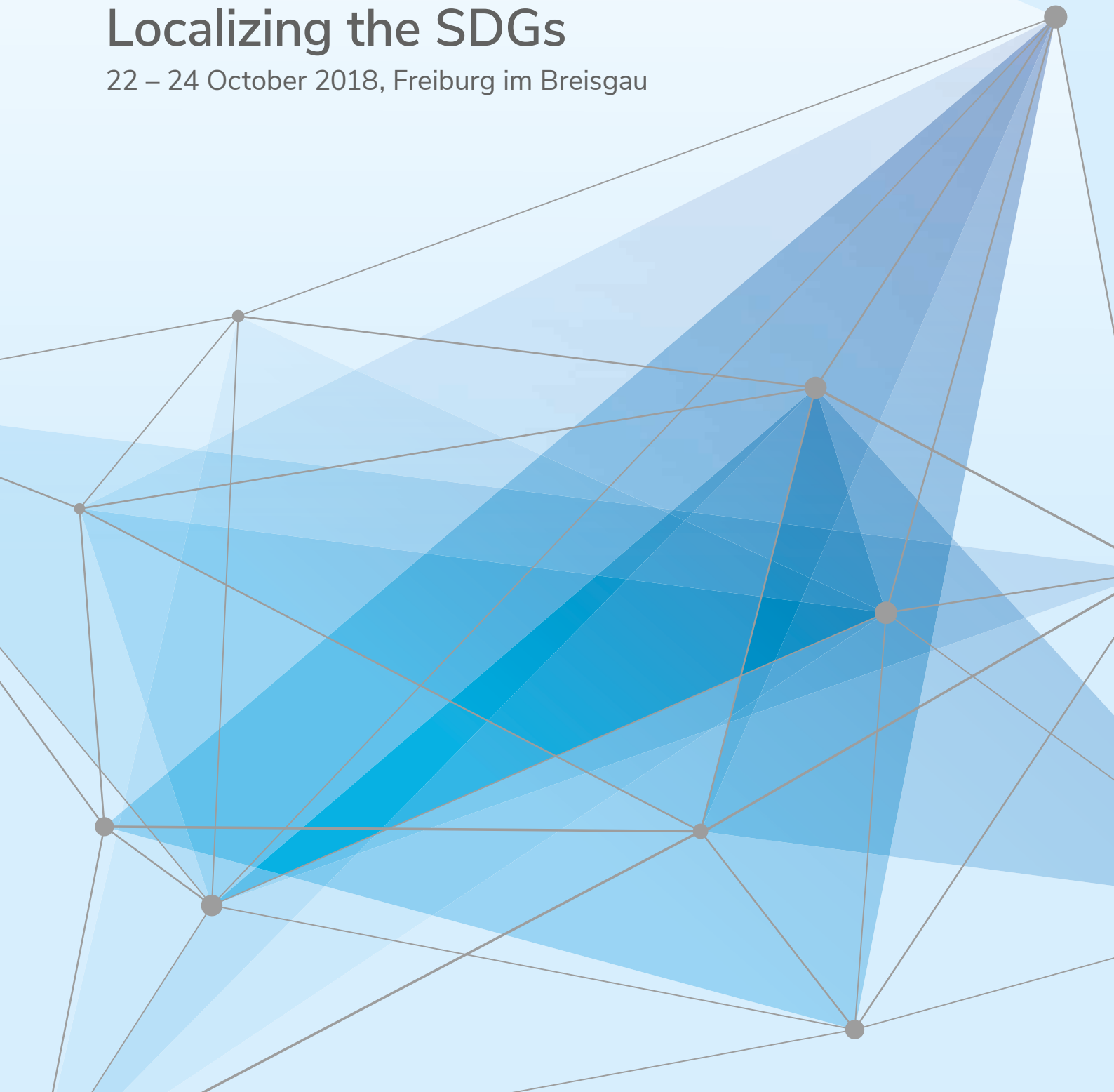


REPORT

# International Sister Cities Conference - Localizing the SDGs

22 – 24 October 2018, Freiburg im Breisgau



## INTERNATIONAL SISTER CITIES CONFERENCE 2018 – WELCOMING THE WORLD IN FREIBURG

The 1<sup>st</sup> International Sister Cities Conference took place from October 22<sup>nd</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup>, 2018 in Freiburg and was a great success. We are honored that mayors and representatives of almost all our 12 sister cities met here to exchange ideas and share their knowledge for a sustainable development on local level.

