



Balkan Cities Network

ISTANBUL SUMMIT

29-30 NOVEMBER 2021





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At the first meeting of the B40 Balkan Cities Network, held in Istanbul on 29-30 November 2021, we came together as 23 Balkan cities to create a new foundation of urban cooperation and solidarity. In this respect, participating cities showed a determination to render an important service for the future of the Balkans.

Environmental and climate issues, the refugee crisis, urban poverty, the pandemic and an aspiration for a stronger democracy are vital global issues that we face as local governments. Their solutions can be made possible primarily through cooperation and solidarity at the regional level. In this context, the B40 Balkan Cities Network is a step taken to develop a new cooperation network that will think globally and act locally. In this respect, I would like to thank the cities included in the B40 Network. I believe that the B40 Balkan Cities Network will be a very important platform where Balkan cities are represented on an equal and friendly level, and where they work to achieve their common goals.

We believe that better cooperation between the Balkan cities in every aspect will create a better future. We also believe that coming together in the B40 Balkan Cities Network from a European perspective will pave the way for a brighter future for our cities and citizens. Today, as local governments in the B40 Balkan Cities Network, our unification behind an ideal of a more advanced local democracy will make an important contribution toward peace and stability throughout the Balkans and Europe. In addition, our collaboration in the B40 Balkan Cities Network will contribute to the development of the institutional capacity of all our member municipalities and an increase in their service potential. With this belief, we are very happy and proud to be the founding municipality and the first host of the B40 Balkan Cities Network.

Our aim is that this journey, which began in Istanbul in the first meeting, will soon result in a strong structure, with even more cities involved.

I would like to express my thanks once again to the founding municipalities of the B40 Balkan Cities Network, who were with us throughout this process and who share this excitement, and I invite all municipalities in the Balkans to join these efforts locally with us.

EKREM İMAMOĞLU

Mayor of Istanbul



WHO WE ARE?

B40 Balkan Cities Network Declaration

This declaration was finalized by the participating mayors and municipality representatives after the first B40 - Balkan Cities Network kickoff meeting hosted by Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality on 29-30 November 2021.

We, as the leaders of the local governments of the participating Balkan cities and the founders of the B40 – Balkan Cities Network;

- Being aware of the potential that sustainable development and peace present for the cities in our region,
- With a shared vision for a European future,
- Aspiring to establish a fruitful cooperation in areas of common interest,
- Knowing that climate change and other global challenges we face requires working together towards common solutions at local, regional and global level,
- Recognizing that good governance requires a resilient, democratic, transparent, and inclusive local governance, based on data, science and shared wisdom for future cities,
- Emphasizing the critical importance of the localization of the New Urban Agenda and other international agreements and plans, particularly the Sustainable Development Goals,

Under the framework of the B40 – Balkan Cities Network, established at the Istanbul Summit, in line with the abovementioned common values, we declare to;

- Work together through this Network to strengthen the dialogue among our cities,
- Cooperate in the fields of economy, culture, innovation, sustainability, and solidarity.
- Develop new areas of cooperation focusing on reversing the effects of the climate change, and strengthening local democracy and good neighborly relations in our region,
- Evaluate the difficulties encountered at the local and regional levels within the framework of reciprocity and dialogue in common platforms by sharing solutions and good practices with the parties,
- Contribute to the recommendation development processes for decision makers at all levels,
- Assist in the planning of the Network meetings and the specification of the meeting agendas in line with the annual priorities to be determined by the Network members and participating in the meetings with Mayors and technical personnel,
- Host and participate in the Network meetings,
- Encourage participation of local communities through participatory activities.
- Provide support to the Network Secretariat.

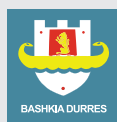


OUR CITIES





CITY OF ATHENS



Grad Sarajevo
City of Sarajevo

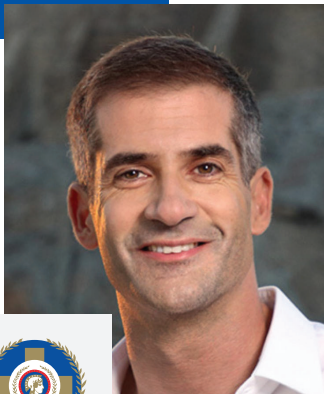


CITY OF THESSALONIKI



BASHKIA
TIRANË

MAYORS



Kostas BAKOYANNIS

Mayor of Athens

Mayor Bakoyannis was born in 1978 in Athens, and graduated from the History and International Relations department at Brown University. He continued his postgraduate studies in Public Policy at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government. He had a Ph.D. degree in Political Science and International Relations, from the University of Oxford. He has worked at the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs and has held positions in the European Parliament in Brussels and the World Bank in Kosovo. He is the vice president of the Hellenic Agency for Local Development and Local Government, a council member of the European Council on Foreign Relations and a Greek Leadership Council member of the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN). He served as Mayor of Karpenissi from 2011 to 2014 and as Governor of Central Greece from 2014 to 2019. Bakoyannis is the Mayor of Athens since 2019.



Zoran RADOJIČIĆ

Mayor of Belgrade

Mayor Radojičić was born in 1963 in Belgrade. He completed his studies at the Medical Faculty of the University of Belgrade in 1989. He has a master's degree and a doctorate at the same faculty. He is a professor at the Faculty of Medicine at the department for pediatric surgery and urology. Since 1991, he has been working as a pediatric surgeon at the University Children's Clinic "Tiršova". From March 2013 to June 2018, he was also the general director of the University Children's Clinic "Tiršova" in Belgrade. Radojičić has been the mayor of Belgrade since June 2018.



Emiriana SAKO

Mayor of Durrës

Emiriana Sako completed her higher studies in the years 2002-2008 at the Polytechnic University of Tirana, Faculty of Civil Engineering, branch Architecture – Master of Science. In 2011-2012 Sako completed in Rome at the University of Rome Three, the professional master Housing-new ways of living between innovation and transformation. Sako has also completed a series of important trainings such as the one organized by the US Department of State: International Exchange Alumni, International Visitor Leading Program with focus on – Persons with different abilities, energy audit organized by Polis University in Tirana, etc. Emiriana Sako is an architect by experience with over 12 years of progressive work contributing in the field of development of the city of Durrës. Sako has participated in all major projects in Durrës, collaborating with well-known international studios related to them. She is one of the drafters of the general local plan and co-designer of some of the largest urban projects in the city. During these 12 years of work in the Municipality of Durrës, Sako worked in the Directorate of Territorial Planning and Development, then continued as director of services, general director of services and then deputy mayor of the Municipality of Durrës.



Recep GÜRKAN

Mayor of Edirne

Mayor Gürkan was born in 1964 in Edirne. He graduated from Trakya University Edirne School of Education in 1983 and from Anadolu University Social Sciences Department in 2001. He has held various senior positions in the private sector and in the public sector. He was elected as a Member of Parliament of the Edirne in the elections of 12 June 2011. He served as a member of the National Education, Culture, Youth and Sports Commission in the Parliament. He received the most successful mayor of the year award at the award ceremonies organized by various institutions and organizations. Gürkan has been the Mayor of Edirne since 2014, he won his second term in 2019.



Ekrem İMAMOĞLU

Mayor of Istanbul

Ekrem İmamoğlu was born in Trabzon's Akçaabat district in 1970. He graduated from Istanbul University with a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration. Following his undergraduate studies, he completed a Master of Science degree.

