



Strong Cities Network  
**Fourth Global Summit**  
19—21 September 2023

Fourth Global Summit Event Report

## Peace & Security City Networks Coordination Meeting

New York City, USA  
20 September 2023



### Summary

On 19-21 September 2023, Strong Cities Network held its [Fourth Global Summit](#) in New York City, which brought together over 240 participants, including city leaders and practitioners representing more than 115 cities from 50 countries globally. The Summit featured 11 events and provided city officials from diverse contexts with the opportunity to share and learn from promising practices for city-led prevention of hate, extremism and polarisation. **Read the event report [here](#).**

The programme included a coordination meeting between Strong Cities Network, [The Carter Center](#), [United Cities and Local Governments \(UCLG\)](#), the [International Republican Institute \(IRI\)](#) and [Peace in Our Cities](#) to explore synergies and potential areas for collaboration. The meeting included representatives from the City of Edmonton (Canada), which participates in a number of city networks, to provide a local government perspective on how these initiatives can better engage cities. This coordination meeting follows one that was held on the margins of the [Cities Summit of](#)

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[the Americas](#) in Denver (Colorado, USA) in April 2023, where more than a dozen organisations that work with cities gathered to facilitate more connections and collaboration among them. Discussions there explored several topics, including data, communications, and the role of cities in the multilateral system.

## Leave No City Behind: Strategies and Approaches for Engaging Cities

The meeting started with recognition from **Laura Neuman, Senior Advisor, Office of the Vice-President for Peace Programs, The Carter Center**, on the plethora of city-focused initiatives that now exist. In addition to the initiatives represented in the meeting, this also includes efforts such as [Open Government Partnership \(OGP\) Local](#), a voluntary platform of 100+ local governments, 70+ national governments and 1000+ civil society organisations, which co-create two-year action plans on a range of policy areas, including environment and climate, health, justice and digital governance, [German Marshall Fund \(GMF\) Cities](#) and more. Participants additionally recognised that each effort brings with it its own mode of engagement with cities. For example, it was pointed out that IRI runs deep-dive programmes within cities and has developed city-specific resources to sustain this impact. UCLG, on the other hand, does not deliver programmes directly with cities and rather serves as an advocate for the role of local governments in implementing the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs) and other international development frameworks.

With numerous, sometimes overlapping efforts, the conversation turned to representatives from the City of Edmonton, who were given the opportunity to provide a local government perspective on both the benefits and challenges of engaging with these different initiatives. **Lisa Holmes, Chief of Staff to Mayor Amarjeet Sohi**, observed that when the last mayor's term ended, she found it challenging to find out what the City is involved in. She suggested that city networks should be more proactive in reaching out to newly elected mayors and their administrations, making it clear that the City is involved in their efforts and what that involvement has looked like so far. **Salima Ebrahim, Chief of Staff and Corporate Lead for Anti-Racism and Reconciliation, City of Edmonton** further reiterated the importance of engaging new administrations proactively, as this may help them shape their priorities and understand the resources they can tap into to achieve them.

With respect to modes of engagement, the Edmonton officials shared that there is value in both the deep-dive technical approach and that which focuses more on networking and city-city learning. However, they advised that regardless of the primary mode of engagement, city networks should focus on proactive information-sharing with cities, rather than relying on local governments to seek out the latest trends and emerging good practices themselves. "Networks need to report back", as stated by Ebrahim, particularly in light of local governments often being under-resourced and therefore not always able to join trainings and/or city convenings that require travel, and that they do not necessarily know what to look for in the first place.

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## Combining Forces: How Can City Networks Work Together?

With the growing number of city networks and other organisations working with cities, participants were asked to reflect on whether these efforts are becoming duplicative, and if it is worth mapping them with a view to better streamline them. While there was agreement that it is worth identifying synergies between these efforts, participants agreed that cities need these spaces as local governments remain neglected in many of the policy areas where they can make significant impact. **Pablo Fernandez, Director of Partnerships, UCLG**, added that overlap between city-focused efforts is therefore not necessarily a bad thing.

Further, **Eric Rosand, Executive Director, Strong Cities Network**, suggested that rather than collaborating to map all these efforts, it would be more useful for a selection of city-focused initiatives to come together on a pilot project addressing a specific topic. In this context, **Neuman** raised gender-based violence as an area where support is consistently requested by local governments and thus proposed it as the focus of a proof-of-concept collaboration among the organisations represented in the room. Participants agreed that this is a needed and relevant area they can collaborate on and committed to co-creating a toolkit and other resources for local governments on how they can help prevent or otherwise reduce gender-based violence in their cities.

Another area of collaboration that was discussed is in the context of multilateralism, in particular the [New Agenda for Peace](#), which is United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Antonio Guterres's vision "for multilateral efforts for peace and security". It provides a series of recommendations that Member States are advised to action to prevent conflict and violence, strengthen peace operations, implement innovative and novel approaches to resolving conflict, and strengthen international governance as this relates to security. Participants agreed that they should jointly advocate for the role of local governments in implementing the recommendations of the New Agenda for Peace, with one participant proposing a joint campaign around cities being reliable and essential partners in conflict prevention. **Fernandez** added that in addition to informing this agenda, it may be worth considering pushing for a peace agenda specifically for cities. Finally, participants agreed that they should work together to ensure local government voices are well represented in the UN's 2024 [Summit of the Future](#), which builds on the 2023 [SDG Summit](#) and seeks to improve cooperation on existing and emerging critical challenges.

## What's Next?

As **Bojan Francuz, Programme Officer, Peace in Our Cities** stated, "there are very concrete touchpoints for us [as city-focused initiatives] to explore". The above areas of collaboration are two such touchpoints, which Strong Cities will take forward over the coming months in partnership with the other city networks that were present in the meeting. In all this, and as **Barbara Smith, Vice President for Peace Programmes, The Carter Center**, stressed, Strong Cities, The Carter Center and other partners will ensure that it is local governments that set the agenda for this ongoing collaboration.

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The Fourth Global Summit was made possible with generous support from the European Union, Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and US Department of State.

Strong Cities is also grateful to The Carter Center and Peace in Our Cities for their support in making this coordination meeting happen.

*The views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of all meeting participants, Summit partners nor sponsors.*

## Contact Us

For more information about Strong Cities Network and/or the Fourth Global Summit, please contact Allison Curtis, Deputy Executive Director, at [ac@strongcitiesnetwork.org](mailto:ac@strongcitiesnetwork.org).

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