During three intensive days of conference, we learned about a number of exemplary sustainable projects and strategies which are being implemented in our sister cities all over the world. We also discussed the challenges we face in our respective work and elaborated together possible approaches. In various workshops with respect to the UN-Sustainable Development Goals 4, 11 and 13 we dealt with relevant topics and developed ideas about joint organized pilot projects. By sharing knowledge and creating new bonds, we built a global network of sister cities which is unique in its kind.

To consolidate the worldwide partnerships and connections, all participating sister cities ultimately signed the memorandum “Declaration of the Sister Cities”, setting an ambitious example for international collaboration with focus on implementing the Agenda 2030 and its 17 Goals on local level.

Since this conference was not at all one among many others, we aspire to further develop and implement the newly created ideas and pilot projects with our sister cities. By a joint effort, we will realize our plans and thereby achieve the ambitious targets defined in our common declaration.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all participants and sponsors, namely Engagement Global, to all partners and friends from Besançon, Guildford, Padua, Innsbruck, Lviv, Madison, Isfahan, Matsuyama, Suwon, Tel Aviv and Wiwilí! Thank you for your valuable contribution and your outstanding commitment! We are looking forward to meeting you again for further intense exchanges.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M. Horn".

**Martin Horn**  
Mayor of Freiburg i.Br.



BESANÇON FREIBURG GUILDFORD  
GRANADA INNSBRUCK ISFAHAN  
LVIV MADISON MATSUYAMA PADUA  
SUWON TEL AVIV-YAFO WIWILI

## NETWORKING & EXCHANGE

The first International Sister Cities Conference Freiburg took place from October 22<sup>nd</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> 2018 at the Historical Merchants Hall in the heart of the city, opposite the cathedral; one of the city's striking landmarks. For the first time, representatives from almost all sister cities met in Freiburg for a joint conference on the UN-Agenda 2030 and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



With participants from 11 out of the 12 sister cities, the City of Freiburg focused on the implementation of a sustainable local development as the central theme of this event. Starting with the conference on Monday evening, all guests came together for a traditional local dinner and wine tasting at the winery „Schätzle“. Stefan Breiter, Mayor of Finances of the City of Freiburg, opened the evening with a warm welcome speech about the characteristics of Freiburg and the region. He emphasized the need for collaboration to preserve the environment for future generations and to fight climate change. He also stressed that cities bear a great responsibility due to the fact that the majority of people in the world live in cities – and their number is growing. In order to meet the cities' responsibility – he explained – sharing their strengths and skills and fostering mutual friendships are important approaches and at the same time are the declared objectives of this conference.

“ THE FRIENDS OF MY FRIENDS  
ARE MY FRIENDS, TOO ”



During this first convivial gathering, many networking opportunities were given and the guests spent an enjoyable evening in a pleasant atmosphere. Thereby, under the motto “The friends of my friends are my friends, too”, the first International Sister Cities Conference was successfully launched.



## LOCALIZING THE SDGS AROUND THE GLOBE



The official part of the conference started on Tuesday at the main venue, the “Historical Merchants Hall” situated in the heart of the city. In the course of his opening speech, Mayor Stefan Breiter, on behalf of Lord Mayor Martin Horn, stressed the appreciation towards all sister cities delegations who took the effort of traveling around the globe to participate in this special occasion. “It is proof of your commitment to our friendship, and shows that this friendship between our cities and communities is alive and well”.

“ WE ARE BETTER OFF TOGETHER  
THAN WE WOULD BE ALONE ”

As responsibility today has a global dimension, neither economic crises nor climate change are limited to a particular region, or to a country. This means even at a local level, no-one can avoid being tackled by the major questions and challenges of these times. At the same time, it is becoming clear that they cannot be solved alone. By metaphorically comparing the town twinning with a marriage, Mr. Breiter stated that ups and downs on both sides are part of the relationship between cities and underlines the importance of keeping these bonds interesting at all times, knowing that they are better off together than they would be alone.

In fact, town twinnings open up new possibilities of exchange and collaboration on similar tasks and challenges, all equally affected by globalisation, climate change and threats to the environment.

Thus, this conference aimed at finding solutions for these difficult tasks and challenges by exchanging experiences, strategies and know-how, so “no-one has to repeat the mistakes someone else has already made”.

Local governments may be the lowest level of administration, but climate protection as well as social, cultural and economic responsibility do start with small gestures, with consumers, with renovation of buildings, educational institutions, with responsible urban planning and so on.

“ THINK GLOBALLY, ACT LOCALLY ”

By thinking globally and acting locally, each city can contribute to the achievement of the UN-Sustainable Development Goals. Thus, the first International Sister Cities Conference represented a wonderful opportunity to bring together knowledge, experience and good ideas for the future to create something new, something that all cities can take with them around the world.



