

THE DECLARATION OF BEIRUT 2006 ON INTERMEDIATE CITIES

After the initiative of the Lebanese section of the UIA, Region II and the Branch of the Architects, an international conference took place in Beirut on the 8th and 9th of March 2006. This conference was organized in collaboration with the UMAR and the UNESCO. Experts from twenty-two different countries presented their diverse experiences on numerous topics related to intermediate cities.

This important international event was marked by the speech of the Lebanese Prime Minister, H.E. Fuad Siniora, during the official reception in honor of the participants in this conference. Mr. Fuad Siniora outlined the principal ongoing reformation projects in Lebanon:

- The reconstruction of Downtown Beirut.
- The instigation of an ambitious project for the protection of the cultural patrimony and for the urban development of five intermediary cities: Tripoli, Byblos, Saïda, Tyr and Baalbeck.

This conference follows the declaration of Lleida on Intermediate Cities and the urbanization of the World, which treated the following major concepts and principles:

- An extended definition of the concept of intermediate cities.
- A concept of intermediate cities as an important and diverse group of urban structures.
- An appropriate intermediate scale to study future plans of urbanization, participative management, and sustainability.

The Beirut conference followed up adequately on the discussions engaged at Lleida, considering the richness and the diversity of the interventions (planning, architecture, housing, urban culture, patrimony, tourism, natural disasters, etc.), also considering the numerousness of the cities, whose cases were presented (Tripoli, Saïda, Liège, Beirut, Izmir, Aleppo, Nabulus, Bahia, Tunis, Antioch, Kavala, Bucarest, Amman, Marmara, Damascus, etc.)

The participants in the Beirut Conference emphasized on:

1. The need for a greater political and administrative decentralization, in favor of intermediate cities, while giving particular attention to:
 - Properly selecting the powers to be decentralized, given the vulnerability of the municipal authorities to the interferences of the traditional poles of local authority.
 - Strengthening dialogue, through the development of tools to reach directly the local populations concerned.
 - Equipping local authorities with the appropriate human and technical resources.
 - Encouraging the development of inter-communality, which favors local authority over state authority.

2. The need to establish international solidarity links and communication networks between the CIMES, which have proven to enhance decentralized cooperation. This type of cooperation especially helps local authorities carry through sustainable development projects, strengthen academic and professional programs, initiate environmental and patrimonial initiatives, as well as encourage and support local organizations.
3. The need for planning prior to any urban policy, taking into consideration the general interest and the needs of the local populations. Planning has proven essential for a controlled urbanization at the scale of intermediate cities (Tripoli, Saïda, in comparison to Beirut).
The preparation of planning documents should allow to:
 - i. Counterbalance the importance of big cities in favor of intermediate cities, especially with regard to public investment.
 - ii. Identify and develop complementary economic activities between intermediate cities.
4. The need to remedy the current deficiencies of planning, especially those related to the patrimony, by an appropriate partnership between the private and the public sectors.
5. The need to establish planning management tools, in particular creating workshops to encourage the exchange of knowledge collected from various international experiences with intermediate cities.
6. In case of limited financial resources for the implementation of housing and patrimonial policies, the need to conduct localized pilot projects in selected quarters of intermediate cities. These initiatives have proven efficient in enhancing the dialogue among the concerned local parties.
7. Intermediate cities are an appropriate common platform for studying and for developing appropriate policies for the interrelated topics of natural disasters prevention, architecture, patrimony and tourism.

The results of this declaration stem from the close collaboration of the Order of Engineers and Architects of Lebanon, the UNESCO, the UMAR and several study programs of the UIA, in particular: Architecture and Tourism, Natural Disasters, Patrimony, Housing and Intermediary Cities.

This declaration will be distributed to all concerned parties.
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