In the March 30 local elections in 2014, he was elected Mayor of Beylikdüzü.

Following the positive changes he made in the district's living standards, social life, and infrastructural services, Mr. İmamoğlu captured the attention of the people of Beylikdüzü, the media, academia, and the upper echelons of his party.

Subsequently, the CHP nominated Mr. İmamoğlu for Mayor of Istanbul in the local elections of March 31, 2019. After an effective and inspiring campaign period of three months, he garnered 48.82% of the total votes and was elected Mayor of Istanbul.

Nevertheless, following the objections made by the ruling party, the Supreme Board of Elections (YSK) annulled Mr. İmamoğlu's mandate on his 18th day as Mayor, relying on a decision that went against its own legal precedents. YSK ruled for an election re-run for June 23, 2019.

Mr. İmamoğlu's renewed campaign became a potent symbol of the fight for justice and democracy in Turkey. On June 23, he achieved an even more successful result than March 31, and was elected Mayor with the support of 54.2% of the voters. This election became a milestone for the democratic future of both Istanbul and Turkey. Ekrem İmamoğlu is married with three children and has been living in Istanbul since 1988.



Hasan AZIS

Mayor of Kardzhali

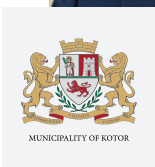
Mayor Azis was born in 1969 in this Rhodope city. He graduated from the University of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy in Sofia in 1995. He received his master's degree specializing in Management and Marketing at Sofia National and World University of Economics in 1998. Between 2001-2003, he was the Deputy Regional Governor of Kardzhali Region responsible for administrative control, state property, regional development and Euro integration. He is fluent in English and Russian. Azis has been the Mayor of Kardzhali Municipality since 2003.



Mehmet KESİMOĞLU

Mayor of Kırklareli

Mayor Kesimoğlu was born in 1960 in Kırklareli. He graduated from Ankara University, Faculty of Political Sciences, Department of Public Administration in 1983. He was the Chief Consultant at the Ministry of Tourism. He has held various senior positions in the private sector and in the public sector. He was elected as Kırklareli Member of Parliament in the 22nd Term. In the same period, he became the President of the Turkey – Estonia Parliamentary Friendship Group. He was re-elected as a Member of Parliament for Kırklareli in the 24th term. Kesimoğlu has been the Mayor of Kırklareli since 2014, he won his second term in 2019.



Vladimir JOKIĆ

Mayor of Kotor

Vladimir Jokić was born on 24th January 1988 in Kotor, where he completed Elementary School and Gymnasium, both with honours. He graduated from the Law School of Belgrade University, at the Theoretical Law Department. He speaks English, but he can also communicate in Italian. He attended several seminars, conferences and professional events. He was one of the organizers of the seminar entitled "Job Opportunity" held in October 2017. He underwent training and apprenticeship with "Ernst&Young" in Belgrade in 2012, being involved in the activities related to labour, commercial and fiscal law. In the period from 2010 to 2014, he worked as a lawyer associate with "Petković" Law Office in Belgrade, where he specialized for the area of commercial and sport law. In 2014, he carries out law-related activities with the accounting agency "Jokić 4V" DOO from Kotor. As of 2012, he has been a co-owner of the "ABPM Sport Agency" DOO from Belgrade, company offering consulting services in the area of sport, law and economy and develops Internet start-up projects. He acted as a Co-Chair to UNESCO International Coordination Group. In the period from 2017 to 2019, he held the office of the Mayor of Kotor for the first time. He is the President of the Municipal Board of "Democratic Montenegro" – Kotor, member to the Main Board of "Democratic Montenegro" and a member of the Presidency of "Democratic Montenegro".



Miroslav BOJIĆ

Mayor of Laktaši

Mayor Bojić was born in 1983 in Prnjavor. He has a degree in agricultural engineering, with many years of experience in the profession. Between 2018 and 2019, he served as Head of Regional Unit Banjaluka at the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management of the Republic of Srpska. Between 2019 and 2020, he performed the function of Assistant Minister in the Ministry of the same name. He continues his postgraduate education on "Food Safety of Animal Origin in the Agricultural Production Line" at Banja Luka University Faculty of Agriculture. He is fluent in English. Bojić has been the Mayor of Laktaši since 2020.



MUNICIPALITY OF MYTILENE

Stratis KYTELIS

Mayor of Mytilene

Mr. Kytelis was born in Mytilene and graduated the Medical School of the University of Athens. He served as a doctor at the 261st Infantry Regiment during his military service. He served as a doctor at the Regional Hospital of Mytilene from 1989 till 1993. From 1995 he was transferred to the Social Security State Institute (IKA), where he was appointed deputy Director. Since 2011 he served as director of EOPPE office in Mytilene. Since 2002 he is a member of the board of the Lesvos Doctors Association. Stratis Kytelis has served in various positions at the local Administration.



Konstantinos PELETIDIS

Mayor of Patras

Mayor Peletidis was born in 1953 in Ryakio, Kozani. He studied medicine and specialized in cardiology. He has been the president of the rural doctors of the prefecture of Pella, a member of the three-member committee of doctors of the General Hospital, Saint Andrew. He was then a member of the Board of the Federation of Doctors of IKA and a representative of the Medical Association of Patras in the Panhellenic Medical Association. He was a member and then President of the Pan-Asian Association of Patras and Surroundings and a member of the Board of the Pontian Lighthouse. He has been participating in the Municipal Council of Patras since 1999. Peletidis has been the Mayor of Patras since 2019.



Ivan VUKOVIĆ

Mayor of Podgorica

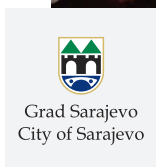
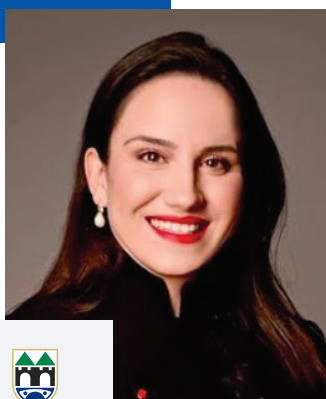
Mayor Vukovic was born in 1984 in Podgorica. He completed his undergraduate and specialist studies in 2007 Faculty of Political Science at the University of Montenegro. Vukovic was one of the student representatives in the Movement for Independence of Montenegro. After the specialist studies, he enrolled in postgraduate studies at the Leiden University, Netherlands. Vukovic was a teaching assistant at the Faculty of Political Science of the University of Montenegro. He had his PhD degree in 2014, at the Central European University in Budapest. In the period from 2014-2015, he acquired the title of Lecturer at the Faculty of Political Science, where he was elected Assistant Professor and Vice-Dean for International Relations. He spent the academic year 2016 – 2017 at the George Washington University, as the first Fulbright Postdoctoral scholarship holder from Montenegro. In January 2021, he was elected as the Vice president of the Democratic Party of Socialists. He became the President of the Assembly of the Union of Municipalities of Montenegro in 2021. He is fluent in English and has a good grasp of French. Vuković has been the Mayor of Podgorica since 2018.



