



**Global
Challenges
Foundation**

A Global League of Sustainable Cities

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The submission takes notice of the increased importance of cities in current policy making, and proposes a Global League of Sustainable Cities, circumventing current status quo of nation-states. The league creates a global network of hundreds of sustainable cities that synchronize their policies according to the best practices available to rapidly and decisively lead a fight against climate change, environmental damage, poverty, and violence. The League is open to all the cities in the world that want to be part of the solution to current problems, each pledging a percentage of their budget. The model creates a governing body, a general assembly, a body of experts, and a common know-how database using resources from the world's top-200 cities initially invited. Votes are decided by simple majorities. Appointed expert juries recommend policies and can also sanction cities violating agreements.





1. Abstract

A Global League of Sustainable Cities would be an elegant solution to accomplish much more and much faster than redesigning a global governance model based on the current status quo of nation-states.

The League would create a global network of hundreds of sustainable cities that synchronize their policies according to the best practices available to rapidly and decisively lead a fight against climate change, environmental damage, poverty, and violence at a deeper level than the one provided by nation-states.

WHY A LEAGUE OF CITIES?

Focusing on cities rather than on nations enables faster and lasting changes than keeping decision-making processes at the nation-state level. All problems regarding different political, economic or social systems would be irrelevant, as the decisions would be made at a city level, not in the central government.

Cities rise in importance, both economically and environmentally. Today, more than 54 percent of the world population lives in urban areas. This percentage will grow to 66 percent in 2050. The most dramatic, rapid and efficient changes to local legislation are already being done in cities, regardless of the political and social system currently in place in their respective nation states.

Cities are the major source of CO₂, NO_x emissions, and overall pollution, and they also exacerbate other problems like violence or poverty. But they can also be the leading element of change. Enabling access to a pool of world-renowned experts with local knowledge and a binding international framework would allow them to apply the right policies and optimize their resources. Being part of an elite league of cities would also bring prestige and funds for developing and implementing sustainable standard policies that apply to their respective regions and cultures, avoiding the errors that come from the lack of information.

Last, but not least, conflicting national agendas would be lessened, as it is in the cities' best interest to solve their problems through sustainable policies.

THE GLOBAL LEAGUE OF SUSTAINABLE CITIES – HOW DOES IT WORK?

The League is open to all the cities in the world that want to be part of the solution to current problems, without regard to political or social systems. Any participant city has to pledge and commit a fraction of its budget (1-5 percent per year) to the League and for meeting its objectives.

The League's goal would be to entice mayors to be a part of an elite club that moves the world forward through efficient and sustainable policies that are not tied to political, social or economic vested interests.

It would have a *Governing Body* that would meet monthly to define, vet for financing and monitor the implementation of its policies, as well as a *General Assembly* that would meet twice per year to vote the measures put forward by the Governing Body.

Directly underneath the Governing Body would stand a *Body of Experts* formed from full-time hired experts on specific Departments that define the policies for each main direction indicated by the Governing Body.



The fourth element would be an online database, the *Sustainability Knowledge Pool*, that would be structured as an open pool of knowledge created by the experts in their respective fields, enabling each city easy and fast access to policies and measures that fit best with their specific necessities.

The League would accomplish its goals through four main processes: the bi-annual Agreements of the General Assembly, the monthly Directives of the Governing Body, the periodic policy documents from the Body of Experts and the daily use of the Sustainability Knowledge Pool by its members.

Usually, the vote in the Governing Body is consensual with a simple majority, as is the case with the General Assembly. Some specific actions require a two-thirds majority.

Each city is held responsible for observing the Agreements it decides to enter. Some of the cities may enter all the Agreements put forth by the Governing Body to the General Assembly, while others may opt only for some of the said Agreements. The General Assembly may vote to eliminate from the Governing Body or even from the League the cities that do not meet a required number of Agreements and their criteria in a defined timeframe.

Each participant city would split its financial contribution between financing the activities of the League and implementing the policies put forward by it. A major part of the funds pledged would go towards the latter.

The result is that this global network of cities commits to a list of sustainability goals, then receives the relevant information about the best practices and provides the funding necessary to implement them. It would act like a major change factor at a much faster pace than the nation-states.

THE GLOBAL LEAGUE OF SUSTAINABLE CITIES – THE FOUNDING PROCESS

The initial *League Sponsors* would be the Global Challenges Foundation and any other organism willing to finance the *Founding Conference*. They will launch an open invitation to 300 major cities of the world to assemble as the League Founders in a prestigious location, provide them with the relevant documentation and push for the creation of the Global League.

