



Delegates at the Second Annual Convening of the Global Parliament of Mayors (GPM) in Stavanger, Norway

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Big Data and Local Governments

The digital age is an age of disruptive power. Big data is one such disruptive power. It poses a serious crisis for the state, society and democracy. Big data is challenging the core capacities of institutions. Its universe is expanding astronomically. The digital data is available from internet, social media, smart phones, surveillance cameras etc. Having more data is not necessarily having quality data. Big data has its obvious advantages. But big data can be misused. It can be gamed. Then there is question of accountability. There is another problem. Satya Nadella of Microsoft says, "The world is rapidly running out of computing capacity."

According to one calculation, the data that is generated today from various sources comes to about nine zettabytes which is nine trillion gigabytes. The standard laptop holds 500 gigabytes of storage of digital data in the world today. Given the volume, variety and velocity, these data are not easy to manage or analyse.

Business models are being created on the basis of big data. Local governments in the UK and in other European countries are trying to create new models of service delivery by developing big data capabilities. Big data has the potential to develop new channels of service delivery which can reach out to larger beneficiaries. Many local governments have reams of data on local

inhabitants and local businesses. Big Data can be used to improve services, increase quality of life and make doing business easier.

However, there is very little evidence to show concrete benefits as of now for the local communities. As far as the developing countries are concerned, local governments, reeling under financial squeeze, are unlikely to have the capacity, resource and skills to tap big data. Most governments are flummoxed by big data, what they should be collecting, why they should be collecting it and what they should be doing with it. The biggest challenge before local governments is how to get all their data in a single analytical ecosystem.

Protagonists of big data claim, data is the sword of the 21st century. Those who manage it well may become data warriors. For local governments, big data projects are doomed to fail unless data quality and governance are improved dramatically. All of the great data technology advancements will continue to fall short of expectations thanks to the reality of our data—redundant, disparate, inaccurate, missing, misplaced, undefined, ill-defined, dirty, old, reused, misused, etc. For data warriors, data may be the sword or new oil. But the empowered citizens of the 21st century want to take back control of their data. It is too precious to leave it to tech giants.

– Ash Narain Roy

What's New

Pledge for Emissions-Free Cities by Mayors

The mayors of London, Los Angeles, Paris and other major cities have pledged to ban gasoline and diesel vehicles from certain large areas of their cities by 2030 as part of an initiative to “progressively abandon combustion engines” for a cleaner and quieter environment, raise economic productivity and reduce pollution related deaths in the respective cities. It is hoped that this step will encourage other cities especially

metropolitan ones to follow suit after this initiative from the mayors of London, Los Angeles, Paris, Mexico City, Seattle, Copenhagen, Barcelona, Vancouver, Milan, Quito, Cape Town and Auckland. Actions at the local level are being planned in a significant manner by American cities and local politicians following President Trump’s exit from the Paris climate agreement.

Agadir Declaration at Climate Change World Summit

The Climate Change World Summit was held from 11-13 September 2017 in Agadir, Morocco and ended with the Agadir Declaration calling for a push towards a coordinated climate action. It was the largest gathering of climate actors before COP23, the 23rd United Nations Climate Change Conference. It was attended by more than 5,000 participants from over 80 nations. The declaration incorporates inputs, opinions and perspectives from key stakeholder groups such as indigenous peoples, environmental non-governmental organizations and local governments. The final document emphasizes the importance of integrating climate action with the broader sustainable development agenda and outlines nine key priorities that support effective

implementation of the earlier Paris Agreement. It calls for more active stakeholder inputs into the climate negotiations as well as a stronger dialogue between national governments and climate stakeholders. It also raises key issues to be addressed in advancing climate action such as the need for further funding and a focus on adaptation in vulnerable areas. Many leading networks of climate actors including ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability, UCLG, R20 and C40, showed their support towards the Declaration. The declaration was available for signatures until 15 October 2017 before it is presented to national governments and the Secretary General of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Landmark Ordinance in Quezon City, The Philippines

The government of Quezon City in Philippines has taken important and noteworthy steps to implement an Anti-Catcalling Ordinance that deters men from committing sexual harassment. On International Human Rights Day the city expressed its wish to see women walk the city free from fear or any kind of apprehensions of being sexually harassed. This also coincided with the closing of the 16-Day activism against gender-based violence, a global campaign that Quezon City is a part of. Quezon City joins only 23 other cities in

the world to pass legislation that imposes penalties on catcalling, wolf-whistling and other forms of harassment in public spaces. This landmark ordinance is the first of its kind in terms of a national law on anti-sexual harassment in the Philippines and is definitely a model for other local government entities in the country and around the world. Quezon City also seeks to improve its Lighting Project with the objective of installing more streetlights in dark alleys and areas in its city.

South American Countries Join Hands to Preserve Bio-Diversity with Local Action

The International Conference on Protected Areas and Other Conservation Measures of Local Governments that was held in May at São Paulo, Brazil witnessed the launch of the project titled, "Protected Areas and Other Conservation Measures of Local Governments." This is to be implemented in Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru with the objective of sharing their experiences in the management of protected areas and biodiversity conservation. The event was hosted with the collaboration of ICLEI South America, GIZ, the German Development Agency, and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). It has increasingly become clear the paramount role that local governments have in supporting implementation of global sustainability frameworks. Moreover the goals and agreements set out in the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) give local and regional governments important responsibility for conserving natural systems and maintaining ecosystems services. In

the context of ratified international conventions for the protection of biodiversity, the four countries recognize local governments as important and legitimate actors in the management of protected areas. Local governments due to limitations regarding legal and institutional structures, financing and technical and administrative capacity rarely use this instrument for conservation. One of the objectives of the project is to improve the conditions of local governments to conserve biodiversity through the effective and equitable management of protected areas and other conservation mechanisms. This is to be implemented by the Ministries of the Environment of Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru in partnership with GIZ, ICLEI South America and IUCN, with support from the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Protection, Construction and Nuclear Safety (BMUB) under the International Climate Initiative (IKI).

