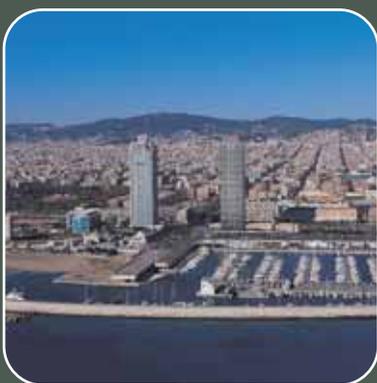


Decentralization and Local Democracy in the World



2007 First
Global
Report

United Cities and Local Governments
Cités et Gouvernements Locaux Unis
Ciudades y Gobiernos Locales Unidos

Decentralization and Local Democracy in the World

First UCLG Global Report



Coordinated by the Research Network
on Local Government in Europe (GRALE)

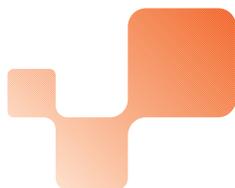
GRALE

under the scientific direction of Gérard Marcou,
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1st UCLG World Report on Decentralization and Local Democracy in the World

Foreward

It is our great pleasure, as Presidents of the World Organization of Local and Regional Authorities, to present the *First World Report on Decentralization and Local Democracy*.

We hope that this report, which is the first of its kind, will help deepen and strengthen knowledge about the role of local governments in the contemporary world, and will enrich national and international discussions on the relationship between decentralization and development.

The present report clearly shows that the world is undergoing a quiet **democratic re-**

volution. Therefore, even if important aspects of this process have yet to be accomplished, especially in countries in conflict (in the Middle East, Asia and Africa) local democracy is gaining momentum all over the world: from the African savanna villages, the highlands of Latin America, the *barangay* in the Philippines to the towns of Eurasia.

In a world where more than half of humanity now lives in cities, local authorities are also the key to the solution of major contemporary challenges of all kinds: democratic, as it is in the local sphere that the sense of citizenship is reinforced and identities are

constructed to deal with globalization; environmental, since the preservation of our planet and the fight against global warming depends to a great extent on finding sustainable solutions to transform current models of production and consumption, particularly in the urban areas; economic, given that large amounts of wealth and opportunities, as well as extreme inequities are generated within the cities and in their surroundings; and, social, as it is at the local level that the foundations need to be laid for creating social inclusion, managing cultural diversity and ensuring human security.

This publication coincides with the adoption by Member States of the UN Habitat Governing Council of the international *Guidelines on Decentralization and Strengthening of Local Authorities*: the first international cornerstone reference to “outline the main principles underlying democratic, constitu-

tional, legal and administrative aspects of local governance and decentralization”¹

Both the guidelines and this report are the fruition of longstanding efforts by local governments and their partners which we hope will complement each other in promoting the ownership and implementation of the *Guidelines* by states and local authorities all over the world. The report constitutes the first stage of the *World Observatory of Decentralization and Local Democracy* project launched by United Cities and Local Governments and supported by the UN Habitat Governing Council.

We are convinced that this publication –the first of regular triennial reports– will enable United Cities and Local Governments to become “a major world source of information and intelligence on local government” as anticipated by its members.

1. UN Habitat, 21st Governing Council, Decisions and Resolutions, Nairobi, 16-20 April 2007: Resolution 21/3.

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