accordance with their shared obligations to respect, protect and fulfil human rights,
- g. *recalling* the need for a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and related agendas,
- h. *affirming* that a multi-level governance approach has a positive impact on the implementation of local human rights action plans,
- i. *recognizing* that aligning local action plans with national and international action plans increases their effectiveness and coherence and makes them more likely to be implemented and achieve the intended impact,
- j. *stressing* that local human rights action plans may inform related action plans at higher tiers of government,
- k. *noting* that local governments are the governance units closest to inhabitants and thus in an excellent position to effectively adopt and implement context-appropriate human rights action plans,
- l. *acknowledging* that responses to human rights challenges vary at the local level and that human rights action plans therefore need to be tailored to the specific context,
- m. *noting* the valuable contribution that research on human rights at the local level can make, if conducted freely and without undue interference, towards evidence-based human rights action plans tailored to the needs of rights-holders,
- n. *convinced* that seeking and utilizing the perspectives of all rights holders, especially those most at risk of exclusion, in the development of local human rights action plans will ensure that policies better reflect the needs and rights of all inhabitants,
- o. *highlighting* the importance of including the interests and perspectives of all inhabitants in local human rights action plans, and of ensuring that participation in their development is accessible for all parts of the urban community,



- p. *recognizing* that human rights action plans of local governments clarify the priorities of their human rights policies and objectives within their de-centralized competences and in light of their shared international obligations, including from the New Urban Agenda, and the 2023 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals,
- q. *acknowledging* that human rights action plans of local governments mobilize local actors, including local authorities, civil society, academia, the private sector, and the population concerned, towards common objectives,
- r. *recognizing* that action plans for human rights at the local level may vary in scope and may thus focus on a specific topic or may be comprehensive programmes,
- s. *acknowledging* that the international human rights framework and the principles of effective governance, such as competence, sound policymaking, collaboration, accountability, integrity, transparency, independent oversight, leaving no one behind, non-discrimination, participation, subsidiarity, and intergenerational equity, should serve as a normative starting point for local government bodies in developing action plans to respect, protect, and fulfil human rights,
- t. *recognising* that discrimination, including racial discrimination, is a denial of human rights, and that local governments should therefore incorporate anti-discrimination policies and mechanisms into their human rights action plans,
- u. *underlining* that local human rights action plans, by setting specific objectives, targets, indicators, and establishing modalities for monitoring, evaluating and reporting can provide a structured and systematic approach to promoting and protecting human rights.
- v. *acknowledging* that human rights action plans of local governments can help identify and address both, systemic and structural human rights issues,
- w. *convinced* that human rights action plans can help local governments to use their resources efficiently by setting appropriate priorities responding to the needs of the inhabitants and thus ensuring that the funds are directed where they are most urgently needed,
- x. *underlining* that local human rights action plans contribute to the consistent integration of human rights considerations across all relevant departments and policies,
- y. *convinced* that local human rights action plans help to make human rights an everyday management practice, and improve the delivery and quality of public services,
- z. *acknowledging* that local human rights action plans, especially those with well-defined objectives and indicators, can provide a framework for monitoring the progressive realization of human rights,



- aa. *highlighting* the benefits of local human rights action plans in promoting transparency and accountability in respect of human rights, thereby building the trust of all rights-holders in locally elected representatives and local administrations,
- bb. *convinced* that local action plans are an important instrument to ensure effective governance, raise awareness of human rights among policy-makers, officials and the general public, can serve as an educational tool and can promote a culture of rights and responsibilities,
- cc. *recognizing* the importance of developing, building and strengthening local governments' capacities and capabilities and encouraging innovation in the development and implementation of human rights action plans,
- dd. *highlighting* the importance of providing adequate resources to local governments to enable them to successfully implement their human rights action plans,
- ee. *acknowledging* that many local governments have already gained valuable experience in implementing local action plans that are explicitly based on human rights,
- ff. *acknowledging* that local governments that have already adopted human rights action plans can serve as a source of inspiration and best practices for other local governments around the world,
- gg. *emphasizing* the importance of investing in peer review and peer learning among local governments to share knowledge, methods and best practices, learn from each other, collaborate, build partnerships and work together to implement human rights at the local level,
- hh. *reiterating* 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 inhabitants, in the promotion of human rights,
- ii. *acknowledging* the strong support provided by organisations and actors to local governments to develop and adopt human rights action plans, such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UN-Habitat, the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, the World Organization of United Cities and Local Governments and its seven Regional Sections, and the International Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable Cities,
- jj. *intending* to strengthen existing efforts of local governments worldwide in a spirit of global solidarity to adopt and implement human rights action plans as a tool to promote local government accountability,



encourage local level governments worldwide to

1. *adopt* a Human Rights Action Plan with smart objectives that make human rights a fundamental component of their governance and demonstrates their commitment to fulfilling shared international obligations,
2. *localize* the Sustainable Development Goals and international human rights standards to the needs and opportunities of the population, stakeholders and local governments in the local Human Rights Action Plan to ensure their effective implementation,
3. *align* the local Human Rights Action Plan with the relevant strategies, programmes and plans of action at all relevant levels of government and to push for the adoption of such action programmes where they do not already exist at those levels,
4. *utilize* the findings of research on human rights at the local level to develop relevant Human Rights Action Plans that are tailored to the needs of all rights-holders,
5. *apply* a whole-of-the-city approach by involving all relevant local departments and stakeholders in the preparation and implementation of the Human Rights Action Plan, and to clearly define the roles that leadership, the local administration, front-line public servants, local stakeholders and the population at large play in these processes,
6. *seek* inspiration and practical guidance from other actors at the local, regional, national, and international levels, on how to effectively elaborate and implement Human Rights Action Plans within local government structures to foster accountability,
7. *utilize* participatory governance processes to enable all right-holders, particularly those most at risk of being excluded, to actively participate in identifying the needs and priorities for the Human Rights Action Plan, thereby increasing accountability,
8. *align* the local Human Rights Action Plan with the substantive and procedural requirements of a human rights economy as they apply to this level of governance and thus contribute to strengthening accountability through human rights-compliant budget allocations and expenditures,
9. *train* local policy makers, local government staff and future leaders in the development and implementation of the Human Rights Action Plan and to inform civil society and affected populations about their role in Human Rights Action Plans with the goal of strengthening local accountability,
10. *provide* the local Human Rights Action Plan with the human, financial and technical resources required to operate as a sustainable basis for the respect, protection and fulfilment of human rights, while fostering the accountability of local governments,



11. *monitor* the implementation of the Human Rights Action Plan to assess progress and results in the realization of human rights, which is an essential component of local accountability,
12. *set* a clear timeframe for the implementation of the Human Rights Action Plan and to commit to reviewing it regularly in the light of monitoring results, taking into account the progressive realisation of economic, social and cultural rights alongside civil and political rights.
13. *share* effective methods for developing, monitoring, and updating Human Rights Action Plans with peers at the local, national, and international levels, as well as through networks and fora,
14. *form* alliances at the local, regional, national, and international levels, encourage knowledge-sharing, join existing networks, and seek exchanges with peers, regional, national, and international actors and organisations, as well as civil society, academia, and private-sector actors, to promote accountability through Human Rights Action Plans around the world.

