**THEMATIC AXIS 4: RESPONSES FROM LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS TO VIOLENCE BASED ON INEQUALITIES AND STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE.**

I. **Context**

Cities and territories are on the front line of response to the various expressions of violence that occur as a result of social, economic, environmental and territorial inequalities, which in many cases is presented as a phenomenon of structural violence. There is a consensus on the need to establish a relationship between expressions of violence that alter peace and coexistence in territories and dynamics of economic development, which often take precedence over the interests of the most vulnerable communities and groups that have historically inhabited the territories.

Local and Regional Governments (LRGs) are the first to respond to the challenges imposed by various forms of structural violence, which disproportionately affect young people, limiting their opportunities to develop a life project and their active participation in the decisions that affect them. Although economic development is a source of employment and income generation for society, the asymmetry of interests and the size of economic actors compromise social and community agendas. An example of this is the impact of mass and deregulated tourism on social cohesion and access to housing, a problem that has gained prominence in recent years as an expression of globalization.

The United Nations report *Our Common Agenda. The New Agenda for Peace* (July 2023) and the Pact for the Future (2024) highlight the importance of sustaining peaceful, inclusive and just societies to combat the root causes of conflict and recognize the persistence of violence outside of states' armed conflicts. This reality not only affects those who directly participate in situations of violence, but also has a profound impact on social stability, the livelihoods of broad sectors of society, and even the lives of citizens, highlighting the urgency of developing comprehensive and sustainable approaches to address it.

The climate crisis and the challenges to environmental sustainability are phenomena that increasingly deepen structural inequalities associated with land use. New forms of violence are expressed in eco-social tensions in the territories, and present unprecedented challenges to local authorities in their approach and resolution. In this context, unprecedented challenges for local authorities arise in terms of prevention, mitigation and response. The Pact for the Future of UCLG, adopted in Daejeon in 2022, also emphasizes the importance of exploring alternative measures to the current development model in order to transform societies into peaceful and inclusive ones.
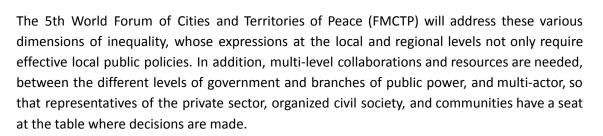
The 5th World Forum of Cities and Territories of Peace (FMCTP) will address these various dimensions of inequality, whose expressions at the local and regional levels not only require effective local public policies. In addition, multi-level collaborations and resources are needed, between the different levels of government and branches of public power, and multi-actor, so that representatives of the private sector, organized civil society, and communities have a seat at the table where decisions are made.

## II.   Methodology

The sessions dedicated to addressing the thematic axes will be addressed at two different times of axis 4. A panel discussion and workshop session with guiding questions:

| Panel of Experts: Key Perspectives and Approaches | **Objective:** To provide a technical approach to the key perspectives and approaches of the thematic axes |
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| | **Format:** Conversation between a maximum of 5 experts with a moderator. |
| | **Duration:** 60 minutes |
| Workshops on experiences and learning | **Objective:** To share innovative learnings from public policies and successful projects, carried out by LRGs, networks of cities, civil society organizations, communities or citizens around the thematic axis. |
| | **Format:**  Presentation of success stories, followed by an interactive methodology, through which attendees will be consulted to nourish the conversation. Digital instruments will be used to interact with those present in the auditorium and question and answer spaces will be opened. |
| | **Duration:** 90 minutes |

## III.   Dimensions

Under the concept of **Participatory Management for Coexistence and Peace** developed by the FMCTP**, Thematic Axis 4: equality, inclusive development and climate justice** aims to have relevant participants and implementation experiences from LRGs, international organizations, civil society organizations and youth around the following six dimensions:

**1.INITIATIVES TO RESPOND TO THE DIFFERENT EXPRESSIONS OF VIOLENCE BASED ON INEQUALITIES THAT PARTICULARLY AFFECT YOUNG PEOPLE.** There is a strong correlation between the quality and quantity of opportunities for young people and indicators of peace and coexistence. Socioeconomic inequalities disproportionately impact young people between the ages of 15 and 24, by preventing access to education and employment. Two-thirds of young people who do not study or work are young women, reflecting structural gender inequities.

