



The [Global Conference on Cities and Migration](#) was held in Mechelen, Belgium on 16 and 17 November. The event gathered more than 150 representatives from local authorities, related associations and networks, together with representatives from UN agencies, foundations and the private sector. Over 50 cities from Europe, North, Central and South America, Asia and Africa were represented.

The conference aimed to help build a more positive narrative on migration from the perspective of local and regional authorities. It served as an opportunity to consolidate local governments' contributions to developing a Global Compact on Migration and to review progress in implementing the migration-related commitments of [Habitat III](#) ahead of meetings in Mexico next month, as well as the [9th World Urban Forum](#) scheduled for February 2018 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

“While national and international discussions on migration and refugees often get too quickly polarized, local communities take a different approach. They know best what the needs are of their citizens – migrants and non-migrants – and are champions in finding creative solutions that

make sense. That is why it is so important that the voice of local authorities is heard in the Global Compact on Migration,” said Alexander De Croo, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Development Cooperation of Belgium.

“[Mechelen was selected as the host city] because of its excellent track record on migrants’ inclusion. The city has chosen not only to accept its super diversity, with 138 nationalities out of a total of 86,000 people, but also to embrace it as the new normal.” “Cities are not a problem, but a solution. After all, cities are always confronted with new social developments. Citizens are the key to the future.” said Bart Somers, Mayor of Mechelen.

The main outcome of the conference was the [Mechelen Declaration](#) , capturing the voice on Cities and Migration by Mayors and Governors of Regional and Local Governments. The document was submitted to the Special Representative of the Secretary General for International Migration (SRSG), Louise Arbour, and co-facilitators.

“All of our societies are going to become multicultural, multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multilingual. Mayors, even more than national politicians, really understand migrants and migration.” “We hope that the findings and conclusions of this conference will contribute usefully to the HABITAT III follow up process and to the Global Compact on Migration, through the Declaration that this Conference will endorse,” concluded William Lacy Swing, IOM Director General.

The Conference was hosted by the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation and the City of Mechelen, the conference was co-organized by partners [UN-Habitat](#) ; [IOM](#) (the UN Migration Agency) and [United Cities and Local Governments](#) (UCLG).