Following the opening remarks by Mayor Stefan Breiter, Maruxa Cardama - Secretary General ‘SLo-CaT’ Partnership and founder of the ‘Communitas Coalition’ – captivated all those present with an impressive keynote speech including meaningful data and images.

By stating that 21% of the 169 targets set by the SDGs can only be implemented by local and regional governments, she specifically emphasized the important role of municipalities in this process. At the same time, she stressed the lack of concrete measures on the national level, such as specific targets, conducive national urban policies and sub-national

action plans as well as incentive schemes. These are “required to unleash the full potential of cities’ contributions to a more resilient and low-carbon urbanisation, as well as, ultimately, to achieving the global 1.5 degree climate goal”.

The fact that cities occupy only 2% of the total land, but produce 70% of the global waste and greenhouse gas emissions, consume over 60% of global energy and own 70% of the economy, shows the importance of action on the local level. Thereby, the SDGs serve as the new universal and integrated roadmap for sustainable human development that leaves no-one, no place and no ecosystem behind.





## THE SISTER CITIES' PRESENTATIONS

How do Freiburg's sister cities implement the SDGs in their respective local level? Which strategies or projects do they realize in order to contribute to the Agenda 2030?

**Besançon** is currently developing its own indicators for measuring the achievement of the UN-Sustainable Development Goals. This is due to the fact that the original SDG-indicators are rather suitable for the national level than the local. Besançon regularly publishes a sustainability report in which the city administrations' achievements are presented and future developments are indicated. Besançon – besides the other SDGs – very much focuses on topics such as energy and biodiversity, thereby making use of educational approaches to ensure citizen participation.

To be a town and rural borough that is the most desirable place to live, work and visit in South East England is the common vision of the city of **Guildford**.

This is to be achieved through outstanding urban planning and design, sustainable regeneration of previously-developed land and new infrastructure. Therefore, the city developed the Guildford "Corporate Plan" to be achieved by 2023.

The main issues the City of **Suwon** is dealing with are heavy traffic and air pollution as well as increasing population density. To solve them, Suwon applies people-oriented, environmentally friendly and sustainable strategies. Focusing mainly on SDG 11, Suwon also published an Implementation Report and installed a "Sustainable Development Strategy Team" in the Department of Policy Planning.

Meanwhile in Japan, the city of **Matsuyama** is countering the car-dependence. The idea is to implement a Walkable City Concept, aiming at revitalizing the city center, creating continuous pedestrian axis for a circulating and barrier-free walk and offering streets with scenery and rest spots to stimulate walks in town.

On the other side of the globe, **Innsbruck** focuses on taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impact as well as on making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. Therefore, Innsbruck developed an "Energy Plan 2050" to radically reduce energy consumption in a strategic manner, while involving different stakeholders.

In the south of Europe, the City of **Padua** collects and groups all its environmental policies under 8 areas of competence summed up in the «Environmental Report» for the period 2017-2022. Through the "CLEAR" method (City and Local Environment Accounting and Reporting), commitments, actions, measures and expected impacts have been identified for each area. Current projects like "LIFE Veneto ADAPT" or "INTERREG Central Europe Urban Green Belts" are designed to help cities to adapt to the climate change in a multi-level regional perspective and to sustainably manage urban green spaces for creating more healthy and liveable environments.

At the same time, the municipality of **Tel Aviv-Yafo** is working on the city's urban sustainable development by focusing on SDG 11 with topics such as transportation, public space and environmental quality as well as current projects such as the construction of bike lanes or the development of sustainable neighborhoods with a model named "The One Planet Living".





In Ukraine, the City of **Lviv** aims at ensuring healthy lives and wellbeing for all people at all ages, achieving gender equality, building a resilient infrastructure as well as fostering inclusive, sustainable industrialization and innovations. Thanks to the cooperation between Lviv and Freiburg, the cities work together on a project named “Green Technologies District”, funded by the German Federal Ministry. The aim is to apply energy efficient technologies in a model district and in doing so, ensure citizen participation during and after the project.



In the city of **Madison**, green projects range from Energy Efficiency Programs for the City and Community through “Zero Waste”-Projects or green buildings for new city constructions to Energy Efficiency Projects such as new LEED certified constructions (e.g. Monona Terrace Convention Center). Additionally, the city’s declared objective is to make Madison a model solar city for the Midwest (1 of 25 US Solar Cities) and to double the amount of photovoltaic and solar thermal systems installed in Madison.