Dr.Sc. Filip ZORIČIĆ

Mayor of Pula

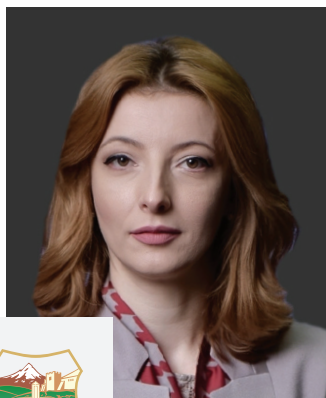
Filip Zoričić is the Mayor of Pula. He is a professor mentor of Croatian language and literature and history. He has a PhD in interdisciplinary humanities. He obtained his PhD degree with a thesis on the ideas and life of Vlado Gotovac. He was a principal of the Pula Gymnasium highschool, president of the association "Institut Mediteran" and is the founder of the Memo museum in Pula. He is a member of the Academy for Political Development of the Council of Europe, member of the Croatian cultural institution "Matica hrvatska", of the Institute Vlado Gotovac and of the Historical Society of Istria. He is an Alumni of the American Association for Young Political Leaders (ACYPL), Vice President of the Association of Employers in Education at the Croatian Employers' Association (HUP), member of the Association of Croatian School Principals. He was an independent councilor at the local committee "Stari grad" in Pula. He is married and father of two children.



Benjamina KARIĆ

Mayor of Sarajevo

Mayor Karić was born in 1991 in Sarajevo. She graduated from the Faculty of Law, University of Sarajevo in 2013, and received her master's degree from the Faculty of Law, University of Sarajevo in 2014. While studying in parallel, in 2015 she graduated from the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Sarajevo, Department of History. In 2018, she received her PhD from the Faculty of Law, University of Zenica, Department of History of State and Law. She is the youngest doctor of law in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the first post-war doctor of classical Roman law. She actively speaks English and German. She is the author of over fifty publications, books, articles, and translations and reviews. She has won several awards for exceptional commitment and contribution to the development of teaching and research. Karić has been Mayor of Sarajevo since 2021.



Danela ARSOVSKA

Mayor of Skopje

Mayor Arsovska was born in 1979 in Skopje. She has a BA in Law from the University of Skopje and a MA in Economics from Oxford and advanced management from the University of Sheffield. Since 2016, Arsovska has been the representative of the National Council for European Integration of the Republic of North Macedonia. She has been a member of the OSCE Court of Conciliation and Arbitration and the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague since 2017. In 2018, she was awarded as the "Best Business Woman Role Model in South East Europe" at the World Business Angels Investment Forum. Arsovska has been the Mayor of Skopje since 2021.



Ivica PULJAK

Mayor of Split

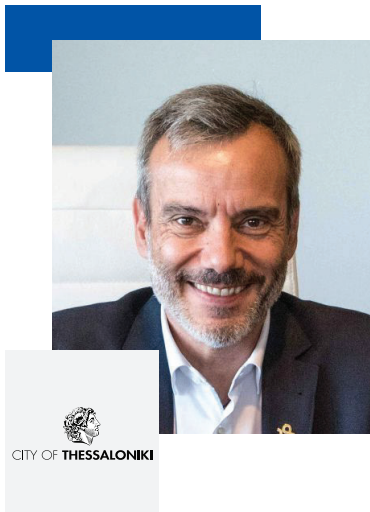
Mayor Puljak was born in 1969 in Split. In 1994, he graduated with a Bachelor's degree in electrical engineering from the Faculty of Electrical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering and Naval Architecture in Split. He obtained his Master's degree in particle physics from Zagreb in 1997. In 2000, he earned a PhD at the Pierre and Marie Curie University in Paris. Apart from taking part in nuclear physics research, Puljak taught at Split University. He is also known for his promotion of popular science. Prior to assuming office, Puljak worked as a professor. Puljak has been the Mayor of Split since 2021.



Kadir ALBAYRAK

Mayor of Tekirdağ

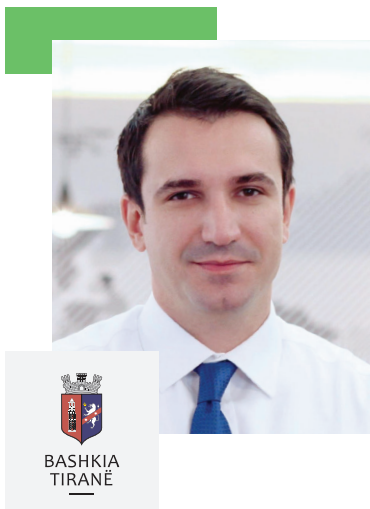
Mayor Albayrak was born in 1949 in Tekirdağ. He graduated from Yıldız Technical University, Department of Chemical Engineering in 1971. He worked as an engineer at Tekel Tekirdağ Distillery. In the factory where he entered as an engineer, he worked as a laboratory chief, wine production supervisor, business chief, assistant manager and factory manager for the last 15 years. Albayrak, who retired in 2007, served as CHP Tekirdağ Provincial Chairman between 2010-2012. Albayrak has been the Mayor of Tekirdağ since 2014, he won his second term in 2019.



Konstantinos ZERVAS

Mayor of Thessaloniki

Mayor Zervas was born in 1964 in Thessaloniki. He graduated with a degree in Civil Engineering from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and continued studies in the USA. Zervas has worked in the private sector since 1990. From 1994 to 1997 Zervas was a member of the Board of Directors of PAOK and in 2010-2016 member of the Board of Directors of Attiko Metro SA. From 2011 to 2014, he served as Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Thessaloniki State Orchestra. In 2011 Zervas was sworn as a City Councilor and Deputy Mayor for the Environment, Quality of Life and Free Space. In 2014 he was re-elected in the Municipality of Thessaloniki and took over the Citizen's Mobility, Youth and Sports Deputy Municipality. In 2015, Zervas resigned from the position of Vice Mayor. In 2017 Zervas became an Independent City Councilor in the Municipality of Thessaloniki. Zervas is the Mayor of Thessaloniki since 2019.

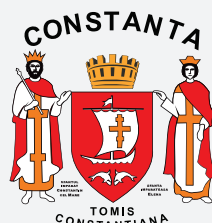


Erion VELIAJ

Mayor of Tirana

Mayor Veliaj was born in 1979 in Tirana. He has BA degree in Political Science from the Grand Valley State University of Michigan, USA, and a MSc in European Studies from the University of Sussex, UK. He entered politics after a long engagement with civil society, international organizations and media. In 2003, Mr. Veliaj founded the movement "MJAFT" (Enough), an organization that unified the activist and protest spirit of the Albanian youth, which in 2004 received the United Nations Award for civil society. He led the "MJAFT" organization until November 2007. He joined the European Stability Initiative, a key organism in the promotion of EU enlargement. In 2013 he was elected as a Member of the Albanian Parliament in Gjirokastra. In the same year, he was appointed as the Albanian Minister of Social Welfare and Youth. He has a very good knowledge of English and Italian language, and is fluent in German and French. Veliaj has been the Mayor of Tirana since 2015.

THE MUNICIPALITIES REPRESENTED AT THE BALKAN CITIES SUMMIT



CONSTANTA
Municipality



ÇANAKKALE
Municipality



PRISHTINA
Municipality



PRIZREN
Municipality



OPENING SESSION

DAY 1 // 29th November 2021

BETTER COOPERATION, BETTER FUTURE



On 29-30 November 2021, the first Balkan Cities Network summit was held at the Istanbul Convention Center. The motto of the B40 Network, first spoken in Istanbul, was "better cooperation, better future." At the Summit, attended by the mayors and representatives of twenty-three municipalities from 11 countries, the following common goals for cooperation between Balkan cities were expressed.