Founders would be the cities' mayors. During the Founding Conference, they would form a General Assembly, in which each city has one vote. This Assembly would first elect a Governing Body (GB). This body would define the central tenets as suggested by the Sponsors in the Conference documentation and will create the organisms that would monitor and implement policies in the entire network of cities.

The GB would be formed by a total of 24 yearly elected representatives from all the continents. Five from Europe, four from North and Latin America, three from South America, five from Africa, seven from Asia and Oceania.

The GB would then have three months to define and vote upon the main founding documents and organisms that would be presented in front of the General Assembly at the second Conference. After the vote, the League will essentially start its work.



2. Description of the model

THE GLOBAL LEAGUE OF SUSTAINABLE CITIES – PURPOSE

The purpose of the Global League of Sustainable Cities is to create a network of hundreds and eventually thousands of cities that pledge to act fast and decisively on problems like climate change, environmental damage, poverty, and violence.

Its main activity would be to define standard sustainable policies in all these major directions through the work of a body of regional and local experts, to pledge the financing of their implementation and to monitor their progress.

Its lean structure would enable the League members to have easy and fast access to the best practices in any of the major directions, implementing them without the interference of the national political, economic or social systems. Standardization is paramount. These standard policies would be adapted to regional realities and would ensure that extant resources are used efficiently. No city in the League would have to reinvent the wheel or to waste time and precious resources doing more harm than good while trying to solve a problem.

THE GLOBAL LEAGUE OF SUSTAINABLE CITIES – WHO CAN JOIN

At first, the top 200 largest cities from all main continents, will be invited to join the League. Also invited would be other 100 culturally and economically important cities around the world, even if they don't meet the population criteria (national or regional capital cities, etc.). A total of 550,000,000 people live in these cities alone. They are also responsible for a major part of the CO2 emissions and pollutants in their respective regions.

This invitation would be then extended towards smaller cities, quickly expanding the League towards a general population of over 1,000,000,000 people, in a 5-year horizon. A city may also request to join by contacting the League through official channels and would be accepted by the vote of the General Assembly, held twice per year. Cities with a population below 500,000 people may only request Observer status, at least at first.

Any city that wants to join has to pledge a percentage of its annual budget (1-5 percent) towards the League and the implementation of its policies. It would also be legally bound by the Agreements that it enters, upon penalty of exclusion from the League and its institutions.

THE GLOBAL LEAGUE OF SUSTAINABLE CITIES – INSTITUTIONS AT A GLIMPSE

The General Assembly (GA) – is formed by the total of the cities representatives (mayors or other delegates). Each city has one vote of equal power. Decisions are made with a simple majority. No representative is paid for its participation at the Assembly. However, the League covers the costs of their related activity.

The General Assembly is held twice per year. Members can be physically present or participate through online means. Its purpose is to debate the Governing Body's proposed policies, to vote for them and to enter or decline Agreements on each policy. It also votes on financial matters and holds yearly elections for the Governing Body's members.



The Governing Body (GB) – is formed by a total of 24 yearly elected and paid representatives from all the continents. Five from Europe, four from North America, three from South America, five from Africa, seven from Asia and Oceania. Each year, its presidency will rotate from one continent to another. Each GB member represents its city, and the city can name or recall its representative within the Body without losing the seat in the GB.

The Governing Body would meet for three days once per month to define, vet for financing and monitor the implementation of its policies. It would oversee the Body of Experts work and prepare the General Assembly activities.

The Body of Experts (BE) – is formed by hired experts that work full time for the League. There are six main Departments, managed by Department Leaders: climate change, environmental damage, sustainable economy, sustainable transport, education, and public safety. Other departments would be added by the GB, after the vote in the General Assembly.

Each Department undertakes studies and defines policies and best practices for each of the different regions of the world, taking into account local particularities (climate, culture, etc.). It then forwards these policies to the Governing Body's Secretariat, that defines the GB meeting's agenda. The Departments can also issue calls for projects in their relevant fields to solve specific problems, upon the approval of the Governing Body.

The Knowledge Pool – is an online database structured by a specific department of the Body of Experts. It gathers all the relevant policies and best practices documents from all other departments and puts them online to be accessible in an easy and straightforward manner by all the League members. It also gathers and publishes testimonials and case studies for the implementing of the above actions.