First All Women Council for a Village in Pacific Island Nation

Mrs. Leimalu Tapasei was appointed as the chairwoman of Sunai village on Moso island thus making it an all women council, the first in the history of the village. Mrs. Tapasei will head the village tribunal council in the Pacific island nation giving a shot in the arm to the empowerment of women. This development is largely seen as a thunderous response to the deep-rooted cultural perceptions of women that tend to exclude them from leadership positions and other senior roles in the public sphere. Terming it as an unprecedented decision the chairman of the village area council said that she was appointed on merit for her contribution to community development. Mrs. Tapasei has to her credit established terms of reference, bylaws and

a mission statement for the village council. She has also gone ahead to restructure the council by creating sub-committees for education, health, water, environment, business, infrastructure, land and disaster. Her major goal is to partner with an organization to fight coastal erosion as many marine resources in the island are at risk due to climate change. On her agenda is a sustainable water supply system and a multi-purpose women's club house that can be utilized as a disaster relief centre also and building a network of government, civil society and NGOs. Ms. Tapasei's other aims include rebuilding a new community church, establishing a marine conservation park and continuing to facilitate short courses for members of the community.

Citizens Participation Framework in Zimbabwe

The local councils in Zimbabwe are forging a closer relationship between residents and their local authorities by introducing a Citizens' Participation Framework (CPF) that aims to increase opportunities for residents to contribute to local development and improved service delivery. This is with the support of CLGF and the United Councils Association of Zimbabwe (UCAZ), and funded by the EU. The CPF is the result of a number of local government studies to identify the most important issues for residents and the best ways of delivering services to them. A series of workshops has been planned to allow officials

from rural and urban councils to discuss the best ways to enable citizens to play a part in development issues. This is in line with the Zimbabwean Constitution where the role of the local authority is to take the lead on delivering development related services. However the onus is on the people who should define what they actually want. It is seen as a transformation for the local authorities from their previous role as an administrative body, to becoming an instrument that actually delivers. One of the key objectives is to create a social contract between councils and eliminate conflict.

Belize City Capital Projects to be Funded by Municipal Bonds

With 2012 needs assessment of Belize City identifying concerns by its community about the lack of public spaces along with a need for improved infrastructure, there began a move to seek additional funding needed to support such capital projects. This initiative involved a great deal of preparatory work, including a SWOT analysis that revealed a degree of political risk as council terms lasted just three years while the bonds went beyond this time period. Soon Belize City was exploring the use of municipal bonds and decided to look at the financing model used by its neighbours in South Florida. This was one of the many ways of finding new and innovative ways for finding resources for local government to deliver quality services for its citizens. The mayor of Belize City said that this was an area that they had already enjoyed close cooperation with South Florida. Mostly due to tourism with international cruise liners docking in both locations and also because of the significant diaspora population spread across both places. The city council approached various international funding agencies to assess the liquidity in Belize and this revealed that interest rates were high while savings rates low but at the same time there was a great

deal of interest in potential investments from private sector. After the needs assessment exercise, the bonds were floated in 2013 and outcomes so far include the creation of two large leisure areas namely Battlefield Park and BTL. The funds have also gone into renovating the road network and necessary upgrades along the coastal roads. Interestingly the bonds are insured through the Central Bank of Belize with yields at two, five and ten year intervals. The bonds may be refloated and a new large-scale project can be embarked upon at the ten-year stage. Mayor Darrell Bradley of Belize City said that the investors - banks, pension funds, diaspora companies - were pleased with the initiative with the bonds being sold out as soon as they were put on sale. He stressed that the benefits extended beyond funds being raised, as it had led to improved financial planning; better working with the private sector; and closer relationships with citizens on project selection. Belize City was also the first English-speaking city in the Caribbean to use municipal bonds. The Mayor proudly mentioned that the financial models were from other countries but the skill sets were all within Belize City.

Largest Collaboration of Insurance Industry and Cities and the “Bonn Ambition”

In a landmark event held in May titled “Insuring Resilient and Sustainable Cities Summit” at Bonn, Germany convened by the UN Environment Principles for Sustainable Insurance (PSI) Initiative and ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability saw one of the largest collaborative initiative. The UN and the insurance industry along with ICLEI, the leading global network of more than 1,500 cities, towns and regions came together (in December 2016) to create the largest collaboration between the insurance industry and cities for resilience. The main outcome of the PSI-ICLEI Summit was the “Bonn Ambition” that aims to achieve three goals by June 2018. That is when ICLEI hosts the World Congress in Montréal, Canada. The Bonn Ambition is strategically linked to the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), namely to:

1. Create “Insurance Development Goals for Cities”, which would harness the insurance industry’s triple role as risk managers, risk carriers and investors in the context of the SDGs, focusing on SDG 11—“Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable”. The idea is for the PSI and ICLEI to convert SDG 11’s stated targets into Insurance Development Goals that would set the long-term global agenda for the insurance industry and cities;
2. Develop city-level sustainable insurance roadmaps to drive strategic approaches and collaborative action by insurers and local governments. This could be linked to the Insurance Development Goals for Cities, and would complement ongoing efforts to develop national sustainable insurance and finance roadmaps, and;
3. Organize the first-ever roundtable of insurance industry CEOs and city mayors at the 2018 ICLEI World Congress to accelerate global and local action. The Congress is held every three years and assembles hundreds of local governments and key stakeholders to set the course for globalizing urban sustainability.