The program started with the opening speech of the Mayor of Istanbul, Ekrem İmamoğlu:

'The objectives of the B40 Balkan Cities Network are providing more solidarity against global problems, creating more cooperation opportunities for local governments, transfer of new ideas and good practices in the context of urbanism, the regional contribution to the European values, and strengthening peace and brotherhood among societies'

Cumhuriyet, 29.11.2021

"We know that we can achieve very good results by working together. Therefore, as Balkan cities, we are ready to participate in this team game because we have common goals. Our first goal is to work for sustainable

development, democracy, and peace in the Balkans. We want to contribute to the vision of the future of Europe. We know that we won't succeed if we don't work with the whole world against climate change. We want to expand our cities' democratic, transparent, and inclusive governance based on science and common sense. So, how do we achieve these common goals? Of course, through dialogue. We're going to strengthen this bond every day. We will work together in every possible field, especially in economy, culture, technology, and tourism. We will share the smart solutions and result-oriented applications we put forward for our cities. We'll get together frequently. We will develop new and efficient areas of cooperation. The road ahead is long, but we know very well what our goal is, and we believe that with these steps towards more stable and stronger Balkan cities, we will move closer to a better future and a more livable world."

The participating Mayors then took the floor according to the alphabetical order of their cities. Simultaneous interpretation was available throughout the meeting for the guests in all the Balkan languages of the participating countries.

EKREM İMAMOĞLU

Mayor of Istanbul



Starting his speech by expressing his happiness from hosting the Mayors of Balkan cities in Istanbul, Mayor İmamoğlu continued: "If we manage to maintain this union in the future, we can create an inspiring model not only for the Balkans but for Europe as a whole and the world."

Mr.İmamoğlu, who brought together the Balkan cities that have been trying to gather for a long time, said that 'I am an insistent person, I like to unite people, and that I will follow this.' He also pointed out that meeting is not easy, but it is very strong.

Sputnik Turkey, 30.11.2021

"Today, as 23 Balkan municipalities, we gathered here to create a new basis for cooperation and to develop a new vision for the future of our cities and region. For decades, the word Balkans or Balkanization has been used in the international literature to describe ethnic divisions, border disputes and conflicts. However, we are here today to start a new chapter for our region. We gathered to build a stronger cooperation and a better future

together. Today, the Mayors who attend this meeting are serving their cities and providing a very important service for the democratic future of the Balkans within Europe. We face crucial issues as local governments, such as environmental and climate issues, the refugee crisis, energy management and a yearning for further democracy and these global issues, our concerns transcend countries' borders. Today we all know that as soon as a forest fire breaks out in Sarıyer, Istanbul, forest fires can also break out in Athens, Albania, on the coastline or the Aegean. We know that while Istanbul is fighting against the problems of irregular migration, Sarajevo, or Zagreb face similar problems. We are here today as we know that solving these major problems is

'For decades, the word 'Balkans' or 'Balkanization' has been used in the international literature; It was used to describe ethnic divisions, border disputes, and conflicts. However, we are here today to open a brand-new page for our region.'

Rayhaber, 29.11.2021



possible through regional cooperation and solidarity. It is for this reason that we are all taking the first step to develop the B40 Balkan Cities Network, which we have proposed as a strong regional initiative and shaped with you."

Mayor Imamoglu stated his firm belief that the B40 Network will be an important platform where all Balkan cities are represented equally, based on friendship, and to achieve common goals. He continued by saying that the B40 Balkan Cities Network would create opportunities for better cooperation through local governments, and contribute to the European vision and values of the Balkans at the regional level. He added that it would foster a better shared future through the transfer of new ideas and good examples of urbanization, as cities stand in solidarity in the face of global problems (such as Covid-19 and the refugee crisis) while strengthening peace and brotherhood among communities.

Stating that he was very happy and proud to

be the founding municipality and first host of the B40 Balkan Cities Network, İmamoğlu concluded his address with the following words:

"Just as it is a plain truth that the sun rises from the east, it is also clear that Europe started from Istanbul and the Balkans. The multinational, multi-identity and pluralistic model of democracy represented by the European Union is an ideal for all of us. Human rights, rule of law, and culture of reconciliation and freedom are common goals for millions living in our cities. These common goals also form the basis of the B40 Network. The B40 Network we launched today will also serve as a network of peace and democracy among Balkan cities. Pluralism, gender equality, justice and the rule of law are just as important and necessary for local governments as they are for central governments. I also believe that the collaborations we will develop through the B40 Balkan Cities Network will contribute to the development of the institutional capacity of all participating municipalities and to increase their service potential."

'The B40 Network will also be a network of peace and democracy among Balkan cities. Human rights, rule of law, a culture of reconciliation, and freedoms are common goals for millions of people living in our cities and that these common goals are also the basis of the B40 Network.'

Cumhuriyet, 29.11.2021

KOSTAS BAKOYANNIS

Mayor of Athens



Mayor Bakoyannis began his address by stating that this Summit marks a new beginning and that it is a unique forum that can bring out the best in ourselves as people and cities.

'We believe that the newly emerging Europe will only be richer, stronger and more resilient if it includes Southeast Europe. A space that needs to be transformed from Europe's "backyard" to a "front yard". 'Make sure cities can be the "engine" of our vision for Europe'

Athina984, 29.11.2021

Underlining that the Balkan Cities Network represents a vision for Europe, he continued: "The B40 Balkan Cities Network is a network whose time has come, or to be frank, a network that was actually long overdue. After all, our common home, the Balkans, was once known as history's cauldron. We have endured centuries and centuries of bitter ethnic, religious and ideological conflicts up to recent times. Yet many of us, especially on a local level, are moving rapidly to disown that label for the

sake of our people in the new Europe we are building. The European vision has successfully tied former enemies in strong bonds of shared interests and values. The European Union has actually made the first half of the last century look even more distant. When it comes to Europe, there can be a degree of justified disillusionment, disappointment, and cynicism among all our peoples; there's no need to cover it up. Disagreements amongst member states have led Europe to drag its feet over the past decade. Promises were made, but promises were not kept. However, I would like to tell you that Europe is still the future... For many countries that have joined and those actually lining up, the prospect of membership has acted as a great stimulant for democratic change. It has encouraged and supported governments on the long road towards an open democracy that respects human rights, diversity and minorities."

Stressing his view that the Balkans should be transformed from being Europe's backyard to being Europe's front yard, Bakoyannis stated that European integration could not be broken down if people were living in greater peace and prosperity in Europe.



Noting that cities can actually be the engines for the European vision, Mayor Bakoyannis said, "We are the closest democratic institutions to our citizens. Therefore, we can translate and reflect our peoples' genuine sentiments. We can share positive political agendas that transcend borders. If nation-states are tankers moving slowly, then cities are speedboats open to new horizons". He concluded his address with the words of the teacher and philosopher Socrates from thousands of years ago: "The condition for peace is not the money by which men can

be bought nor force by which men can be compelled. It is all the conquering power of goodwill, and if there is a will, as we all know, then it is our way, the way our cities will go, the way to the future."

Mayor Bakoyannis expressed his willingness as the host of the second B40 Balkan Cities Network Summit to be held next year.

