



Mayors' Panel, October 13, Brussels (Belgium) Report

**Organization of World Heritage Cities (OWHC)
Québec Roadmap: Together towards a “New Urban Project”**

CONTEXT

At the [16th OWHC World Congress](#) (Quebec City, Canada, September 2022), mayors voiced their concerns about the challenges to which their cities are increasingly exposed. The combined effects of climate, economic, and social crises are putting considerable pressure on urban environments, which are particularly vulnerable in their historical and heritage dimensions. The political vision expressed by the Mayors is based on four main ideas:

- As the core of cities, the historical areas have shaped their identities. As a living entity, the historic city must continually adapt itself to continue being the foundation for the future development of the whole urban area.
- Interventions in these areas must preserve and dynamize all the functions that have to coexist in order to constitute attractive living environments.
- Their development in modernity must be carried out with respect for the idea that the city is made to live in and for the integrity of their heritage which must be regarded as an irreplaceable resource for quality community life.
- Local governments must create and maintain a permanent dialogue with all the actors involved in the development of the city.

The member cities of the OWHC have therefore decided to act together. They are determined to draw up a “New Urban Project”, which will contribute to the emergence of a new generation of urban development policies, strategies, and projects, nurtured by a heritage approach to sustainable development that reconciles the urban, the human, and the environmental.

INTRODUCTION

On October 13, the Mayors' Panel brought together the mayors of the 22 OWHC member cities participating in the *Québec Roadmap*. The Panel ensures political oversight of the process.

At the Brussels meeting on October 13, 2023, to which representatives of the main international organizations/institutions were invited, the mayors

- Highlighted the initial results of the *Québec Roadmap*.
- Adopted the “Manifesto” which revitalizes the political ambitions pursued (see Appendix 2).
- Validated the proposed conceptual and strategic revision of the challenges addressed in the *Roadmap*.



REPORT

The mayors and their representatives highlighted the following points in particular:

1. Paradigm shift and Roadmap

The Mayors' Panel meeting in Brussels marks an important milestone in the progress of work launched at the 16th World Congress held in Quebec City in September 2022.

The Mayors' Panel validated the Manifesto, the revised challenges, and the concept of the Cordoba Symposium. These are important documents that will facilitate the pursuit of the objectives of the Québec Roadmap. The Roadmap represents an opportunity for OWHC member cities to share best practices and cooperate. It helps to foster greater solidarity in an international context that has become sensitive and unpredictable, and in which World Heritage cities are experiencing serious climatic and geopolitical problems, thereby also posing social and economic challenges.

Through the “Manifesto”, the Mayors' Panel underlined the original and daring contribution of World Heritage Cities that is being developed through the *Roadmap* process. The fruits of this new participative and concrete approach should be shared not only with all OWHC member cities, but with all World Heritage Cities as well. The success of the Roadmap will also serve to strengthen the Organization, whose mission is to bring together the expertise and know-how of cities, and to guide and support them as they confront the changes and upheavals currently underway.

2. Global issues and local action

Faced with the scale of the unfolding changes, new ways of acting and innovative urban practices need to be envisaged. This approach must ensure the preservation of our heritage while meeting the needs of our communities in terms of housing, nature, employment, services, transport, and the like, by proposing tools that will implement new solutions, in a sustainable perspective and with respect for the nature and uses of the city. Building this joint action strategy will help make heritage cities dynamic and resilient.

The formulation of the challenges facing the member cities involved in the *Roadmap* underscores the original contribution that OWHC cities wish to make concerning the profound changes to come:

- Adapting cities to climate change and reducing its impact
- Capitalizing on the ability of historic districts to reinvent themselves
- Enhancing the features that make the heritage city livable
- Promoting heritage as an essential resource for sustainable development

In this way, the OWHC is committed to the social role of heritage; it seeks to develop a plural approach to heritage, opening up the field of recognition and participation to all local players. For the Mayors' Panel, this openness is a sign of modernity that is both asserted and embraced.



3. A new approach and new partnerships

The OWHC wishes to develop partnerships with a view to the future implementation of its “New Urban Project” in order to better address the issues of heritage preservation and ecological transition.

The Mayors' Panel stresses that the contact established in Brussels with international organizations / institutions is a starting point. It invites the international organizations / institutions involved with the Panel to follow the Roadmap process in 2024 and to join in the work of the OWHC at the 17th World Congress of the Organization to be held in September 2024 in Cordoba (Spain). This will be an opportunity to invent new ways of working together, collaborating, exchanging, and opening up discussions, because without new partnerships that concretely involve cities in the production of future standards, international cooperation, and the dissemination of best practices, it will be difficult to meet the challenges of this century.

4. A wide range of topics covered

The Mayors' Panel highlighted a number of topics which are already the subject of work under the Roadmap or which overlap with situations to be addressed in the run-up to the Cordoba Symposium, including (for the record):

- Protecting and optimizing architectural, landscape, and urban heritage
- Making heritage accessible to the entire community
- Prioritizing consultation and dialogue with all stakeholders
- Enhancing the appeal of old town centres
- Remaining open to the world and welcoming diversity
- Managing mass tourism
- Combating tourist accommodations and housing vacancy
- Enhancing liveability for habitable, vibrant cities
- Establishing mechanisms to increase the housing supply
- Devising strategies to expand services for residents
- Making mobility accessible and pacifying traffic
- Reducing carbon emissions / demineralizing and greening public spaces
- Managing the energy transition
- Preserving nature in the city and promoting biodiversity
- Rethinking sustainability by promoting frugality and reclamation

NEXT STEPS

The first two stages of the Roadmap will continue in an ongoing cycle, enabling as many member cities as possible to join or associate themselves with the process.

