

The canton and City of Geneva create *Geneva Cities Hub* to amplify the voices of cities

Supported by the Confederation, the canton and the City of Geneva have formed *Geneva Cities Hub* (GCH), to facilitate relations between cities across the world, with city networks, and with international organizations represented in Geneva. Cities play a crucial role in managing global challenges and GCH will work to strengthen their presence in International Geneva.

An association under Swiss law, the GCH will link local authorities around the world to the unique networks of international organizations, diplomatic missions, NGOs, and research institutions that compose Geneva International. The United Nations has recognized the contribution cities make to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which the UN adopted in the context of Agenda 2030. In addition, GCH will assist cities and city networks to raise their concerns and draw on the expertise that International Geneva offers.

Cities are the front line

The voices of cities are not heard loudly enough, though cities are immediately affected by, and play a critical role in researching and finding solutions for, many of the world's most pressing challenges. There is an increasingly urgent need to acknowledge their importance and learn from their experience.

Geneva's unique concentration of public and private institutions mean that it is ideally placed to help integrate cities in global governance, notably in fields where Geneva has special expertise, including peace, security, disarmament, humanitarian action, human rights, migration, labour, economics and trade, science, telecommunications, health, the environment, and sustainable development.

The *Global Cities Hub* has been launched after consultation with a wide range of interested parties, including cities and city networks and international organizations, and is informed by the findings of an expert seminar in December 2019 that developed, examined and focused the principal policy directions that GCH will take forward. It was originally hosted by the Geneva Centre for Security Policy's Creative Spark unit, which supports and promotes initiatives that will have a positive impact on peace and security.

The keys to success

GCH will make a special effort to facilitate relations between its stakeholders without duplicating the work of other bodies. In particular, it will coordinate its activities with the main city networks through partnerships. "*Geneva Cities Hub won't be a new city network, but will link existing city networks, fed by content rooted in urban reality and informed by our own analyses and cooperation with academic experts,*" underlined Sami Kanaan, Administrative Adviser [Conseiller administratif] of the City of Geneva and GCH's inaugural President.

The success of GCH will largely be achieved by bringing together in partnerships and cooperation the many key actors of the urban world: UN Habitat, which organizes the world urban forum; United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), the largest city network, and the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments; the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), which will hold its first Mayors' Forum in Geneva in October 2020; the

Global Alliance for Urban Crises (GAUC), which already has a network in Geneva; Geneva university institutions working on urban issues; the urban focal points of UN agencies and NGOs; and many others. *“A summit of city networks will certainly be held before the end of the year to decide clearly how they and the Geneva Cities Hub can best cooperate,”* noted Mme Kamelia Kemileva, GCH’s interim Director.

“The Council of State is convinced that this new body will play a major role in facilitating exchange across different urban fields in Geneva International and will help to improve the ability of cities, their international networks, and urban actors emerging globally, to access the institutions of Geneva International,” according to Antonio Hodgers, President of Geneva’s Council of State, who noted that the initiative is in line with the approach adopted by the hosting authorities of Geneva International in their joint declaration of 16 September 2019.

“Today’s challenges – of epidemics, climate change, development – can only be managed through the cooperation of a wide range of actors: international organizations, States, civil society, academic institutions, and of course cities,” stressed Ambassador Yannick Roulin, Head of the Host Country division of the Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations Office and to the other international organizations in Geneva.

The *Geneva Cities Hub* will begin operating immediately from offices that the Canton has made available in the Villa Rigot. A director will be appointed in the next few weeks.

Principal objectives of the *Geneva Cities Hub*:

- Acting as a neutral platform, to facilitate relations between cities and city networks and organizations active in Geneva International.
- To raise the profile of cities and city networks among organizations active in Geneva International, specifically by organizing events and supporting the events of other organizations.
- To create a neutral space for discussion by and about cities by actively promoting initiatives developed in Geneva or by urban actors.
- To generate and sustain exchanges between international actors that work on urban themes in Geneva.
- To strengthen the activities of urban actors in United Nations and international fora in Geneva.

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