It has been suggested that the absence of opportunities, particularly for young people, contributes to social unrest and democratic instability. Therefore, initiatives in the territory aimed at improving the conditions for young people to develop their life project reduce the likelihood that they will be linked to processes of violence in the territories and increase their participation in decisions that affect them at the local, regional, national and global levels.

| *Panel Questions:* | *Workshop Questions:* |
|---|---|
| *What role do LRGs play in the provision of social services that increase opportunities for young people and contribute to the prevention, eradication and reparation of the different expressions of violence based on phenomena of social inequality and territorial segregation?* <br><br> *What interpretation do young people make to address urban and territorial violence related to phenomena of social inequality and territorial segregation and what responses have they proposed?* | *What lessons learned can be identified from the experiences of intergenerational dialogue to address this type of violence? What were the conditions in terms of the type of leadership deployed by young people and representatives of LRGs and other organizations, as well as the narratives developed for the success of those experiences?* <br><br> *How do we guarantee the participation of young people, and the different actors of the territory in the definition of public policies for this approach? What kind of spaces are necessary for the participatory management of this type of violence?* <br><br> *How can LRGs be funded for programmes that respond to the needs of young people to eradicate violence in highly degraded urban areas, characterised by lack of basic services, overcrowding and precariousness?* |

**2. SOCIO-SPATIAL INEQUALITY, SEGREGATION AND URBAN VIOLENCE: THE IMPACT OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT ON COMMUNITIES.** Accelerated urbanization has transformed the territory and deepened socio-spatial inequalities, with a growing abandonment of rural areas and an uncontrolled expansion of cities. This phenomenon is especially critical in developing countries, where the lack of urban planning has led to the formation of degraded

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peripheries, with deficiencies in basic services, housing, education and employment, concentrating multiple vulnerabilities and increasing social precariousness.

One of the main accelerators of these inequalities is the commodification of urban land. There are various expressions of the phenomena of social inequality and territorial segregation, understanding that they are the result of structural dynamics that have prioritized economic development over the rights and needs of local communities. In this context, the discussion will focus on the unbridled growth of tourism and real estate speculation, which has generated profound transformations in the social fabric of cities, especially affecting the most vulnerable groups and impacting access to housing.

In many cities, the proliferation of tourist accommodation has contributed to gentrification, real estate harassment and segregation in urban ghettos, increasing social exclusion and urban fragmentation. Likewise, investment in infrastructure and tourism-oriented services often generates inequalities in access to public goods, reinforcing the marginalization of certain sectors of the population.

"Touristification" has not only made access to housing more expensive, but has also generated growing tensions between visitors and local residents, affecting social cohesion and making it difficult to live together in increasingly fragmented urban environments. In this sense, understanding how these dynamics influence urban conflicts will make it possible to make social tensions visible and to know strategies to guarantee, from local public policies, a more equitable and inclusive urban development.

| Panel Questions: | Workshop Questions: |
|---|---|
| *What role do LRGs play in exercising the right to housing, controlling gentrification, and managing tensions between tourists and local citizens, while delivering quality basic services?* | *What concrete measures have proven effective in mitigating the negative impacts of tourism on the availability and quality of housing for local citizens?* |
| *How can housing policies in areas of high tourist demand be balanced to protect residents without slowing economic growth?* | *How does decentralization and local autonomy affect the exercise of the right to housing, gentrification and tensions between tourists and local citizens?* |
| *How does the commodification of urban space deepen inequalities and what public policies could counteract its negative effects on the most vulnerable sectors?* | *How can LRGs be funded for equitable access to housing, health, education, and basic services?* |
| | *How can the private sector be included in the conversation in the face of the privatisation of public space and "touristification" in the* |

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*social cohesion of cities, and how can these
tensions be addressed through public policy?*

**3. INITIATIVES TO RESPOND TO THE EXPANSION OF CRIMINAL ORGANIZATIONS IN THE TERRITORIES** Exclusion, lack of opportunities and the lack of compliance with basic rights have created a breeding ground for radicalisation and the increase in violent conflicts. In this context, structural violence becomes a key factor in understanding insecurity in cities, where the action of criminal organizations deepens the social crisis.