Participating cities will make valuable contributions by identifying the various topics raised by their particular situation and will enrich the panorama of issues addressed by the Roadmap.



The collective work, carried out within the framework of Collaborative Networks dedicated to priority topics, will develop from November 2023 onwards. The results of this work will be processed as of spring 2024, with a view to structuring the Cordoba Symposium.

Before the end of 2023, the General Secretariat will establish bilateral contacts with international organizations and institutions in order to identify possible modes of cooperation and to work out the possibilities of participation in the Cordoba Symposium.



APPENDIX 1: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Cities represented

Bordeaux, France	Didier Jeanjean	Elected representative, Deputy Mayor, in charge of nature in the city and neighborhood tranquility
Bruges, Belgium	Minou Esquenet	Elected representative, Alderman for climate and energy, environmental policy, smart city and facility management
Brussels, Belgium	Philippe Close / Anaïs Maes	Mayor/ Alderman for urban planning and heritage
Cidade Velha, Cape Verde	Nelson Moreira	Mayor
Colonia del Sacramento, Uruguay	Walter Debeneddeti	World Heritage Site Director
Krakow, Poland	Robert Piaskowski	Mayor's plenipotentiary representative for culture
Dubrovnik, Croatia	Mato Frankovic	Mayor
Évora, Portugal	Carlos Pinto de Sá	Mayor
Luxembourg, Luxembourg	Shaaf Milani-Nia	Urban Planning and Development Department
Quebec City, Canada	Bruno Marchand	Mayor
Regensburg, Germany	Wolfgang Dersch	Elected representative of the Mayor, Head of Cultural Services
Strasbourg, France	Suzanne Brolly	Elected representative, Deputy Mayor, responsible for the resilient city, urban planning, and green spaces

Cities sending apologies of absence

Angra do Heroísmo, Portugal	Cordoba, Spain	Cuenca, Ecuador
Marrakech, Morocco	Morelia, Mexico	Puebla, Mexico
Querétaro, Mexico	Split, Croatia	Vilnius, Lithuania
Xochimilco, Mexico		



International organizations/institutions

Council of Europe	Ambassador Andryi Zayats	Head of Brussels office responsible for liaison with the European Union
OECD	Lamia Kamal-Chaoui	Director, OECD Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities
UNESCO	Oriol Freixa Matalonga	UNESCO Office in Brussels
EuroCities	Dorthe Nielsen	Executive Director, Eurocities
URBACT	Teofil Oliver GHERCA	Director of URBACT
Europa Nostra + Climate Heritage Network	Sneška Quaadvlieg-Mihailovic	Secretary General of Europa Nostra and Co-Chair of the Climate Heritage Network
ICOMOS-CIVVIH	Paula Cordeiro	President of CIVVIH-ICOMOS

International organizations/institutions sending apologies of absence

Cultural Heritage Finance Alliance	European Union - DG-EAC	European Union - DG-REGIO
Cities Alliance	UNOPS	Our World Heritage

General Secretariat

OWHC	Mikhaël De Thyse	Secretary General
OWHC	Andréanne Charest	Deputy Secretary General



APPENDIX 2: MANIFESTO

1. At the 16th World Congress of the Organization of World Heritage Cities (OWHC), held in Quebec City in September 2022, we Mayors emphasized the extent to which the combined effects of climate, economic, and social crises are exerting considerable pressure on urban environments, which are particularly vulnerable due to their historical and heritage dimensions.
2. Faced with the scale of the changes underway, but also with the consequences of the increasingly frequent natural disasters and armed conflicts to which our cities are also subjected, compromising the integrity of their heritage and leaving deep scars within communities, we need to consider other ways of acting and new urban practices.
3. We are convinced that the city is first and foremost a place to live, work, socialize, cultivate, build community, and open up to others. The city, as a living entity in constant transformation, is the bearer of a future that must guarantee a quality living environment as well as the sustainability of the cohesive and inclusive societies to which we aspire.
4. We have therefore committed the OWHC to an innovative process, known as the "Roadmap," which will enable us to collectively build a strategy for joint action. In the long term, it will consolidate the leading role that our cities can and must play in the search for solutions that we are determined to implement concretely, rapidly, and effectively.
5. Our aim is to take action to create more sustainable, resilient, and liveable cities. Ultimately, we want World Heritage Cities to help reduce carbon emissions, preserve biodiversity, and create healthy, peaceful urban environments by promoting a new generation of holistic, integrated projects. These projects should focus on the efficient use of local resources, the renovation of existing infrastructures, the retention of existing populations, the reduction of car use in cities, the creation of attractive public spaces, the promotion of social diversity, the stimulation of economic activity, and the revitalization of existing urban areas.
6. We are therefore calling for our cities to make a bold, original contribution to reconciling the human, the urban, and the environmental. From this perspective, heritage, in the broad sense of the tangible and intangible assets accumulated over the course of history, is an irreplaceable resource. It enables the city to reinvent itself within a framework of "regenerative development," in a historical continuity and logic that guarantees its identity and potential.
7. Convinced that the preservation of heritage, its integrity and authenticity, is inseparable from our vision of modernity, we are determined to move forward, together, and apply an original heritage approach to the urban developments to come. The elected representatives of OWHC member cities are committed to preserving and safeguarding their heritage, and are attentive to the application of heritage regulations, which must evolve in line with the need to adapt to climate change. The "Roadmap" will enable us to learn from each other, share our experiences, and support each other within the unique political network that is the OWHC. The future implementation of innovative urban projects will have to take place within the framework of renewed partnerships with key international players, which will enable our projects to achieve their goals and reach their full magnitude.