



**OPENING SPEECH**  
9 SEPTEMBER 2021

**UĞUR İBRAHİM ALTAY**  
COPRESIDENT OF UCLG  
MAYOR OF KONYA





Dear colleagues:

I am delivering this speech to you acting with the capacity of the Co-President of UCLG, meanwhile, I would like to greet you with respect as the President on behalf of the members of the Union of Turkish World Municipalities and as the Mayor Konya.

Before starting my words, I would like to state that I am extremely happy to see you in Turkey.

As Rumi has stated, "In this earth, in this immaculate field, we shall not plant any seeds except for compassion, except for love." Many societies and communities have lived together for long years in this forbearance and peaceful environment and our country has become a homeland for cultural heritage.

It is an honor for us to host the Culture Summit in Turkey, a country that have been a cradle for civilizations throughout the history and have a perfect cultural heritage.

I would like to convey my best wishes to all the people participating in the Summit, both those who are in Izmir and those who are following the Summit online, from all corners of the world.

This is the fourth Summit, following the ones we organised in Bilbao in March 2015, in Jeju in May 2017 and in Buenos Aires in April 2019. I would like to salute the representatives of these three cities for their successful work, and the UCLG regional sections in their respective continents, for their success was also theirs.

For two days, today and tomorrow, Izmir will be the world capital of culture. I am sure that our beautiful İzmir will apply new policies and programs to sustain and develop this title

Izmir has successfully completed its Pilot City programme, and is now highly deserving of the distinction of Leading City in the UCLG Committee on Culture. I hope this title will contribute beauties to İzmir and our country.

When we have arrived here and saw the beauty and quality of the preparations, we have truly understood that it has been the right decision to organize this summit in İzmir.



As Co-President of UCLG, I would like to congratulate the Mayor of Izmir, my dear colleague Tunç Soyer and his team. I personally thank everyone who contributed the organization of the Summit.

The UCLG Culture Summit is taking place in an exceptional context. For over a year and a half now, we have been facing a global pandemic.

The crisis we are facing cannot be tackled by health or economic measures alone. We must appeal to the creativity of communities, using Culture as an antidote to the effects of the pandemic. It is an indisputable part of the solution to humanity's problems.



- We pointed this out in our manifesto on *The Future of Culture*, adopted at our Durban Congress in November 2019.
- We acknowledged it as such in a unique and clear way in the *Decalogue of the UCLG Presidency for the post-COVID-19 era*, which also identifies culture as a major component in recovery and as a key element to address inequalities by developing programmes on heritage, creativity, and diversity, and by implementing cultural rights at the local level.
- We will amplify this in the *Izmir Declaration*, which we will present tomorrow, at the closing of this Summit.

The Summit has an outstanding programme, with sessions dedicated to such important topics as:

- The relationship between culture and gender equality in the *Rome Charter*;
- The relationship between culture, health and the environment in a care-based society;
- The global campaign “Culture2030Goal”

We understand that this World Summit consolidates UCLG’s ambition in the global conversation on culture and development. Our message is clear: we state that culture is the fourth pillar of sustainable development.

We see in our communities, and in our territories, that participation in cultural life is a prerequisite for the well-being of our communities, to deepen democracies, to ensure equality and environmental balance.

While shaping our cities, we strive for establishing a world’s city in consideration of the international standards. From this point forth, within the framework of the plan *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* as discussed in the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit held in September, 2015, we have been endeavouring to implement 17 Sustainable Development Goals to be achieved by the year 2030. The awareness that the development to be initiated in the cities shall extend to the entire world constitutes the core principle of our policy.





Culture is among the pillars of the Sustainable Development Goals. Every moment, every minute we live is shaped based on the culture embracing us. Therefore, we are required to preserve our cultural heritage of the past and hand this heritage down to the next generations.

Aiming to reinforce and strengthen the collaboration among the cities in accordance with the values and principles of UCLG, the Culture Committee has performed endeavors of utmost importance for the purpose of adding a cultural dimension to the sustainable development goals.



*Agenda 21 for Culture*, the first international document drawn up in 2004, emphasizing the correlation and association among the culture, citizenship and sustainability has suggested 9 major commitments and 100 actions for our cities.

Each goal stipulated in *Agenda 21 for Culture* has a vital importance for the development of cities in cultural terms and being more sustainable. At this point, both the self-assessment reports and experience sharing programs serve as substantial tools guiding us throughout this process.

We have elaborated and discussed in every meeting of ours until today that we are required to practice upon the culture as an antidote. Culture, apart from being a substantial concept reflecting our core values and attributions, serving as a solution against all sorts of issues and problems experienced and encountered is highly indispensable for the societies.

A cultural dimension is even available in the provisions we aim for sustainability. In other words, we cannot even consider a life deprived of culture for both living and development.

Therefore, we are required to give top priority to the culture and preservation thereof in our agendas.

Culture has always been a tool binding humans in local areas throughout many years. People sharing the same culture rejoiced the same things and again grieved for the same things. Having influenced by the globalization process, cultures have expanded across the world. However, the globalization process also had an adverse impact resulting in expansion of the issues and problems. Many issues such as the climate and environmental issues as well as the Coronavirus that are the common problems of the entire humankind have started to pose a danger to all of us.

Culture is among the routes to be taken to seek for a common solution for global issues. The challenging process we have been experiencing for the last two years as the entire world has once more reminded us the importance of being respectful towards the environment and culture in an unpleasant way.

Therefore, we are urged to make use of culture to the broadest extent to live together and overcome the issues, while keeping in mind the lessons we have learned from the pandemic process.



We need a broad cultural perspective, deeper dialogues on the relationship between humanity and nature, on scientific research and evidence, on the time and resources we devote to cooperation and solidarity, on our capacity to heal the wounds of the past, on our desire to build creative cities and societies. I believe that the special people here will lead in this.

We see the Summit as a fundamental contribution to the *Pact for the Future* that we at UCLG are promoting, and that we will approve at our Congress in 2022.

I would like reiterate that as UCLG we would like to work together with love, friendship and understanding to achieve a more equal, peaceful and prosperous world, in which no one will be left behind.

Thank you very much to all of you.

May the Summit be a success!



#IzmirCultureSummit

#UCLGmeets

#UCLGculture

#Culture21Actions

#Listen2Cities

[www.uclg-culturesummit2021.org](http://www.uclg-culturesummit2021.org)

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