



Speech delivered by Peter Kurz Mayor of Mannheim, Germany, at the International Sustainable Cities Summit in Kadikoy, Turkey

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Dear friends and colleagues,

It is a pleasure to be here in Kadikoy with you today, and to be a part of this important conversation on sustainability. Of course, all of our activities these days are overshadowed by the latest developments in Ukraine. In the middle of Europe, we are experiencing a destabilization of peace and an attack on basic democratic values and the principle of territorial sovereignty. Our thoughts are with the people of Ukraine and with the refugees. These recent developments underline that nothing can be taken for granted and that we continuously have to stand up for our democratic values, for solidarity and for peaceful coexistence. As cities, we can build bridges through urban diplomacy, city twinning, and networks like ICLEI. And we can and must stand together.

The Russian war in Ukraine provides us with a painful reminder, that people cannot build a future where war reigns.

So, the global sustainable development cannot be achieved without peace. The sixteenth goal "peace" is in itself a prerequisite for all others SDGs. Willy Brandt, the not only for Germany important social democratic leader, once said: Peace is not everything, but without peace everything is nothing.

And if we look closer to Ukraine and think of Tschernobyl we realize: nature can survive humanity - but we cannot survive nature. To say it clear: Sustainability is just a much nicer word than the conditions for survival.

So what prevents and hinders us from achieving the sustainable development goals is more than dangerous. Autocracies are a threat.

Democracy and participation instead are drivers. Although they are not sufficient they are indispensable.

Fighting Poverty, quality education and educational justice, gender equality, decent work and reduced inequalities are not imaginable without democracy and participation.

And because cities are a decisive level of action, we need local self government and local democracy.

Cities have a sense of interdependence and that we need partners. We know that governments, however well they work, cannot address these challenges alone. We need the active participation of citizens and civil society. We need the expertise of scientists and academics. And we need the commitment of private sector companies.

Local government is the level of government closest to the people. We have connections on the ground with our residents. And we also have deep connections to civil society organizations, research institutes, and companies. These connections mean that we have an important double role. First, we must both listen to our city and its residents to understand their concerns and priorities, and ensure that those interests and priorities are reflected in





international debates. Second, we must use these connections to activate and unite our residents in our efforts to address climate change.

One central way in which we have done these two things, is our SDG localization efforts. In Mannheim we started with a broad-based participation process sponsored by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, and worked together with more than 2,500 Mannheim residents, companies, institutions, associations, and universities to develop the "Mannheim 2030" mission statement. Our mission statement thus both reflects the priorities of our residents and the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals. We were also able to harness some of the incredible creativity, intelligence, and commitment of our people.

Concerning climate change, we set now the ambitious goal of being a climate-friendly, climate-resilient and climate-neutral city by 2030. We are building on this work in our efforts to localize the European Green Deal with our own Local Green Deal. With the support of our residents, we are already working to make this a reality. I will talk more about this later this afternoon.

But for now, I think it's important to point out that with our mission statement, Local Green Deal, and other efforts, we are not reinventing the wheel. Instead, we are finding synergies in the work we are already doing and ways to work together better. Our goal is to make sure that all of our efforts are aligned toward common goals.

We have to ensure that these deals and priorities are not just lofty declarations. We are actually transforming our city. I want to give one example of what this looks like on the ground. Next year, Mannheim will host the German National Garden Show – or BUGA for short. We took the BUGA as an opportunity to transform the city.

We are developing an 82-hectare former US military site to serve as a so-called fresh air corridor, as a green artery from the north-east of the city to its center. Almost all of the area will be unsealed and green in the future. We are developing the space in a sustainable way, so that after the show, it will remain a permanent green corridor bringing Mannheim residents more fresh air, protect the climate and support biodiversity.

The BUGA also presents Mannheim with an incredible opportunity to engage with our residents – and the nearly 2 million guests that we expect will attend the show. We are using the BUGA as an opportunity to teach visitors about sustainable development and key environmental issues. The BUGA will be surrounded by SDG gardens, where visitors can learn about the UN's goals and how they can contribute toward them.

And perhaps what is most exciting about the BUGA is its collaborative nature. It is a joint project of many stakeholders.

Participation was key in developing a mission statement, building a fresh-air corridor and as well as hosting a garden show. By working together, we were able to craft a stronger vision and activate stakeholders to make the city a greener and more sustainable place.