**The 11th World Human Rights Cities Forum**

7 – 10 October 2021

Gwangju, Republic of Korea

**Declaration**

***Human Rights in Times of Challenge:***

***A New Social Contract***

With deep concern about the diverse threats against human rights and democracy by violence, discrimination, inequalities, unsustainable development, climate change and environmental disasters, the participants of the 11th World Human Rights Cities Forum in 2021

1. Confirm our will to continuously implement the principles recommended by ‘the Vision of a Human Rights City’ declared at the 1st WHRCF in 2011, ‘the Gwangju Guiding Principles for a Human Rights City’ at the 4th WHRCF in 2014, and the ‘Local Government and Human Rights’ report of the UN Human Rights Council in September 2019 (A/HRC/42/22), and the direction of the 'Gwangju Human Rights City 2030 Agenda' at the 10th Forum in 2020,
2. Reaffirm that the cooperation of the human rights cities, local and regional governments and the active participation of all inhabitants have been the source of energy in creating successful 'World Human Rights Cities Forums' for the past ten years and will be for ten more years, while expressing appreciation for the commitment of the Gwangju Metropolitan City, UN Human Rights, UNESCO, United Cities and Local Governments, Raoul Wallenberg Institute, civil societies, and human rights experts to make this valuable gathering possible,
3. Confirm that all disasters negatively affect human rights, and that the impact of disasters is not equal on all members of society, consequently recognizing the responsibility of all humankind for the climate crisis, and urging the international community to take bold measures towards a sustainable future based on the principles of human rights, intergenerational justice, and the collective wisdom,
4. Recognize the leading roles of human rights cities, and their inherent links with inclusive cities, when collaboration and solidarity are needed among communities, among cities, and among countries more than ever before at this time of human rights and climate crisis, and when all humanity is suffering at the global and local levels,
5. Recall the people-centered COVID-19 guidance recommended by the UN Human Rights High Commissioner in April 2020 and the roles of local governments for human rights protection emphasized at the 45 th session of the UN Human Rights Council (A/HRC/45/L.27), and reiterate that they must be exercised,
6. Confirm the need of redefining the rights of peoples and the roles of governments in regards of today’s reality with a more active support of the UN when human rights are shrinking in the freedom of expression, assembly, and privacy, with increasing unemployment, inequality, discrimination, and social exclusion of socially disadvantaged and minorities due to the current pandemic and climate change,
7. Confirm the role of the human rights city movement as one of the sustainable models for future innovations in our endeavor to build fairer and equitable societies, to establish partnerships based on a decisive attitude to fight against racism and discrimination in all its forms, and to cooperate toward inclusion and coexistence,
8. Acknowledge the need of a new social contract between governments and their people so as to rebuild trust and embrace a comprehensive vision of human rights, the outcome of which must be reflected in the daily lives of people through active and equal participation of women, including updated governance arrangements to deliver better public goods and usher in a new era of universal social protection, health coverage, education, skills, decent work and housing,
9. Welcome the adoption of a resolution by the UN General Assembly to ban arms exports to Myanmar and by the UN Human Rights Council to strengthen the protection and advocacy of human rights in Afghanistan, while emphasizing the need of more active measures by the international community, including the United Nations, paying special attention to the situations around the world, where the political power was taken over by force and violence and without respect to human rights and freedom of people, and with no democratic participation, which cannot be justified under any circumstances,
10. Recognize additionally the need of effective and harmonized measures established by local and central governments to help internally displaced people and refugees with special attention to human rights of minorities, children, women, and persons with disabilities whose sufferings are aggravated in this time of violence,
11. Acknowledge the efforts of local civil society in eight thematic sessions on refugees, elderly persons, persons with disabilities, children and youth, sustainable development, social economy, the right to food, and peace, while expecting the proposals of the sessions to be implemented,
12. Appreciate the spread of the discourse of ‘the Right to the City’ in the Asia Pacific region, with special attention to the human rights city movement by local and central governments of Indonesia with unique strategies and practices in diverse ways including the annual Human Rights Festival,
13. Value the effort of the Korean government to establish the ‘Framework Act on Human Rights Policy’ as the groundwork for implementing human rights policies across the government, including local governments, along with the network being strengthened between government officials and civil society activists, and recognizing the active interaction and networking among human rights city officials, experts, activists through proper collaboration and containment in human rights governance,
14. Welcome the expansion of sessions on human rights education at the 2021 WHRCF with the understanding that human rights education should be further promoted in order to strengthen human rights knowledge basis, handling skills, positive attitudes, and practical capacities among people, teachers, and local government officials, and
15. Recognize the importance of including young people in the process of finding solutions to the diverse future challenges getting their perspective as presented in the youth sessions
16. Confirm our will to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic in strengthening our solidarity and cooperation, though our hope to meet physically at this year’s forum was not realized, and looking forward to meeting face to face at the 12th World Human Rights Cities Forum.

**The participants of the 11th World Human Rights Cities Forum 2021 agree to implement and recommend the following five promises:**

1. To take actions to address diverse challenges including the climate crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic in order to build forward fairer based on human rights and democracy in collaboration with the human rights cities around the world,
2. To promote communication and understanding between the United Nations, central/local governments, human rights experts, and population, while understanding the crucial role of youth, so that discussions on the new social contract can progress and the principles of human rights can be implemented to build a fair inclusive society as an alternative development model with proper balance between economic, environmental sustainability and social life,
3. To strive to protect the human rights of the vulnerable people suffering more gravely in the current disaster situation by identifying potential and new categories of vulnerable groups,
4. To monitor the human rights situation of various socially underprivileged people such as refugees, migrants, persons with disabilities, women and religious minorities, and make joint efforts to protect their human rights, particularly from violence, and
5. To propose research work on the past agenda, the future direction and strategy of the human rights cities movement, and the expansion of the role of the World Human Rights Cities Forum in order to continue the past achievements of the Human Rights City Movement.