THE LEAGUE OF SUSTAINABLE CITIES – INSTITUTIONS IN DETAIL

The General Assembly

The General Assembly (GA) is formed by all the representatives from the member cities. Usually, the cities are represented at a mayoral or vice-mayoral level. It meets twice per year at a defined location (each member city can apply for hosting the General Assembly, and the location is voted upon in the GA). Members can also participate online via a live transmission from the Assembly and through an online voting system.

Each member with a population above 500,000 has exactly one vote. The others would have Observer status, with all the benefits of a full membership, except the voting rights. Two or more such smaller cities could unite into a single membership with more than 1,000,000 population and thus get a vote in the GA.

Each vote is equal. Decisions are made with a simple majority. The matters put forth before the Assembly are defined by the Governing Body, but each member can communicate towards the GB its desired matters in a specific timeframe before the Assembly. The GB can choose to admit or ignore request as it deems fit.



The Assembly:

- elects, every year, the members of the Governing Body. Each city can vote only for the members of its own continent.
- votes on the Policies and Agreement Proposals put forward by the Governing Body
- votes on the type of projects that can receive Financial Aid from the GB in the next 6 months
- votes on the accepting or expulsion of a city from the League
- votes on the creating of new Departments in the Body of Experts
- issues a final Statement for the next 6 months, with clear goals attached to it

The Governing Body

The Governing Body (GB) is formed by 24 elected representatives through the vote of the GA. Each city can have only one representative. These are paid for their activity at the League, but they are not full-time employees. Rather, they usually are mayors or vice-mayors that devote a part of their time for the League's activities.

A city may designate whatever person it deems fit for this activity; it can also recall and replace it with another representative, but no more than three times per year, to ensure continuity.

The GB votes for a President and two Vice-Presidents that would serve in this position for one year. The President has the same rights and obligations as the other GB members but also coordinates the GB activities, helped by the two Vice-Presidents. He also keeps close contact with the General Assembly and the Body of Experts' Department Leaders, as well as with the General Secretary. He also represents the League in its external dealings, but only according to the specific mandates voted in the GB and GA.

The GB assembles once per month, for three full days. The location can vary from month to month, as the GB votes and decides. A three-hour meeting in the afternoon of the first day settles the Agenda. An eight-hour meeting on the second day offers enough time for hearing the Body of Experts' proposals, as well as for debate and voting. A four-hour session on the third day allows for final voting and defining the next GB meeting's agenda.

There are four main documents that are being voted on by the GB: *Policies*, *Financing Aid*, *Agreement Proposals* and *Approvals* for the Body of Experts' requests.

Policies: these are detailed documents that describe what specific actions need to be done to solve a problem. Policies are drafted by the Body of Experts and submitted for vote to the GB. The GB can amend them, approve them or return them for further development.

Financing Aid: these are financing approvals for specific projects drafted by the Body of Experts. These may be studies, calls for projects, pilot projects or other projects coordinated directly by the League.



Agreement Proposals: these are more general documents drafted by the GB Secretariat, based on the necessary policies determined by the Body of Experts. They are adopted by the GB and forwarded towards the League Members for feedback. In the last meeting before the General Assembly, the GB would choose the Agreement Proposals it wants to put forward for the GA meeting agenda.

Approvals: these are documents that approve namings, new job positions, budgeting and other routine activities. Examples:

- The monthly agenda for each Department of the Body of Experts, as submitted by the Department Leader
- Annual budgets for each Department
- Budgetary modifications for each Department
- Specific projects that meet the budgetary limits already approved
- New job creation
- Hiring or firing of Experts or Department Leaders
- New member requests, to be forwarded towards the General Assembly
- Convening the Experts Jury for judging one of the members or experts
- Suspension or expulsion of members, after the Experts Jury has pronounced a decision

The Governing Body Secretariat

Led by a General Secretary, it's the full-time hired team that drafts the GB's agenda and keeps contact with the GB, the BE and GA, new prospective members, the media and the general public.

It has several departments that cover all the usual bases in a corporation: accounting, marketing, PR, GB relations, GA relations, BE relations etc. Each department has a minimum staff to meet the Secretariat's needs. Its structure and personnel are defined by the GB and approved by vote by the GA.