The above initiative lies in the background of the increasing speed at which climate adverse effects impact communities worldwide and the urgency of improving the way cities assess, prevent and manage their climate-related risks along with unsustainable urbanization. This was also one of the central themes of the upcoming COP23 climate conference that took place last November in Bonn under the Presidency of Fiji.

Taipei Initiatives to Foster Entrepreneurship

The Mayor of Taipei invited entrepreneurs to establish business in his city by promising government support. He was addressing the opening reception for the “Fastrack Creative and Innovation Center” in December. Taipei according to the Mayor was Asia’s most democratic, open, free and diverse metropolis and these values were the basic requirements for startups to innovate and deliver. Taipei is also a hub for financial industry comprising 80 percent of the island’s banks, as well as housing 10 of Taiwan’s 17 medical centers. These advantages added to the fact that Taipei has the highest concentration of incubators, accelerators, social networking

platforms, and entrepreneurial resources compared to other municipalities. Entities wishing to start businesses in the city could make inquiries regarding operations via the government-established “StartUP@Taipei” and file complaints directly through the Mayor’s Office in case they encounter issues. This initiative provides services spanning startup examination, consultation, networking opportunities, master lectures and loans. This approach has helped unleash the entrepreneurial potential of the private sector too and between 2015 and 2017, the subsidy provided to such startups by the city government amounted to NT\$8 billion.

Third European Congress of Local Governments at Krakow

Krakow hosted the third European Congress of Local Governments in March where nearly 1800 regional leaders, representatives from state administration, scientific and business institutions, cultural and non-governmental organizations from over 40 countries participated. The theme of was, "Local governments in the face of the challenges of the twenty-first century." The Congress was one of the international conferences in Europe that was devoted to the issues of regional politics, cooperation between local governments, representatives of state administration, science and business. The conference witnessed 80 different events (thematic blocs, report presentations, panel

sessions, workshops and lectures) divided into several theme paths: Business and Local Government, Finances, Economy, Innovations, Society, Environment, Tourism and Local Government. Issues that dominated discussions included relations with central administrations and local governments, management, healthcare, culture and economic activities concerning local governments. The mayor of Krakow in the plenary session highlighted the fact that the local governments are not allowed to invite immigrants to settle in Polish cities and communes and this significantly limits them in enhancing EU politics at the local level.

Bangladesh: Center of Excellence for Urban Development

A new Center of Excellence for Urban Development will be established in Bangladesh to support cities and its local agencies to collaborate and share efforts to improve the lives of citizens. The South Asian country has experienced some of the most rapid urbanization while at the same time the cities offer inadequate infrastructure and low levels of urban services, particularly in district towns and municipalities. All this looks to change with the World Bank having signed a memorandum of understanding with four professional institutions - the Bangladesh Institute of Planners (BIP), the Institute of Architects of Bangladesh (IAB), the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh (IEB), and the Municipal Association of Bangladesh (MAB) - to set up a Center of Excellence for Urban Development (CEUD). These institutions have assisted city corporations and municipalities to prepare and implement multi-year capital investment plans (CIPs) and so far some 31 urban local governments have prepared their CIPs under the project. The World Bank will provide technical support to the CEUD to improve the

performance of the urban local government bodies and in turn, the CEUD will bring together key stakeholders from the public and private sectors to improve the urban management capacity of urban Local Government Institutions by collaborating, sharing knowledge and providing trainings. It is also planned to initiate a Young Professional Internship Program in the urban local governments. The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) has provided a \$3.76 million grant to support World Bank's technical assistance for the CEUD as well as to support the objectives of the ongoing Municipal Governance and Services Project (MGSP) and the Third Local Government Support Project (LGSP III). For MGSP, the World Bank has committed \$410 million to improve municipal governance and basic urban services in district towns and municipalities. For the LGSP III, the World Bank has committed \$300 million to empower the Union Parishads, the lowest tier local governments with discretionary funds that would enable communities decide and implement local development priorities.

Malawi Calls for Participation of Youth in Local Governance

The African Day of Decentralization and Local Development in Malawi was commemorated in August with a clarion call to the youth for their increased participation in local governance. The Malawian capital, Lilongwe, was the backdrop for the special event, with the theme; " *Equal opportunities, socio economic empowerment and youth participation in local governance and local development in Africa.*" Malawi had adopted their decentralization policy in 1998 to ensure quality service delivery and also to effectively promote socio economic development in local communities. Focusing on the need for the youth to participate more effectively in their respective local councils, the Principal Secretary of the Ministry of Local Government and Rural

Development Kiswell Dakamau, said that if given a chance young people could really and effectively accelerate development. Dakamau further said that on the basis of equal opportunity and gender equity the youth should be elected as local representatives to enable local governments to take decisions that reflect their needs and aspirations. Malawi has been in the forefront of involving its youth in the local planning and development process and there have been significant increases in the level of their participation and representation at the local councils. At the event there was a call by one of the Youth Parliamentarians for Dowa West, Gibson Kasalika, for at least 30 per cent inclusion of young people in local government.

World Bank Warns of Growing Urban Inequality in Asia

In a grave warning the World Bank said that widening inequality in Asia's burgeoning cities could lead to potentially risky social divisions. The International body asked governments to focus more on the urban poor while planning and implementing projects. In the report it said that half of the region's population live in cities and rapid urbanization had helped lift 655 million people out of poverty. However the report highlighted that East Asia and the Pacific were still home to the world's biggest population of slum dwellers at 250 million. Many of them were still in China, Indonesia and the Philippines. While studies on inequality often focus on the disparity between urban and rural areas, the expanding chasm among city dwellers was a major

problem the report said. Victoria Kwakwa, the bank's vice president for the region, said a growing number of people who move to cities lack access to basic services, housing and jobs and this was creating growing resentment over the gap between urban rich and poor. The lead author of the report said that the widening inequalities can create social divisions and unrest in society and this was much more stark in cities where the wealthy live right next door to the urban poor in small spaces. The report urged governments to come out with policies targeted at connecting the urban poor with job markets, ensuring quality and affordable housing and access to services such as public transport.