Last but not least, in the north of Nicaragua, the municipalities of **Wiwilí Jinotega and Nueva Segovia** are working on the improvement of their water supply, medical services and education. Working closely together with the city of Freiburg, a new government-funded project was recently launched to address the local problems and challenges regarding potable water supply, waste water management, organic farming and so on.



## CONCLUSION

Despite each city focusing on its own main challenges and diverse topics, a variety of common themes were identified. This facilitated new opportunities to share ideas and experiences especially in regard to sustainable and resilient city development, which includes a wide range of working areas such as infrastructure, transportation, smart technologies, urban planning and many more. Furthermore, the need for exchange and know-how transfer clearly supports everyone’s effort to progress with the implementation of the Agenda 2030 on local level.

Transnational working groups or cooperations can be useful for further projects and developments in each city. International networks are capable of connecting people and local authorities beyond the national level and thereby giving a broader perspective on different issues. Even field trips to other sister cities can be a very effective way of learning more about best-practices in other parts of the world.

## PANEL DISCUSSIONS & GALLERY WALK

During the panel sessions, representatives of Freiburg and its sister cities discussed in detail the implementation of the SDGs including road use in the cities, involvement of local businesses and development of neighbourhoods. One of the key issues addressed the question on how to convince citizens and stakeholders to engage for a better tomorrow. The majority of people would not care about tomorrow, as long as they live a good life today, explained Arturo Lorenzoni, Deputy Mayor of Padova. The question is how to convince people that less is often better, such as less cars in the city area. This is one of the biggest challenges municipalities face while implementing the SDGs.



In addition, to promote networking and exchange throughout the conference, each sister city was provided with a presentation wall to visualize their commitment, projects and strategies during the „Gallery Walk“ and coffee breaks.





## IDENTIFYING COMMON INTERESTS

On Tuesday afternoon, the first workshop round took place and offered the opportunity to discuss each city's active contribution and projects as well as the obstacles and challenges involved. With the expertise of other group participants, solutions or ideas to tackle the described issue were developed. Participants could choose from the following SDGs: 4-Quality Education, 11- Sustainable Cities and Communities and 13-Climate Action. The discussed topics were then summed up in the plenary in order to give a brief insight in each working group's results. The next day, these topics would be ranked in order to work intensely on the most voted.



## CONCLUSION

This first workshop round allowed the participants to form groups according to their fields of interest. Challenges and obstacles in the implementation of the SDGs on local level were discussed and common features were identified. Topics such as intercultural education, citizen participation and urban planning were among the most relevant issues. As the final objective of the workshops was the creation of new projects, more specific topics had to be identified the next day.

## MEETING THE LOCAL COUNCIL

Before concluding the first conference day, the sister cities delegations followed the invitation of Lord Mayor Martin Horn to visit the City Council meeting which simultaneously took place.

For the first time, all sister cities' representatives were introduced to Freiburg's City Council members and gained an insight into a council meeting.





## WELCOME RECEPTION

In the evening, Lord Mayor Martin Horn welcomed all guests in the Historical Council Chamber for an official reception and networking evening. In his welcoming speech, he stressed the growing importance and relevance of the UN Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. In the age of climate change, extreme poverty and inequality, polluted oceans and deforestation, it is necessary to send a clear signal. In Freiburg, "Partnership for the Goals" as one of the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals, was filled with life and became reality during the three days of conference where all cities worked together on ways to implement the SDGs at the level of local government with the aim to make the world a better place.

Emphasizing that this event would be an opportunity to map out and discuss potential joint pilot projects with and between the sister cities, he also highlighted the joint signing of a Memorandum of Understanding: "This agreement between all of the participating cities aims to reinforce the findings, partnerships and project ideas developed during the conference, and to ensure that we stay in touch and monitor our collaborative work on a regular basis." Following the conference, the city of Freiburg will set up a Technical Commission consisting of representatives appointed by each city



in order to offer a platform supporting project implementation as well as regular dialogue and knowledge transfer. Moreover, Lord Mayor Horn pointed out that this conference should be the starting point for ongoing collaboration, and concluded his speech with the words "I believe that I speak for all of us when I say this – because we want to join forces to help implement the 2030 Agenda in our cities, and drive forward global partnerships and cooperations. This work makes us a role model for many cities worldwide, and it is an honour for me to stand with you and set an example of shared commitment, worldwide friendship and tolerance."