ZORAN RADOJIČIĆ

Mayor of Belgrade



Mayor Radojičić stated the following: "I am sure that you will all talk about globalization and the pressures of globalization, pandemic, climate change, political diversity around the world and the pressures of daily life. We use many terms to describe all of these things, and we all have different stories, but when I talk to each of you, I know that we all have a common goal and want to create something concrete for our cities and citizens. So, what can we do today if we are really sincere? We've all had significant experiences in different fields. Another important task is to communicate well with our citizens. If we can exchange our experience in sports, culture, and all other activities, all of this will form the basis of our friendship. That's why I believe it's very important that we came together here today."

Stating that this crisis experienced by the world today is both a burden and an opportunity for us all, Radojičić underlined how they were able to make the most of these opportunities to create better cities for the future; for example, during the Corona pandemic, Belgrade became more familiar with the digital world and the internet, and it helped with fighting this pandemic more efficiently through digitalization. Noting that experiences related to investments in this field on the occasion of such events can be shared, Radojičić said that there are a lot of incentives, especially in terms of investments, and that our local experiences both in this regard and what efforts can create a better quality of life for our citizens can be shared. Radojičić ended his remarks by thanking the host, Ekrem İmamoğlu, for materializing this idea and making a space for the sharing of such experiences.

IONUT RUSU

Deputy Mayor of Constanta



Mayor Rusu started by emphasizing that the city of Constanta is located in both the Black Sea Region and the Balkans and that these are two very important regions of Europe. He said, "I believe there is a great opportunity here to build future cooperation and develop practices." Underlining that these opportunities will also be useful when considering future additions of new countries to the European Union, Rusu added: "Constanta is a city where practices throughout Europe, such as Budapest and Athens, which are cities of the European Union member states, are fully implemented. We are ready to share information on implementing EU policies and offer help in this area. This new network will undoubtedly be very useful for Turkey's membership in the European Union. We will build a solid network with all the cities represented here, whether members of the EU or not. Constanta is not an ordinary city. It is the gateway to Europe with its ports and has connections with many countries.

Constanta, which forms the border of NATO and is geostrategically located in the Black Sea Region, is an important city. We also promise to play an important role in the B40 Network. Here we will discuss the EU and Euro-Atlantic visions. Countries in the Balkan region must adopt EU policies. Romania's strategy is to support this kind of adoption. In addition, the agreement between Romania and Turkey has been in force for ten years, and Romania is an important partner of Turkey."

Mayor Rusu stated that they would like to host Ekrem İmamoğlu, Mayor of Istanbul, in Constanta in 2022 and would be honored to do so. He said, "Constanta is the southern capital of Romania, a developing city and a European city. We would like to see you all in our city." Ionut Rusu concluded that Constanta could also host a summit in the coming years.

EMIRIANA SAKO

Mayor of Durres



Mayor Sako thanked Ekrem İmamoğlu for inviting her to this regional Summit, organized to establish a permanent network of Balkan cities to strengthen cooperation between cities. Sako stated that Durres is the fourth largest city in Albania, with a population of 330,000 with a coastline of 61 kilometers and 300 square kilometers. Reminding that Durres, 33 kilometers away from Tirana, is one of the most developed and important cities in Albania with its natural resources, tourist areas, cultural heritage, underwater ecology, and unique history, Sako stated that tourism has a large share in the economy of Durres and that the sector welcomes about 400,000 tourists every year, and that it is growing every year.

Mayor Sako added: "Municipality of Durres also aims to support businesses operating in the tourism sector by encouraging them to provide quality tourism services or products that directly impact the growth of the local

economy. In addition, as the Municipality of Durres, we need to prioritize the sustainability of tourism in the region, clean environment and good management, and the conversion of solid waste. The urban waste landfill in the southern part of the city was closed down and moved, and it was transformed into an eco-park which is the first of its kind in Albania. Also, finding alternative solutions for solid waste management and increasing public awareness about the environment to provide a cleaner, healthier, and safer environment for citizens and tourists coming to Durres is one of the priorities of our municipality. Another important issue for our city is the employment of young people by increasing the role of youth and local government." Sako stressed that this Summit should be seen as an important opportunity for all cities to establish and strengthen regional cooperation in areas of common interest such as economy, tourism, culture, environment, climate change, innovation, and youth.

RECEP GÜRKAN

Mayor of Edirne



Starting his address by saying that "we are witnessing a historic moment today," Mayor Gürkan continued, "maybe we are not very aware at the moment, but one day in the future, history will surely note down this meeting and the contribution of this meeting in the development and sustainability of the Balkan geography will be respected by our children. Bakoyannis made a very important statement. He said, "Brothers and sisters." It is a very valuable, kind, and sincere statement. While every nation in the Balkans preserves its identity, it is at the same time the brother, stakeholder or companion of another, a companion not only in good and bad days but also in days of abundance and poverty; because this geography is a shared geography for all nationalities, all cultures, all ethnicities, and all faiths. It's such valuable geography, on which the whole world keeps a close eye, that experienced turmoil in the past to disrupt unity and integrity. Today we are taking a historic step in this sense. We open such a window,

such a perspective into the future, that history will surely record it, it will surely note it down."

Emphasizing that ensuring the sustainability of this union would be just as valuable as initiating it, Gürkan pointed to the sentiment of Ekrem İmamoğlu in his opening speech, and stressed that the mayors around the table would best maintain this union by ensuring equal representation, by acting together and by speaking with an equal voice.

MEHMET KESİMOĞLU

Mayor of Kırklareli



In his introductory remarks, Mayor Kesimoğlu said: "In meteorological data and reports in Turkey, we usually hear or see the following statement: The cold weather wave from the Balkans will dominate our country, but I feel that there is a very warm Balkan atmosphere here today. I hope that this will remain everywhere and at all times."

Emphasizing that all participating mayors are unifying stakeholders of the Balkan geography, Kesimoğlu continued: "Our province, the city of Kırklareli, is the city of happy people, enjoying the culture of democracy, tolerance, solidarity, human rights, sharing, love and respect at its peak. We never care about one's identity. We never look at that. We never care about people's political or religious opinion, ethnicity, sect, color of skin or the language. In Kırklareli, we find geometric happiness by making an arithmetic investment, and this makes Kırklareli a city well-known for its happy people."

Mayor Kesimoğlu also gave information about the history of Kırklareli, which was home to many Balkan peoples, and added: "in the past, our name was Saranta Ekklisies, which

meant Forty Churches. We lived together with our Greek friends. We had churches. In the Republican times, the city's name was changed to Kırklareli. We lived together with our Bulgarian friends under the name of Lozengrad. It is the city of grapes, we produced wine and our special beverage "hardaliye" together with them. We all enjoy the shared characteristics of this Balkan geography. We share the same history, culture, geography, feelings, and ideas. Whatever happened in the past is a thing of the past; now, it is time to look forward.

For this reason, as the founder of our republic, the Great Leader Mustafa Kemal Atatürk said, "we want peace at home and peace in the world." He also stated that the Ali Rıza Efendi City Cultural House was established with these thoughts and concluded his words by saying: "Cities have memories. It's a house that makes up memory. Our Greek friends furnished one room, our Bulgarian friends furnished one room, and our Montenegrin friends furnished another. That house is a concrete example of our historical unity in every sphere of life. We want to live together as brothers and sisters in peace from now on."