World Mayor Project 2018 for Women Mayors

The 2018 World Mayor Project would be dedicated to women in local government. It will aim to capture the achievements of women mayors from across the world and honor the best of them. The long and short lists will dig deep to find from large and small towns and cities women leaders with integrity, determination and imagination. The 2018 World Mayor Prize and Commendations seeks to honor women who have made outstanding and long-lasting contributions to their communities. Women having fought prejudice for so many years now have the platform for themselves have displayed courage and resolve to reach where they are today, however their contributions are still often undervalued and their potential not fully recognized. Moreover in local government, particularly in politics, women are under-represented. While a number of

prominent cities, like Tokyo, Madrid, Washington, Rome and Sydney, have elected female mayors, according to research by the City Mayors Foundation, the organizers of the World Mayor Project, only about twenty per cent of the world's mayors are women. It has also been estimated that only between 30 and 35 per cent of city councillors are female. In late 2017, six out of Sydney's ten councillors were female, while in Tokyo the percentage of female councillors was below 30. City Mayors' research in the US shows that while just under 20 per cent of the largest American cities have female mayors, more than 32 per cent of municipal councillors are women. In previous World Mayor Projects, female mayors have always featured prominently with the 2005 and 2008 prizes being awarded to women.

2017 World Cities Day in Guangzhou, China

The 2017 World Cities Day was held in Guangzhou under the banner of "Innovative Governance, Open Cities". It saw the presence of participants from over 40 countries exchanging and showcasing innovative practice from around the world in the areas of urban planning, building and management. The theme echoed the ideas of the 'New Urban Agenda' and the five development philosophies of China with the objective of leading the sustainable development of cities around the world and meeting the challenges brought about by urbanization. Guangzhou has actively played a key role in the realm of urban governance in step with the development concepts of innovation, coordination, being green, being open and sharing, while trying to establish itself as a hub network city and also an important node in the global city network. It

was expected that cities around the world would align their development patterns with the principals of innovative and sustainable development. Guangzhou would provide advanced experience, innovative ideas for urban governance around the world as well as obtain new development opportunities for the whole province's opening-up and innovation said the Governor of Guangdong Province. With the joint efforts of UN-Habitat, MOHURD, CCPIT and the Shanghai Municipal Government, the UN General Assembly adopted the resolution which designated 31 October as World Cities Day(WCD) in December 2013. The general theme of WCD is "Better City, Better Life", the theme of the Shanghai World Expo, while the annual theme changes accordingly.

■ The Big Story ■

GLOBAL DEMOCRATIC BACKSLIDE: LOCAL GOVERNMENTS' DOWNHILL JOURNEY

*Ash Narain Roy and Ravindra Vikram Singh**

All democracies—established and fledgling—seem to be traversing a dangerous road—reducing democracy to voting. That prompted David Van Reybrouck, Belgian author, to write a rather provocative article in *The Guardian*, “why elections are bad for democracy” (29 June, 2016). If national democracies are going through democracy deficits, are local democracies/municipal governments faring any better?

Democracy is facing threats from old foes in new guises in the shape of nationalism, religious extremism, autocratic capitalism, unaccounted tech titans, among others. When democracy saw tremendous advance in the post-Cold War era, it led to a perception that the trend was so powerful that it would not be reversed. In recent years, the fundamentals of democracy—free and fair elections, a free media, the rule of law and the rights of minorities are under attacks around the world. The year 2017 was the consecutive 12th year in which the number of countries becoming more free was outnumbered by those becoming less so.

Democracy may not be doomed but it is more fragile. Are local governments, the third tier of government, equally fragile?

The challenges of rapid economic growth require new forms of decentralised governance and citizenship. There is need to deepen democracy in ways so that ordinary people can effectively participate in and influence policies that directly affect their lives. This is where there are a lot of expectations from local governments. After all, local government is the “institutional embodiment of local democracy.” Local governments are also instruments of deepening democracy.

Reform and institutional innovations in the local governance seem to have halted. Local bodies in the developing countries are perennially short of funds. Rather than becoming institutions of government, these elected councils have become agencies for implementing Central /state governments' development schemes.

A recent study by Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), suggests that lack of autonomy in managing their own resources has hampered the growth of local governments in Latin America. The

*Ash Narain Roy is Director, Institute of Social Sciences, Delhi. Ravindra Vikram Singh is an intern with the Institute of Social Sciences

The Big Story

study analyses seven countries—Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Peru and Venezuela which points to several factors that hamper meaningful decentralisation including lack of local institutional capacity to manage taxes properly. The study further says that political constraints have prompted central governments to exercise greater control over local authorities. Central governments are often the biggest obstacle to decentralization because they fear they will lose fiscal control, political bargaining power and bureaucratic influence. Greater fiscal decentralization alone would allow state and municipal governments to better allocate resources to meet local needs while making mayors more accountable for their spending because taxpayers can more easily track what they are doing.

The scenario is broadly similar in other developing countries. High levels of corruption mark the functioning of the local governments in Africa, especially in service delivery. A recent Action Aid report on Uganda says that “corruption is still a big cancer in the communities and many Ugandans at the grassroots do not know why those who report cases of corruption don’t get justice...The rich still play big role in using their money to victimise the poor. The political and administrative leadership at the municipality has sold off almost all public land and the money is not banked on the municipality account. Huge sums

of money were paid to a firm to install the street lights in the municipality but the town is still in darkness...”