This situation represents a serious threat to democracy, security and coexistence in cities and territories. Between 2015 and 2021, intentional homicides claimed the lives of 3.1 million people, far exceeding the 700,000 people who died in armed conflicts during that period[1]. In addition, young people are both victims and perpetrators of violence[2]. Estimates of sexual violence in childhood reveal an alarming incidence and devastating impact on children (UNICEF, 2024).[3] Added to this panorama is one of the greatest scourges of our humanity, which is human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, controlled by criminal organizations.

Faced with growing public concern about violent crime and low confidence in state security forces, some governments have opted for extreme measures, such as "states of emergency," to confront organized crime. However, international organizations warn that these securitized responses can generate human rights violations and perpetuate social inequalities. The UN report on the New Agenda for Peace warns of the long-term consequences of these strategies, which can weaken democratic values and encourage recruitment into armed groups, further aggravating the crisis of violence and exclusion in cities[4].

| Panel Questions: | Workshop Questions: |
|---|---|
| *What role do LRGs play in responding to the expansion of criminal organizations in the territories, particularly those related to drug trafficking and human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, when the security forces and the justice operation are* | *What lessons learned can be identified from the experiences to address this type of violence?*<br><br>*How can LRGs carry out public policies and territorial agendas of peace and coexistence* |

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[1] As reported by the World Health Organization (WHO)

[2] For example, homicides disaggregated by age in Latin America indicated that for the year 2021, young men between the ages of 15 and 29 were the ones most at risk of homicide, with an estimated rate of 53.6 male victims per 100,000 men, double the average rate of male homicides in the region.

[3] https://www.unicef.org/es/comunicados-prensa/mas-370-millones-ninas-mujeres-mundo-sometidas-violaciones-abusos-sexuales-infancia

[4] According to the UNDOC report, socio-political killings, which include, among others, the deliberate killings of human rights defenders, environmental defenders, community leaders, journalists, and humanitarian workers, constitute at least 9% of homicides in the world. UNDOC 2023: Report 4TH EDITION OF THE GLOBAL STUDY ON HOMICIDE

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| *beyond the scope of their competences and security approaches are booming globally? What are the risks and limitations of security responses to organized crime, and what alternative approaches may be most effective?* | *in the context of a high presence of organized crime?*<br><br>*How can LRGs coordinate with international and national bodies to address human trafficking and sexual exploitation in their territories?* |
| *How can LRGs guarantee the promotion of sustainable local economies with decent employment and opportunities for all, especially young people, as opportunities against organized crime?* | *How can LRGs foster safe community spaces that reduce the risk of youth violence?*<br><br>*What public policies can LRGs promote to protect vulnerable populations, such as women, children and migrants, from exploitative networks?*<br><br>*What communication and awareness-raising strategies can be implemented to strengthen the culture of peace and coexistence in territories affected by violence?* |

**4. INITIATIVES TO RESPOND TO ENVIRONMENTAL VIOLENCE** The climate crisis and eco-social conflicts are deeply connected to urban inequalities, as environmental degradation and climate change exacerbate territorial tensions and social disparities. The overexploitation of natural resources and the expansion of extractivist megaprojects have had a devastating impact on local communities, leading to forced displacement and human rights violations. In addition, socio-political killings, including killings of human rights and environmental defenders, constitute an alarming proportion of violent deaths globally.

The effects of climate change, such as natural disasters, food insecurity, water crises and degradation of public health, exacerbate territorial conflicts, especially in contexts of high inequality and social exclusion. Tensions over access to basic resources have intensified, contributing to an increase in disputes and clashes. In cities, phenomena such as heat waves, floods and droughts affect both urban infrastructure and the quality of life of inhabitants, especially the most vulnerable.