## CREATING NEW PROJECTS TOGETHER

On Wednesday morning, the conference was opened with a presentation about the efforts of the City of Freiburg. Focusing on Freiburg's sustainability strategy, Simone Ariane Pflaum, head of the city's sustainability management, depicted achievements, key facts and projects which led to what Freiburg is today – a green city with a variety of worldwide known exemplary projects. Afterwards, a short introduction to the results from the day before led to vote. Each sister city was asked to vote for the three most interesting topics. According to the final votes, five thematic areas of interest were identified which appeared to be the most relevant to all cities. The second workshop round was therefore held in five different workshop groups.

Based on the presented ideas, projects and actions the day before, the second workshop round focused on generating exemplary pilot projects which could be realized by a joint effort. The participants, thus, further discussed the previously emerged ideas and created a framework for future cooperations between the respective cities.

In this second workshop round, the participants could choose between the following topics:

- Citizen participation
- Involvement of business stakeholders
- Consumption patterns
- Renewable energy in densely populated areas
- Transformation of streets and public space





Back in the plenary, the participating city representatives presented their results and concepts for further cooperation and joint projects to the audience.

Regarding the workshop about “**citizen participation**”, the cities of Guildford, Besançon, Lviv, Madison, Suwon and Freiburg came up with the idea to create an Online Platform for regular exchange among experts with the aim of discussing citizen participation in the sister cities, especially with regard to SDG 11.



How to **involve business stakeholders** in the local implementation of the Agenda 2030 was the working title of Guildford, Innsbruck and Padua. The ideas ranged from creating a competition for companies, through a common “award of the sister cities” up to local awards in each city. The declared objective, however, was to raise awareness for the SDGs among local companies and to motivate business stakeholders to reflect on their own contribution to the SDGs.

The central topic of discussion by Besançon, Freiburg, Madison and Wiwilí was **consumption patterns**

with a focus on education. The participants came up with the idea of conducting intercultural exchanges for sustainability which includes the creation of a network between schools. Through this network, pupils and students shall be motivated to share media reports regarding local challenges such as environment, climate and energy. Besides, a community garden could serve as a place for environmental and sustainable development education as well as awareness raising. The aim of this common project is to foster a profound understanding of ecological challenges, especially in a social context and with respect to the own behaviour.

Freiburg, Innsbruck and Matsuyama created a project concept on the subject of **renewable energy in densely populated areas**. For the upcoming 3 years, they plan to install solar panel collectors on the rooftop of a public building in each city in order to provide them with solar energy. Therefore, an intensive exchange of experience and knowledge is planned in a first project period. To find overall solutions for solar energy in densely populated areas is the objective of this project.

Regarding the **transformation of streets and public space**, the cities of Besançon, Guildford, Innsbruck, Matsuyama, Padua and Tel Aviv discussed the reduction of parking space, changes in public transport through e-mobility and raised the question of how to be less car-friendly and – at the same time – achieve a change in citizen behaviour. In order to develop new communication strategies and create common space, the cities plan to regularly exchange current strategies, ideas and best-practices among each other through an exchange platform and webinars.

## CONCLUSION

All projects and cooperations created in the course of the conference are consolidated through the Technical Commission. This commission consists of representatives of each sister city and aims at monitoring and accompanying the newly started processes in each group.

In addition, the Technical Commission serves as an exchange platform for all sister cities and summarizes all project concepts and progresses in the future.

## THE SISTER CITIES DECLARATION – A MILESTONE IN GLOBAL COOPERATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY

The International Sister Cities Conference 2018 concluded with a joint declaration which constituted the highlight of the conference. By signing the Sister Cities’ Declaration, all participating cities committed themselves to implementing the Agenda 2030 and its SDGs on their respective local level.

This joint Memorandum of Understanding is meant to strengthen the cities’ collaboration on the topics of the Agenda 2030 and to maintain the global network which has been created during the conference. At the same time, the common declaration was designed to ensure further realisation and monitoring of the newly created projects as well as to foster exchange of experiences and knowledge. By signing this declaration jointly, all sister cities agreed to take action to transform the world for the better.





## CONCLUDING THE ISC18

Closing the conference, Lord Mayor Martin Horn emphasized that all those participating have created a strong network that stretches across borders and added, "We have reached a milestone. We have signed our joint Memorandum of Understanding, which will kick-start a number of exciting projects and collaborations."



In fact, after three successful days of conference, the bonds between Freiburg and its sister cities became stronger and will surely be further strengthened. New cooperations and networks emerged to carry out a variety of new projects together. All participating cities are truly committed to promoting a sustainable local policy, to work and engage for a better tomorrow – for us and the generations to come.



### IMPRINT

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