That the South African local governments have been embroiled in cases of corruption is open secret. In India, a total of 1,332 cases of corruption have been reported in three municipal corporations of Delhi alone. In the UK, there is heated debate about local governments not getting enough funds. Tom Crewe, a historian and journalist, in his book “The Strange Death of Municipal England,” says how gradually governance has become centralised and role of municipal governance has been reduced. The budgetary cuts currently challenging local authorities in England “are part of the wider attack on local democracy and on local services.”

Under the impact of financial meltdown and reduced resources and autonomy, local governments are struggling to survive. Austerity is not only destroying the local roots of the welfare system but systematically subverting local democracy. Local government in England has been divested of much of its power and independence, leaving the gap between the public and their government to be bridged by private companies.

Local authorities are a shadow of their former existence: after 1945 they have lost powers relating to social security, health, public utilities, and more recently they have

lost most of their functions relating to housing or social work. Education has been boxed in by a national curriculum. Planning and licensing have been strangled by the imposition of a quasi-judicial framework, requiring councillors to behave as if they were judges rather than representatives. There was a time when local government really mattered. At the end of the Second world war, the great city councils were responsible for police, hospitals, social security, fire brigades, water, sewerage and transport. They raised whatever level of local taxes voters would support and ran municipal enterprises ranging from abattoirs to building contractors. More often than not they did it very well.

With the rise of mayor, there has been a downfall of the city council. Ideology has no place in local government today and that running a great city is not very different from running a big business.

Local governments in the US, grappling with the financial crisis, face a number of constraints. It has created a number of extremely difficult situations. In general terms, the consequences of the crisis can be felt on three levels: 1) revenue, either generated by local governments or derived from State transfers, are in sharp declines; 2) expenditures are rising because of the slowdown in economic activity and the corresponding increases in unemployment and social welfare needs; 3) financing

capacities are shrinking owing to the difficulty in obtaining loans and the increase in the cost of money.

Governments have adopted different measures depending on political and institutional environment. The situation differs greatly from one country to another. In some institutional contexts, local governments are relatively sheltered while in others, they are exposed. In terms of assets, local governments that can invest their funds in the market have been directly affected by losses in capital. The deterioration in local government accounts is often one of the factors constraining the ability of these governments to borrow.

Amid a painful fiscal squeeze, some local governments are unable to meet their statutory obligations. Most local governments are reeling under huge debt burden. Many local governments are searching for relevance.

Governance remains the biggest challenge for local governments all over the world. Much of what local councilors do isn't governing. There are few powers over other bodies and organisations other than some statutory scrutiny functions – the recommendations of which are not binding on the recipients.

There are no signs of a radical devolution of power that would see primary legislative power passed from the centre to local governments. In many cases, local governments can hardly be called 'local' at all.

Global News

Eurocities Conference Concludes in Ljubljana, Slovenia

The conference had the theme of a circular economy as an attractive and viable alternative that businesses are exploring. A circular economy is restorative and regenerative by design, and aims to keep products, components, and materials at their highest utility and value at all times. The concept also distinguishes between technical and biological cycles. With cities being responsible for implementing national and EU recycling targets it is imperative that behavioral changes are mooted to alter consumption patterns that lead to a more sustainable and resourceful use of resources. Moreover as the procurer of goods and services, cities in Europe can guide decisions towards more circular choices, and build local partnerships with businesses moving towards circular production models. The objective was to strive to become circular cities and support the UN sustainable development goal of 'ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns.'

The transition to a circular economy is aimed to minimize waste generation and where value of products and materials and resources is maintained in a economy for a long period of time. This is in line with EU efforts to develop a sustainable, low carbon and resource efficient economy to transform the economy by improving waste management efforts. The event also showcased projects and actions taken by members to further the cause of the circular economy. The conference host Ljubljana had achieved excellent results over the past decade through the implementation of a comprehensive zero waste strategy. Representatives of the city attributed this success to a strong political commitment and leadership, sound management, investment in ambitious infrastructure, collaboration with citizens and an active communications strategy that promoted reduction, reuse and responsible consumption for all citizens. Edinburgh will host the 2018 edition of the conference.

Ambitious City Promises Project and Climate Change

Seoul was the backdrop for city leaders to come together to build partnerships and share best practices in the fight against climate change on 20 October, 2017. Coinciding with the launch of the Ambitious City Promises initiative, it showed the tangible action that cities are taking within global networks and coalitions. This initiative involved bringing together 10 million residents of Seoul in discussing and taking steps towards implementing climate action with the Seoul Metropolitan Government as the supporting partner. The Ambitious City Promises project supports city governments in developing and implementing low emissions development strategies emphasizing on community engagement across all stages of the process and thereby helping cities establish lasting

mechanisms to share knowledge and use participatory, bottom-up models geared for climate action. Now the plan is to spread this work in nine cities - Jakarta, Bekasi, Tangerang in Indonesia; Pasig, Marikina and Paranaque in Philippines; Hanoi, Soc Son and Son Tay in Vietnam all representing a combined population of around 36 million. The objective is to showcase how collective action taken in cities, with inspired leadership from local governments, can contribute to long term national and global climate goals. The initiative is funded by the International Climate Initiative (IKI) of the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB).