HASAN AZİS

Mayor of Kardzhali



Mayor Azis began by emphasizing that this forum will help address the challenges faced and transform the economies of the Balkans into green economies. Underlining that climate change is the biggest problem of our times, Azis said that "creating a new economic model is a problem not only for big cities, but also for small cities, however, it is at the same time an opportunity. EU member states have set a very ambitious goal by adopting the European Green Deal. It is about making the European continent carbon neutral, in other words drawing attention to carbon emissions and greenhouse gases. Achieving this goal, transforming cities and regions into regions with modern competitive economies and efficient use of their resources could only be possible through the joint efforts of countries, regions, and local governments and by implementing the decisions taken. The European Green Deal aims to achieve economic growth, be independent of the resources used, develop our cities and regions

equally, and ensure our citizens' social well-being. Developing and implementing local policies focusing on energy and the environment and generating economic growth, stable industry and competitiveness are the main factors required to achieve this goal. I am very happy that we could meet with local government representatives here today and work together to develop the Balkans. Through our cooperation and joint efforts, we can transform the Balkans into a competitive geography that can manage its natural resources steadily, offer opportunities for innovations, investments and starting new businesses, and offer transportation to the farthest places."

Mayor Azis concluded his words by voicing his proposal for sustaining this initiative and organizing a summit of local governments in the Balkans annually.

VLADIMIR JOKIĆ

Mayor of Kotor



Mayor Jokić, began his remarks by thanking the event organizers and added: "I would like to express my gratitude for offering me the opportunity to address you in my native language today. When we think of a Balkan country today, it reminds us of a geography where wars and conflicts occur; however, when we look at the history of the Balkans, we see that this is a region and that it is in the world and in Europe. The Balkans are one of the ancient civilizations. We were home to the Roman, Ottoman and Greek civilizations. These three civilizations extended to both east and west, so I would like to say that the Balkans are not the backyard of Europe but the very essence and spirit of Europe. Given

our history, the history we are talking about today should guide us all because we all share the same land in the Balkans. We all need to work on how to change what's being said about us and how to promote ourselves better. We must offer our citizens a better future or help them for a better future. That's why summits of this kind, where state leaders come together, are very important. However, while citizens define the future of politics, mayors represent those cities' locals and must be active on the field. That's why this initiative is very important. This initiative will create very important changes not only in the lives of our citizens but also in the lives of Balkan cities".

MIROSLAV BOJIĆ

Mayor of Laktaši



Mayor Bojić began by thanking Ekrem İmamoğlu for organizing this event, which allowed him to discuss important issues such as economic cooperation, innovation, the environment, and climate change. "Joining the B40 Balkan Cities Network is a great opportunity for us," Bojić said, and then gave information to participants about the city he represents: "Laktaši is in the northwest of Bosnia and Herzegovina and has a population of 40,000. It is the communication, tourism and sports center of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Laktaši is at the intersection of major roads, 20 kilometers away from the EU border and three kilometers away from the international airport. Laktaši is home to a very important commercial center. There are significant economic developments in our city. Of the top 100 major companies in the country, 27 are headquartered in Laktaši. It is a very attractive

city for foreign investors. The municipality owns natural resources. Although there are some historical monuments in Laktaši, the city is best known for its thermal water resources and agricultural sector. Although agriculture is the most advanced sector, livestock, milk, fruit and vegetable cultivation offer great opportunities."

Mayor Bojić stated that they are aware of the importance of this Summit and concluded: "This Summit is an important opportunity for us in terms of economic development. We want to exchange experiences with other cities through the B40 Network. Strong networks will be established between our municipalities. There are many beauties, history, and a common heritage, but we also share the realities of this century, for example, irregular migration."

STRATIS KYTELIS

Mayor of Mytilene



In his introductory remarks, Mayor Kytelis said "since the Balkan geography is a turbulent geography, we aim for sustainable development as well as peace through the final declaration of this meeting." Kytelis continued:

"We would like this Summit to be a step towards saving the environment. Saving the environment continues to be a problem for many communities. We also hope to discuss migration, refugees, and Covid-19 during the Summit. Local governments need to take initiatives in these areas, and I believe this Summit will pave the way for such an initiative. There are thousands of migrants, and we're their gateway. Those of us who are neighbors in the Balkans know geopolitically what the reason is. We must take ownership of our future and our interests together. Whether that will be auspicious or not depends on our people. Distinguished mayors will sign a final declaration at the end of this Summit. Let's accept it as a guide and establish the Balkan Union as a network of cities in the medium term. We can only establish democracy through cooperation between our municipalities. By working together in recent centuries, we can bury past disputes in the dark pages of history. The people of our continent have experienced various realities. So, when it comes to social, cultural, linguistic, religious and economic characteristics, the better we know each other, the better we can

focus on these characteristics, our similarities, and eliminate differences and contribute more decisively for stronger ties."

Stressing the need to ensure that international law is functional, Kytelis said: "That's why it is so important that our cities become sister cities, and this Summit serves as the first step to this end. We believe that war is a fantasy product. Let's act together through constructive and friendly dialogue. Let's promote democracy for our cities and citizens. Let's also promote progress and development through economic and trade relations. We must work together today to prevent pollution on our shores. There may be worse consequences due to climate change, so it will be inevitable to take a step in this direction."

Noting the importance of youth participation, Kytelis added: "if we cannot ensure the active participation of young people, then this will be a stillborn structure, so we must promote communication between young people so that solidarity and tolerance can prevail. Shared identity, shared values, shared history, and shared culture. The Balkan identity is built around these values. We must encourage young people to develop these values further and equip them with the necessary tools to achieve this." He concluded his words by inviting participants to support them in hosting one of the future summits in Mytilene.

KONSTANTINOS

PELETIDIS

Mayor of Patras



Mayor Peletidis stated that the Municipality of Patras has been on the side of people from day one and said: "We have determined the way of governance to focus on the needs of the working class and people. We implement policies to support their rights and fights. A 220km march from Patras to Athens was carried out to draw attention to unemployment in Greece. We've offered social assistance to people in need. We have social policies and focus on the needs of our people; that's what we try to achieve in our municipality."

Continuing his address by saying, "We condemn the plans of the bourgeoisie for the region," Peletidis added: "They are trying to redraw the borders with the blood of the people. It is an imperialist understanding, and people must act together in solidarity to fight it, and we are fighting to achieve it." Stating that the Balkan geography is not fair, and that NATO brings death and suffering to the region, Peletidis also said: "There are many military bases in every corner of the Balkan geography, but our people will gain nothing from such initiatives, we are against the NATO practices in our region."

Referring to those displaced by war and poverty, Peletidis said: "There are migrants and refugees who have been displaced by the conflicts, and we are trying to support them."

Mayor Peletidis emphasized that "As the Municipality of Patras, we attach importance to the discussion, we care about sharing our opinions in such meetings, we gain experience, and we try to make use of it." He also added that people have big problems and that talking, by itself, is not enough to solve them. "Making a declaration is not sufficient. We have to help them determine their developmental methods. We have to work with people. Only then will peace prevail in the region, and people will prosper in the Balkan region. We will work hard to achieve this." Peletidis concluded his remarks by stating that there are some important issues to consider in the final declaration and that they will not sign this declaration because there are some differences of opinion. He ended his speech by thanking the organizers.

IVAN VUKOVIĆ

Mayor of Podgoritsa



Mayor Vuković started his address by saying that "there is a lot of reason to cooperate better in the context of 'better cooperation, better future,' which is the theme of this Summit." He reminded that according to the demographic trends of the United Nations, the inhabitants of cities will reach 68% of the global population by 2050.