The Body of Experts

This body is formed by a total of six Departments (the number may be increased by the decisions of the GA and GB). Each Department has 5 teams with 10 members each and one Team Leader, for each continental region: *Europe, North and Latin America, South America, Africa, Asia and Oceania*.

The Body of Experts will have its own building at the headquarters of the League of Sustainable Cities, along with the Governing Body Secretariat. The location would be chosen by the Governing Body and voted by the General Assembly.

Each Department has a **Department Leader (DL)**, named by the Governing Body from a list of international personalities provided by the League Sponsors (with the help of a head-hunting agency). Department Leaders have to be mainstream scientists from their respective fields and present a convincing case both before the League Sponsors (to be included in the list) and before the Governing Body. They are named with a two-thirds majority within the GB. The GA can challenge the validity of each DL member with a simple majority motion, but they can be removed from office either by a two-thirds majority within the GB or the GA. This majority is needed because of the sensitivity of their jobs (they are the most important people within the League).



Each Department Leader would approve each of his five Team Leaders, also proposed by the Governing Body members from each continent. These also have to be internationally acclaimed experts in their respective fields. The Department Leader can refuse to name a specific team leader, motivating the decision. If, after three successive namings, the Department Leader still refuses to name the proposed team leader, the decision would be taken at the Governing Body level, with the vote of the entire GB.

Department Leaders draft the Department Agenda for the entire year and also for each month, along with the corresponding budgets, to be approved by the GB. They also coordinate the hiring of team members, the teams' projects implementation, and act as a general Project Manager for the Department.

Experts Jury

Department Leaders would also assume the role of Judge when the GB or GA approves a motion for penalizing a fellow DL, a Team Leader or a member-city. In this case, as notified by the GB through a simple majority vote, they meet as the Experts Jury and prepare their proposal before the GB, also through a simple majority (the judged member is a part of this Jury). The GB is bound to apply the Experts Jury's decisions if it cannot override them by a two-thirds majority.

The rules and regulations regarding the convening of the Experts Jury will be defined by the GB and approved by simple majority by the GA.

Team Leaders choose their team members. Each team can have up to 10 experts in addition to the Team Leader. The team members have to meet a list of requirements that are approved by the Department Leader and the Governing Body. They are hired with the help and vetting of a world-renowned head-hunting agency. They are not necessarily citizens of the team's continent cities, but they do have to be experts in their respective fields and continents.

Each Department Leader meets weekly with the Team Leaders and defines the weekly agenda, monitors the current projects and solves any problem that arose in the last week. Each Team Leader coordinates its team and drafts specific projects, financing requests and studies to be approved by the Department Leaders. Team members would work at the League's headquarters, but would also spend a lot of time in the field, visiting and discussing with the experts from each city member regarding specific regional or local policies.

Pool of Sustainable Knowledge Department

This is the seventh Department. Its Department Leader is also named by the GB, but it has only one team of internet and media specialists that would create, maintain and promote the Pool of Sustainable Knowledge website and communication channels. It will also participate as a member of the Experts Jury.

The PSKD is essentially an extremely useful tool for every city member and the repository of all the policies, projects and Agreements created by the League. It has to be easily accessible by registered members and has to offer direct and simple answers to problems that pertain to climate change, environmental damage, sustainable economy, sustainable transport, education, and public safety, as well as other subsequent areas.



Members can query the PSDK for answers regarding this areas and receive all the elements they need to implement the right procedures and policies in the most efficient way. For example, when defining the best CO2 and NOx-related transport policies, members could find out if it's better to invest in individual electric cars, in the expanding of the public transport network or rather in electric bicycles or scooters. False solutions would be thus avoided and public funds would be addressed in the right direction.

Other League Organizations

The General Assembly can decide to create any other legal bodies that it deems fit to fulfill the League's goals. Any member can promote a motion in this respect. The GB has to define the new organization and put it to vote in the next GA.

3. Motivation

1. CORE VALUES.

The core values of the League of Sustainable Cities are fundamentally oriented towards creating a better immediate future for all mankind. The actions of the League's members have a direct and discernible impact on the planet's climate and well-being. Creating sustainable cities is the only way mankind can move forward and pave the way for a better XXI century. Equal voting power for each member and adjusted policies to regional or local realities mean that every culture can contribute efficient ways for a sustainable future.