Belgium Bags 2016 World Mayor Prize, Germany and Greece follow

The Mayor of Mechelen, Belgium, Mr. Bart Somers who has been in that post since 2001 has been awarded the 2016 World Mayor Prize while the World Mayor Commendations was given to Wolfgang G Müller, Mayor of Lahr, Germany and Georgios Kaminis, the Mayor of Athens, Greece. One the key factors or considerations of the 2016 World Mayor Project honors were to mayors and their communities who have welcomed refugees and offered them safety, shelter and support. Most of the nominations that made it to the top ten lists had developed and invested in long-term strategies as well as considered day-to-day measures to successfully welcome and integrate people from different countries and cultures. At the same time they had also addressed local residents' apprehensions regarding these foreigners, who spoke foreign languages, observed their traditional customs or followed different religions. In the past tumultuous years it was clear that Mayors needed to get the support of their local communities to successfully integrate the huge number of immigrants that were coming into their countries and these awards honored

that courage and leadership qualities that was displayed by them. The onus is also on the Mayor and his/her team to further convince the local people who may be generally orthodox or conservative in their views and outlook and at times become hostile towards the immigrants. However these Mayors were successful in presenting an argument that welcoming the foreigners was a moral obligation and that they would make the towns and cities socially and culturally vibrant and richer economically. The mayors that were honored by the World Mayor Project had shown exemplary vision and skill to deal with this challenging but at the same time rewarding task that the towns and cities across Europe were facing at present. The Mayors, Spiros Galinos (Lesbos), Guisi Nicolini (Lampedusa) and Giorgos Kaminis (Athens) all three Mediterranean communities came in for high praise and got special recognition for welcoming refugees in large numbers who were escaping strife or poverty in the Middle East or Africa. Calls were made for more funds and other kinds of assistance from the international community that could help municipalities in the future.

Malta Hosts 2017 Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF)

The 2017 Commonwealth Local Government Forum Conference took place in Valletta, Malta from 21-24 November 2017. The theme for the event was: "Fit for the future: resources and capacity for effective local government". The Government of Malta through the Ministry of Justice, Culture and Local Government and the Local Councils Association of Malta hosted this conference for the first time. The 2017 CLGF conference focused on strategies for boosting the local government resource base and capacity to improve performance, governance and service delivery and also to ensure that it meets the demands of the future. It also explored enabling

financing mechanisms to support local government in delivering the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and a better quality of life to citizens, focusing in particular on innovations around fiscal decentralisation, technology, and funding to combat climate change. The recommendations coming out of the conference would be shared at the 2018 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in the UK. It would also go a long way in shaping CLGF's programs and activities in supporting local governments to strengthen performance and delivery.

Nagano Declaration on Renewable Energy

The Japanese local and regional governments released the Nagano Declaration at the Local Renewables Conference on 8 September, 2017 in Nagano, Japan. This was to highlight their support for a future in which cities and regions are fully powered by renewable energy. The thinking behind the declaration recognizes the fact that cities and regions in the country are facing a population decline and slow economic growth that requires local and regional governments to get involved with new ideas and strong local policies. The Japanese local and regional governments have rallied for switching from imported, fossil-fuel based energy sources to local renewable energy resources and they view this as an opportunity to generate new forms of employment, strengthen the local economy and

lay the foundation for sustainable urban areas to improve the quality of life for residents. The conference saw the participation of around 500 delegates from around the world and Japan and provided an opportunity for local and regional governments, energy service providers, business representatives and experts to jointly to push ahead towards a 100 percent renewable energy future for Japanese cities and regions. The event was a special edition of the Local Renewables Conference Series initiated and organized biannually in Europe by ICLEI and the City of Freiburg, Germany, hosted by the Ministry of the Environment of Japan, Nagano Prefecture and ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability.

Global Covenant of Mayors to Work on Climate Change Commitments

At a meeting of the Global Covenant of Mayors with representatives from more than 7,400 cities across the world the commitment towards efforts to combat climate change were renewed. This is in the background of the US President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw from the Paris agreement. This move has globally spurred greater local efforts to combat climate change irrespective of the US backtrack. In their first meeting city leaders from across US, Europe and other countries pledged to work as one to keep erstwhile US President Barack Obama's commitment towards fighting climate change. It is proposed that cities will devise a standard measurement of emission reductions to help them monitor their progress while also sharing ideas for delivering carbon-free transport and housing. Stating that the present US decision was a disappointing one, the Mayor of Atlanta, Kasim Reed said that he had travelled to Europe to "send

a signal" that US states and cities would execute the policies President Obama had committed to, whether the current White House occupants agreed or not. He added that the present level of collaboration, focus and sharing of best practices was an eye-opener and said that over 300 Mayors gave their backing to deliver the Paris accord commitments. Reed said that they have the ability to achieve between 35 percent and 45 percent CO2 emission reductions without the involvement of the national government and therefore it was important that the 7,400 cities around the world displayed optimism, passion and action. Calls were made to work closely with like-minded cities to forge a strong alliance to implement the Paris agreement in a pragmatic manner. A running theme during the event was to highlight the fact that the fate of America's Paris pledge does not lie with Congress or the White House.

Abhu Dhabi City Municipality Takes the Lead in Educating Employees

The Abu Dhabi City Municipality organized a specialized workshop to educate its employees about its Government Excellence System 2017 as part of its annual awareness plan aimed to disseminate the culture of excellence. This was in line with the general drive of the Department of Municipal Affairs and Transport of the Abu Dhabi City Municipality to promote a culture of excellence amongst its employees, leverage performance and provide modern services capable of meeting aspirations of customers, community and strategic partners. The workshop underscored the Municipality's commitment to ensure excellence culture and values as charted out by the Government of Abu Dhabi thereby highlighting the importance of continually leveraging performance in government institutions. This also supplemented the Abu Dhabi Plan 2030 and focused on utilizing the best methods and alternatives to provide integrated and quality services. The workshop divided the

Abu Dhabi government excellence system into three key parts: (i) realizing the vision, (ii) corporate enablers and (iii) innovation. These broad areas contained 12 key standards aligned with government requirements to support the Abu Dhabi Plan. The Award structure features 24 awards that take into account the diversity of business of government institutions that measures up to the objectives of Abu Dhabi Excellence Program to achieve leadership across all areas. The Excellence System also takes into account the uniqueness, peculiarity and difference in the business of government institutions by efficiently determining the weights of their own standards and performance through optimal utilization of resources and continuous learning and improvement. The Excellence System focuses on the delivery of tasked duties, and government requirements, besides showing the coherence and integration, and the achievement of objectives.