"This naturally makes people like us increasingly responsible for the future of our world. In addition, climate change will be the most important challenge facing future generations. Cities contribute the most to climate change, but we witness many socio-economic challenges every day in the cities we are responsible for. Along with the epidemiological situation, our world has faced a very grave fact for the last year and a half. However, there are also many political challenges, such as the rise of populism, nationalism, and practices far from being liberal that we must oppose. In addition to these global challenges, our cooperation has a very important regional dimension given

the turbulent political history of this region. Unfortunately, I can say that relations at the state level are still very, very complex. This compels us to set a good example and prove that there can be good communication and group cooperation in this part of the world."

Mayor Vuković underlined that local governments are the institutions closest to citizens and that the local administrators can know the needs of citizens in the context of the challenges mentioned above. He concluded his speech by saying: "So what we do is challenging, but at the same time very beautiful and very satisfactory, that's why we focus on these needs, on cities, on our cities. To create a more humane living environment, we must create strategies for long-term sustainable economic growth by using modern technologies and considering saving the environment. Therefore, let us act jointly on this side of the world towards the democratic, green, smart and fair transformation of our cities in our region."



MERITA MALIQI

Representative of
Prishtina



Maliqi began by giving information about Prishtina: "Prishtina is the capital of Kosovo, about 400,000 people live in our city. We have a great opportunity because our mayor is one of the region's youngest leaders, and that's very attractive for the young population. More than 70% of our city is under the age of 25. There is good nightlife; you can walk around the city safely. Like other cities, Prishtina developed a lot in the last ten years. As I mentioned earlier, our city's current population is 400,000. It's a huge achievement for a city with a small budget."

Maliqi also briefed on the work of the municipality of Prishtina, adding: "We tried to make a plan, we invested in long-term development. We carried out strategic works in several areas. We carried out digital transformation works to improve and facilitate the lives of the residents of Prishtina. We also have very big projects in the field of renewable energy. The Municipality of Prishtina has made long-term investments. We also focus on banking. The development bank provides some incentives, so we also

work in that area. We have a 12-year plan, but of course, we have some problems. That's why we would like to work with other cities and examine their practices and plans. We are also implementing the green city plan. Like any major city, we are working to make change sustainable in this field. We have our problems concerning the use of public spaces. As for waste, we have various problems. One of the main problems in Prishtina is the issue of waste. We have a compost project that we are carrying out to solve this problem, and we plan to continue realizing our projects. We can cooperate or discuss this with other cities. There is cooperation between cities, and we must take concrete steps to solve the problems of our people."

Emphasizing that intercity diplomacy is an important opportunity where concrete issues can be discussed and standards improved, Maliqi said, "So this will be a priority for our future. The B40 Balkan Cities Network is a great opportunity for us to develop this diplomacy between cities."

SEVIL LIMAN KAZAZI

Representative of
Prizren



Mrs. Kazazi began her remarks by saying, "we are here to remember our centuries-old fraternal relations and to establish these relations most strongly today and to increase our relations and cooperation." She gave information about the city and added: "The Municipality of Prizren is a developing multinational, multi-religious, multilingual city. As Kosovo's historical and cultural capital, Prizren establishes relations with various cities around the world as sister cities. We are

here as a city that aims to develop in different sectors, especially tourism and trade, and continues to work to this end". At the end of her speech, Mrs. Kazazi drew attention to the issue of women's representation in municipalities. "As a female representative and as someone who cares about gender equality, we see that there are very few female mayors in the Balkans. Therefore, I would like to ask the mayors attending this Summit to include more women in their governments."

FILIP ZORIČIĆ

Mayor of Pula



"Pula is the oldest city in Croatia and is a multi-layered historical and multicultural city with a 3,000-year history that began with Prague and continued with the rule of Venice, Austria, Italy, Yugoslavia and modern Croatia. Pula is Croatia's modern and richest industrial, tourism and cultural center."

'The summit is starting for a peace because Balkan is a critical area because of its history. Such conferences are an excellent opportunity to establish and improve cooperation between the cities of the region.'

'I expect that the summit will provide a great platform for exchanging our experiences and strengthening cooperation in various fields.'

Mayors of Europe, 30.11.2021

"In this Summit, we will talk about our cooperation for better education, better culture and better economy. But I think, first of all, we should talk about peace in this region," Mayor Zoričić said and concluded his words by saying: "For the last 100 years, historians have used the phrase powder keg for the Balkan geography. I think we need to delete that phrase at this Summit. I think this Summit is a chance in that respect, and I believe this Summit will be a starting point for peace. You know Croatia is part of the Balkans. But we are on the border of both the Balkans and Western Europe, and we are also completely in the Mediterranean. In other words, in the context of Europe, the Balkans and the Mediterranean, I think we have an opportunity ahead of us. I think this is a chance for our generation to create a better world for future generations, for our children, so please let's start working."

BENJAMINA KARIĆ

Mayor of Sarajevo



Mayor Karić said, "Although our cities are kilometers away from one another, we are extremely close because our goals and visions are common. From the point of view of international relations, I believe that the diplomacy of cities is becoming more and more important; because cities become important links for the development of regions and states and become an important aspect of international relations." Karić continued:

"Here, there are mayors from different cities at the B40 Balkan Cities Summit. We are very happy to cooperate at the local level and as the Mayor of Sarajevo, I get along very well with other leaders. We can cooperate in different fields such as culture, sports, infrastructure. For this reason, I think this summit is a great opportunity to find the aspects that unite us, not divide us."

Benamina Karic Sarajevo Mayor

Medyascope Interview, 3.12.2021

"Cities have a special role and responsibility in this process because bilateral cooperation between countries through the cooperation of cities is encouraged with the goal of achieving mutual prosperity. In this respect, I welcome this initiative aiming to establish the B40 Balkan Cities Network. Thanks to this regional network, I am confident that we can work even more together, identify common problems by strengthening cooperation and dialogue between cities, share best practice examples with each other, and find the best solution for our cities regardless of geographic distance. Considering that the pandemic has significantly slowed us down and reduced our direct communication, connecting our cities has become important. I believe that our participation in today's meeting will have a positive impact on our cities and will be used as an opportunity to establish an open and constructive dialogue to best fulfill the requirements of the role that cities play in making the world a safer place."

DANELA ARSOVSKA

Mayor of Skopje



"I believe that we will include the entire Balkan geography in this network in the future," Mayor Arsovska said. "We are given this opportunity in Istanbul today. We will not only talk about how different our cities are but also discover the points that connect us in this Summit."

'This is a very important and strategic initiative because uniting all the cities from the Balkans would actually contribute not only to ask cooperating in a friendly manner but also trying to strengthen our economic cooperation, our cultural cooperation, and help transform our cities to be better for their citizens.'

Danela Arsovska Mayor of Skopje

"Green economy, green cities, digitalization are all components of our cities. We all want our citizens to be part of such a project. But at the same time, economic cooperation between our cities unites us. We want to ensure that our citizens live in more developed cities, and this initiative is very important. Balkan cities came together for the first time on a single platform. I believe that this initiative will continue in the coming years, and we will achieve much more than has been achieved so far across the Balkans. Today we will build bridges of friendship and unity in Istanbul. As citizens of the EU and the Balkans, I believe we will show how successful we are in building bridges and unifying for better Balkan geography."