2. DECISION-MAKING CAPACITY.

No party holds a veto vote. No president can singlehandedly decide the League's future. Collaboration is embedded into the model. Simple majorities mean fast and efficient decisions. Two-thirds votes are reserved only for the most important decisions of the League. Enforcing the League's decisions is a simple process of comparing goals and Agreements with clear and direct metrics.

3. EFFECTIVENESS.

Contrary to public opinion, cities do not need big budgetary changes to have a tremendous impact regarding climate change, environmental damage, sustainable economy, sustainable transport, education, and public safety. What they do need is to heed counsel from experts in the above-mentioned fields. The League generates standard expert policies that can be applied by any member cities upon their own agreement. Sustained efforts over several years are much better than allocating big budgets towards the wrong policies. The budgetary percentages involved (1-5 percent of the member-cities budgets) are enough to generate desired change if and when they are applied as the League's experts indicate.

4. RESOURCES AND FINANCING.

Dealing with six main action directions (climate change, environmental damage, sustainable economy, sustainable transport, education, and public safety) doesn't require a large number of bureaucrats. Member-cities already have a bloated apparatus that can be put to use for advancing the League's policies. The model has six Departments and five continental teams per Department, consisting of up to ten people each, along with their Team Leaders.



A maximum of 336 experts, including the Department Leaders. The Governing Body has only 24 members, while the Secretariat would have at most 40 members in all its departments. A 500-member General Assembly should be able to hold each of bi-annual meetings at a cost of under \$2 million, including travel costs and other expenses. Including taxes and other expenses, the whole League would need at most \$60 million per year to function.

Of course, member-cities would pledge much bigger sums for implementing the League's policies, as a 1-5 percent of the budget of a 1 million-people city easily goes into the tens of millions of dollars. But the policies would be implemented locally, with full autonomy for the cities.

5. Trust and Insight.

The League brings together only the cities that want a sustainable future. Therefore, its structure is simple, transparent and uncomplicated. Alliances are possible within the League, and also some level of diplomacy. However, policies are defined by Experts, not by politicians. These are always posted online in the Pool of Knowledge and politicians in the Governing Body or the General Assembly only vote on adopting them or not. The change would come in the supporting cities even if a big part of the League's members has reservations about it.

For example, moving from a fossil fuel heating system to a solar one might be more difficult for some members than for others, but the cities that do want to move faster in this respect would still receive the needed policies and standards to implement this in the most efficient way. On the contrary, if a city constantly rejects Agreements, it would be suspended or even expelled.

All meetings of the General Assembly and Governing Body are public and transmitted live on the internet. They also are archived and available in the Pool of Knowledge.

6. FLEXIBILITY.

The General Assembly meets twice per year and has the means to change or add new mechanisms to its structure and components. Changes can be usually made with a simple majority. Even two-thirds majorities are better than the unanimity required in some current international bodies. As the focus is on each member's meeting its own Agreements goals, the room for political maneuvering and the usual backstage deals is limited.

7. PROTECTION AGAINST THE ABUSE OF POWER.

The League generates only two kinds of documents: Agreements and Policies. Agreements are completely voluntary, but once a city adopts one it becomes mandatory and is judged accordingly by the Body of Experts. Standard policies are basically recommendations but also serve as a mean to judge and validate each member-city observance of the League's goals.

If a member-city or more fail to meet the League's standards, the GB summons an Expert Jury that will propose the sanctions against the said member(s). While the Expert Jury makes the proposals with a simple majority, the GB would need a two-thirds majority to overrule the experts' opinions. The Jury, being made of Department Leaders who are renowned scientists in their respective fields, guarantees that science would come before politics in its decisions. However, its limits are defined by a decisive vote by the GB or the GA.



The General Assembly has the power to overrule the GB decision in cases where Expert Juries were needed, also by a two-thirds majority. This is a system of checks and balances that enables swift day-to-day decisions with simple majorities, but careful and thoroughly negotiated decisions in the most critical parts of the League's activities.

8. ACCOUNTABILITY.

The League's goals are to create sustainable cities in the short and medium term. Its president and Governing Body are judged accordingly through the vote of the General Assembly. If cities are not abiding by the League's standards, they can lose their status within the League or be expelled from the League altogether. If the GB exceeds its attributes or fails to meet expectations, its members can be revoked through the annual vote of the GA. The whole system is designed, however, to let the Experts define and promote policies that ultimately benefit member-cities that apply them.

It's not a political system per se, but rather a meritocracy that has political vetting. Thus, it's superior to any other political-based system currently designed.