The current development model, focused on the exploitation of ecosystems, perpetuates economic and social inequalities, which increases the vulnerabilities of the population. These eco-social conflicts not only involve disputes over resources, but are also the reflection of an interplay between environmental and social factors that threaten peace, security, and democratic stability. In this context, the need for a change in development policies is urgent to avoid further deterioration of ecosystems and social exclusion.

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The inequalities and exclusions that today fuel structural violence must be addressed from the root, preventing sectors of the population from becoming radicalized due to the lack of opportunities. There is a solid analytical basis that demonstrates that the gaps of exclusion and inequality are determining factors in the generation of violence. Therefore, any prevention strategy must focus on equity and social justice.

In this context, cities and territories should not only be seen as spaces of conflict, but also as engines of change and social transformation. From the local and territorial levels, it is possible to design innovative local policies that encourage coexistence, reduce inequalities and promote sustainable development that guarantees the well-being of present and future generations.

| Panel Questions: | Workshop Questions: |
|---|---|
| *What role do LRGs play in responding to environmental degradation, competition for resources, the impact of climate change, pollution, and the consequent public health implications as determinants of environmental violence?* | *What lessons learned can be identified from the experiences of articulation with central government agencies and justice operators to address this type of violence?* |
| *What strategies are appropriate from LRGs to face the effects of climate change in the face of phenomena such as the increase in natural disasters, food insecurity, water crisis and the degradation of public health that affect the most vulnerable populations?* | *How can LRGs carry out public policies and territorial agendas of peace and coexistence in the face of eco-social conflicts?* |
| *What role do LRGs play in protecting human rights defenders, environmental defenders, community leaders, journalists, and humanitarian workers?* | *How is the participation of civil society and the different actors of the territory in the definition of public policies for this approach guaranteed?* |
| *How can LRGs promote sustainable development models that reduce the exploitation of ecosystems without compromising economic growth?* | *What successful examples are there of collaboration between LRGs and international actors in the mitigation of eco-social conflicts?* |
| *How does environmental violence link to other types of urban and territorial violence, and how can they be addressed in a comprehensive manner?* | |

**5. INTERNATIONAL ARTICULATIONS AND LINKS.** We are once again experiencing a global context marked by the unilateral action of great powers that compromise the advancement of global agendas based on inclusion, social justice and sustainability. This is particularly true for the United Nations System as a multilateral platform established by States.

Despite the questioning of the effectiveness of the institutional architecture created after the end of the Second World War, collective action at the regional and local levels today, more than ever, gains relevance to implement actions in the territories that overcome inequalities and structural inequities and contribute to affirming peace and coexistence. In this sense, subnational diplomacy is of central importance to navigate the current situation and contribute to the construction of territories of peace and coexistence.

LRG networks and global collaboration platforms that exist today will play a fundamental role in preventing structural inequalities from deepening. Their impact on global conversations and the strengthening of their technical capacities through the exchange of experiences will be the vehicles to ensure that global solidarity prevails from the levels of government where things happen.

| Panel Questions: | Workshop Questions: |
|---|---|
| *What role does the international action of LRGs play in strengthening public policies that allow us to move towards new ways of doing politics by putting people's lives, their freedoms and the exercise of human and environmental rights at the centre?* | *How do we build new platforms for multi-actor and multi-level dialogues around the prevention, eradication and reparation of the different expressions of urban and territorial violence associated with phenomena of social inequality and territorial segregation?* |
| *How can we create and strengthen the initiatives of local and regional government networks that encourage and contribute to innovative political leadership, particularly among young people, that foster coexistence, reduce inequalities and promote sustainable development?* | *How to maintain lines of cooperation on political leadership and narratives that promote approaches to care, human rights and global solidarity in polarized contexts?* |
| | *What are the institutions and actors that can be strategic for LRGs in advancing these alliances and articulations?* |