Sustainable Transport Award 2017 to Santiago

Santiago in Chile won the sustainable transport award (STA) for 2017 for making marked improvements in the areas of pedestrian space, cycling and public transit by redesigning streets in the city center with the objective of limiting vehicular traffic. In 2006, Santiago had opened Transantiago, an efficient service and the backbone of its transport system, but had since lagged behind other cities in the region on cycling and walking, before bringing in rapid measures to alter the scenario. The moves were the result of significant and transformative policy changes, educational programs and incentivizing the use of cycles. All of these made the Chilean city the sure shot winner in this category last year. The winner of the STA has the privilege of hosting the Institute for Transportation Development Policy (ITDP)

MOBILIZE Summit and Santiago held it on 30 June, 2017. The summit brought together a large number of international urban transport and development planners, practitioners, officials, researchers and representatives from NGOs. The platform provided an opportunity for them to study the case of Santiago as an international best practice in the spheres of pedestrian, cycling, public transit and policy. The award is given each year to a city that shows profound leadership and vision in sustainable transportation and urban livability thereby improving the lives of its citizens in the areas of mobility, reduction of transportation greenhouse and air pollution emissions and enhances safety and access for cyclists and pedestrians. Dar es Salaam will host the MOBILIZE summit in 2018 from June 26-28.

Mayoral Talks Between New Zealand and China

Chinese mayors were hosted by their New Zealand counterparts in December at Wellington with trade in education and primary industries highlighting the forum. It saw the participation of 12 Chinese mayors and vice-mayors from mid and large-sized cities along with 38 mayors from the host country. The earlier forum was held at Xiamen in China in 2015 and had a great impact on both the countries' cultural and

civic initiatives and in the areas of education, tourism and trade. Topics that were discussed at Wellington included trade and investment opportunities in tourism as well as education and primary industries. China is New Zealand's largest source of foreign students with about 34,000 in 2016. Incidentally both Xiamen and Wellington celebrated 30 years of a Sister City relationship at the Forum.

Mexico Hosts Global Compact on Cities and Migration

The Global Conference on Cities and Migration aims to combine thinking around international migration and sustainable urban development to feed into the implementation of the urban dimensions for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It also allies well with the Sustainable Development Goal 11 that has been designed to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. The aim of the annual conference is to create awareness within cities and town on migrants and to provide them with access to basic services, guarantee their rights and promote and facilitate their inclusion and participation to the social,

political and economic local fabric in order to contribute to the achievement of this specific goal. The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration ("Global Compact") was hosted by the Government of Mexico in December 2017, with inputs to the follow-up and implementation of the New Urban Agenda that will be presented at the 9th World Urban Forum in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in February 2018, using the Migration Governance Framework and its urban version and the local Migrants in Countries in Crisis (MICIC) guidelines, launched in Quito on 17 Oct 2016 and Quezon on 29 Sept 2016 respectively.

City of Buenos Aires and IPA, UK Join Hands

The Infrastructure and Projects Authority (IPA) and the Government of the City of Buenos Aires, Argentina, signed a Memorandum of Understanding in November 2017 that aimed at strengthening policy dialogue within the area of Public-Private Partnership and promotion of steady economic growth.

The MoU that was signed during the visit to London of an Argentine delegation headed by the Mayor of the City of Buenos Aires, Horacio Rodríguez Larreta, the authorities of both Governments committed to share experiences and best practices for the preparation, assessment and approval of infrastructure projects.

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Election News

Western Australia Local Councils Seek to Boost Women Candidates

Elections to local governments in Western Australia have shown an increasing number of women being elected and this is notwithstanding the relatively small number of women candidates battling it out in the polls. However still this is not enough according to the Local Government Minister, who said that there should be more women taking part in elections. It was noted that leading up to the 2017 elections women representation was low with 481 women among the 1,388 candidates. One the promising aspect was that most of the women who entered the fray did perform well. For example in Collie, a coal mining town, women form the majority in the

council. Councils in Augusta-Margaret River, Denmark and Dumbleyung have also seen new women presidents taking charge and many city councils too have welcomed women as rightful leaders. Bassendean has a woman mayor with women making up the majority of the council that is more progressive, representative and is gender balanced. Calls were made by the WA Local Government Association president, a woman, has called for more diversity in the local councils not just in the gender aspect but in other forms too. However the number of popularly elected women mayors in 2017 decreased to five from eight in 2015.

Sri Lanka to Hold Local Government Elections by 15 February 2018

The Sri Lankan Elections Commission has said that election to the country's local governments would be held before 15 February, 2018. It also mentioned that measures and steps are being planned to hold polls simultaneously in 341 polling stations. Special discussions have already been held in the presence of the District Returning Officers at the Elections Secretariat.

Nominations of the 248 local government bodies have been announced. A candidate representing an independent group in the forthcoming polls has to deposit Rs. 5,000, while a candidate of a political party has to deposit a sum of Rs. 1,500. The Elections Commission had also stated that party secretaries have been advised not to use religious places for election propaganda purposes.

Centre-Right Mayors Win in Italy

In a blow to the pro-refugees camp, Italy's anti-immigrant centre-right parties emerged big winners in the second-round mayoral elections in June. One of the closely watched races was in Genoa that has been controlled by the left for more than 50 years. Here a candidate backed by the right-wing Northern League and Silvio Berlusconi's centre-right Forza Italia party took 55 per cent of the vote. Across Italy the anti-immigrant wind was blowing as mayoral candidates supported by the centre-right won 15 out of 25 provincial capitals. Genoa along with Come, La Spezia and L'Acquila went to the centre-right parties. However the country's governing centre-left Democratic Party won Palermo, where Mayor Leoluca Orlando was re-

elected in the first round and it also won Lecce. The 5-Star Movement lost in the first round of voting and only made it to a run-off in one of the 25 largest races. It also failed to win in any of the provincial capitals. In Parma, Federico Pizzarotti was re-elected as an independent after he left the Movement. Notably Lampedusa Giusi Nicolini, one of Italy's best-known mayors globally, lost her re-election bid. Mayor Nicolini had become a national symbol of the Island of Lampedusa's eagerness to help refugees fleeing war and poverty and she was also awarded the UNESCO Peace Prize and shared the 2016 Olof Palme Prize with Lesbos Mayor Spiros Galinos.

Election News

Palestinians Hold Local Elections in West Bank

Palestinians held municipal elections in the occupied West Bank, a landmark first democratic exercise in years. However it also raised tensions between the rival Fatah and Hamas movements. With no legislative or presidential elections in sight, the municipal ballot is seen as a popularity test for Western-backed President Mahmoud Abbas and his Fatah party that was caught in a deep rift with Islamist Hamas. In the background of the political schism, Palestinians voted

for representatives in 145 local councils in the West Bank, but not in the Gaza Strip. Weeks and months of political and legal wrangling had preceded the local elections. Abbas's Palestinian Authority, which governs in the West Bank, and Hamas, which runs Gaza, blamed each other for elections not being held in the small coastal enclave. Hamas had earlier boycotted municipal elections in 2012, but urged its supporters to vote for representatives in these elections.

Global News

The Second Global Parliament of Mayors in Norway

The Global Parliament of Mayors (GPM) in Stavanger in Norway witnessed the participation of over 45 mayors and deputy mayors from around the world. The two-day event saw the city representatives deliberating on the theme local and tailored solutions to globally shared challenges. A strong undercurrent of creating resilient, safe, inclusive and empowered cities ran through strongly in all the discussions that took place. Twin ideas of local leadership and the involvement of the community were highlighted by the participants as very important when planning, addressing and implementing policies at the local level. The Mayors identified issues facing the majority of cities today with climate change, terrorism and the tensions due to increasing migration of refugees from war and poverty stricken nations. They also called for a collective resolution to issues that could adversely affect lives of residents in the long run, even if it meant evoking caution with respect to policies spelt out by international organizations. Addressing tensions have to take into account principles of global governance that provides stability and necessary steps need to be taken in this regard voiced many speakers. The city-to-city action partnering with network of institutions and meaningful local engagements geared for global solutions was strongly advocated. The Annual GPM began with the first Dr. Benjamin Barber Global Cities Award being given to Mayor Leoluca Orlando of Palermo, Italy in recognition of

his outstanding actions to advance citizen rights related to refugees coming into the city. Dr. Benjamin Barber was one of the main architects behind the GPM and unfortunately passed away in April 2017. Some of the key organizations that supported the event were Brookings Institution, The Chicago Council on Global Affairs, Pricewaterhouse Coopers, ICORN, UNICEF, The Red Cross, Arcadis, UN-Habitat, The European Commission along with network partners like the US Conference of Mayors and Eurocities and the Universities of Georgetown, Brussels and Stavanger. The inauguration of the formal GPM Association as a legal entity was also an outcome of the event. This was the second annual convening of the GPM. Mayors from large and medium sized cities across the globe including the Mayors of Atlanta (US), Cape Town (SA), Bristol (UK), The Hague (NL), Mannheim (Germany), Ghent (Belgium), Kandahar (Afghanistan), Caracas (Venezuela), Warsaw, (Poland), Hebron (Palestine), and Kampala (Uganda) participated in the GPM event. It may be recalled here that the objective of the GPM is to build an active, impactful and structured network of, by and for mayors and to offer a common global voice to international organizations, enhance cooperation, connectivity and solidarity between city leaders and advance global agendas of international organizations by supporting action driven regional and local initiatives and provide services that mobilize such initiatives.

Dr. Benjamin Barber Global Cities Award to Mayor Leoluca Orlando



Stavanger – September 25, 2017 – At the start of the Annual Convening of the Global Parliament of Mayors (GPM), Mayor Leoluca Orlando (Palermo) received the Dr. Benjamin Barber Global Cities Award. Mayor Orlando is rewarded for his tireless endeavour to defend migrant rights and create a safer city by fighting organized crime.

He advocates on behalf of the most vulnerable citizens, including economic migrants, and welcomes incoming migrants every time a ship arrives at the port of Palermo personally. He works with the EU to promote freedom of movement for migrants, offering his city as a blueprint.

By his outspoken policy, Mayor Orlando contributes substantially to the further development of global urban governance and citizens rights and is an inspiration to mayors all over the world.

“It is an honour to reward Mayor Orlando with the first ‘Dr. Benjamin Barber Global Cities Award’ for his outstanding actions to advance citizens rights. Dr. Barber envisioned a world where there are no refugees or others, but only neighbours and global citizens of a peaceful, just and sustainable planet. Mayor Orlando is making that world a reality, one day at a time”, says Mayor Patricia de Lille (Cape Town), Interim Chair of the GPM Committee.

The Global Parliament of Mayors created the ‘Dr. Benjamin Barber Global Cities Award’ to commemorate outstanding action or research on urban governance, contribution to advancing the values and principles set out by the Global Parliament of Mayors. By that, the GPM honors its founder, Dr. Benjamin Barber, author of the book ‘If Mayors ruled the World’ (2014), who passed away in April 2017.

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GNLG Secretariat & Editorial Office:
Institute of Social Sciences
8, Nelson Mandela Road
Vasant Kunj
New Delhi - 110070
India
Tel: 91-11-43158800
91-11-43158801
Email: issnd@issin.org
www.issin.org

Editor:
Ash Narain Roy

Assistant Editor:
Dino Anna Mathew

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