IVICA PULJAK

Mayor of Split



Mayor Puljak began his address by saying, "I am a scientist, I am a particle physicist, and therefore my speech will sound more scientific than political," adding that despite the complicated and turbulent history of the Balkans, we are all now part of Europe. Puljak continued:

"When we think about 2000 years of our shared past, we often focus on very unpleasant events. In addition to all the troubles, our predecessors also experienced many beautiful and pleasant events. If we look at the statistics, I'm sure the result would favor these beautiful events. People lived together, marriages took place between different nations, formed families, moved from place to place, made connections, and cooperated. Our languages are similar; there are so many words that I can understand when I walk around Istanbul. Our traditions are common, our food culture is common, our cultures have developed together, and these cultures are inseparable. Maybe that's one of the most important reasons why we understand each other; that's one of the reasons why we're here today. I'm going to tell you all something that's going to sound weird, but I think we're having the best time of all times. It's never been better in the world. Follow the evolution of the world, and you will see a steady decline in extreme poverty, child mortality, ignorance, violence, and other bad behavior we experienced in our turbulent past. The good news is that it will continue to be the case in the future, and the future will be even better. The fight will continue, and if it continues well for five, 50 or 100 more years from now, 100 more years from now, we will live in a world where all people are literate, where people do not suffer from extreme poverty or violence. We

will live healthier, longer, and happier lives and enjoy prosperity in the world dreamed of by all poets in human history. Of course, this isn't going to happen on its own. We will create such a world, and one of the most important tools we have is cooperation and collaboration. Of course, there are challenges, but we fight pandemics in the best way possible thanks to science and knowledge. The problem caused by climate change is a real and big problem, but perhaps the most important challenge in human history is connecting and living with technology. Words such as artificial intelligence, nanotechnology, biotechnology, quantum computing and blockchain technology will mark our near future. The future of humanity will be based on how we respond to the fundamental ethical and moral dilemmas arising from our unity. Thanks to technology, the 21st century will be the age of knowledge and science. The worldview of modern man is based on a scientific mindset and humanity, which is why the world continues to move forward. I'm pretty sure we're going to achieve it. The next generation, the incoming generation, and our younger generation are the main reasons, and I am sure of that. They are better people; they empathize more, are willing to work together, and more sensitive about the environment. They are completely familiar with modern technology. This is all great news for us, and we should be proud because we are the ones who raised that generation. Now it's time to equip them with all the tools and develop even better roles for them. First of all, it's time to give them the freedom to create. I'll try to predict the future. As my mayoral colleagues who spoke before me said, today's event will be remembered as one of the most important milestones for the future of the Balkans and Europe."

KADİR ALBAYRAK

Mayor of Tekirdağ



Starting his speech by drawing attention to the historical and cultural importance of the City of Tekirdağ, Mayor Albayrak said: "Located at the heart of Eastern Thrace, our city has historically been one of the centers of migration, expeditions and interactions between civilizations between Europe and Asia." Albayrak stated that Tekirdağ received migrants from Anatolia to the Balkans and vice versa. "Our citizens who are members of the exchange and migrant populations act as ambassadors of culture in our relations with neighboring Balkan countries. Tekirdağ is not only Turkey's gateway to Europe but is also a hub in our relations with other Balkan countries. Many world giants have invested in our city. Tekirdağ has 13 organized industrial zones, 1500 industrial enterprises and 150 thousand employees. Our city is a metropolis that develops with its strong industry, agriculture and livestock, strong transport

network, logistics investments, university and tourism and offers opportunities to investors."

Referring to the works in Tekirdağ, Mayor Albayrak noted:

"We are carrying out significant work in the fields of resilience and climate action cooperation, smart cities and digital transformation, urban democracy and migration. As for economic cooperation between Balkan cities, we have long-standing ties with neighboring Balkan countries and our sister cities. We have accelerated our work within the Thrace Municipalities Association to take our relations to an advanced level so that everyone can benefit. Last March, we held a workshop on cooperation with local governments of Balkan countries. I believe that the Balkan Cities summit will be an important turning point in our future work."

KONSTANTINOS ZERVAS

Mayor of Thessaloniki



Mayor Zervas said: "We have a historic opportunity before us to make a transition from the so-called Balkan issues to Balkan solutions, and we can achieve this through cooperation, sharing experience and good practices and common understanding."

Reminding his audience that the Balkan geography is a rich one where peace did not always reign, Zervas stated that we are faced with new challenges today. Mayor Zervas drew attention to the importance of cooperation between Balkan cities.

"The Balkan geography has an opportunity to

'This summit is a historic opportunity through cooperation, exchange of experience, and understanding examples of good practice for the transition from the time of problems to times of solutions in the Balkans. We promised to create new areas of cooperation, with particular emphasis on the importance of working together in the fields of economy, culture, innovation, sustainability, and solidarity to strengthen local democracies and good neighborly relations in the region and to reverse the effects of the climate crisis.'

Voria, 30.11.2021

resolve the differences through co-existence. I believe the challenges we all face are common. These are traffic, transportation, mobility and too many cars. We need new, more eco-friendly public transport. People don't trust public transport because of the pandemic. We need to improve the infrastructure in our cities. Thessaloniki has a new airport. Great investments have been made in our port, hotels and, more recently, a very modern new metro system. We're building new parks, and we're renovating neighborhoods. We do this in every possible neighborhood. Many of our colleagues talked about waste management, recycling, circular economy, and green economy. We are the first city in Greece to reach 26% in recycling. However, we are still far behind our targets set for 2030 and 2050. Finally, our biggest problem is urbanization and cities being extremely populated. I believe that İmamoğlu, the mayor of Istanbul, is having difficult times because of this problem. This is a global problem. There are many global problems, but we are here today. Today, it is up to us to achieve the common goals in the Balkans. We have to do this in terms of the goals we set for peace, economic development, cooperation, common policies, and the common issues related to our common problems. Our cities must cooperate through our responses to these challenges. We will shape the new future of Europe, the new future of the Balkans, and we can make a difference here today and write a new chapter for our cities, for our countries, for our Europe, for our history."

ERION VELIAJ

Mayor of Tirana



Mayor Veliaj started his remarks by referring back to the speech of Bakoyannis, Mayor of Athens, and agreeing that the implementation of a structure such as the Balkan Cities Network is long overdue. "We see it in the States, in the European cities, how they are organized around C40. So, I think it's really time for the Balkan Cities Network. Even though we're a little late to the party, I think we can really make a difference. It would be great if there were a secretariat that would push the conditions to bring some ideas together and implement some of these ideas."

"On the one hand, it is very important to keep the European perspective alive, and on the other hand, it is really important not to waste time waiting for the good. The good may come late or never, but we can do something and build our mini-Europe here in the meantime. For most citizens, Europe means freedom to move, clean cities, buses showing up on time, getting rid of the trash, going to a school where everybody recognizes the degree. So, if

we get going with some of this project, we will be like Europe anyway."

"You know who invaded whom, who is the neighbor who wants to get your land and your cities. Cities can act independently of this baggage from the past. No one disputes the city flags that we are all carrying here because we would not have them on the table if we were disputing them. But some flags and nations are disputed. No one is disputing city borders. We pretty much know how much surface we run. People are disputing country borders, but no one is disputing city names. They are what they are. There are always negotiations about what countries are called. So, I think we have the agility of the speedboat, not the oil tanker, and we have to make sure that the baggage we carry from the past to the present does not hinder the collaboration amongst us."

"Sometimes we forget that this is one of the unique regions in the world where Asia and



Europe meet, where Christianity meets Islam, where even within religion, Orthodoxy meets Catholicism. I think if we were to rebrand ourselves, not as a place of crisis but as a place of opportunity, I think we all have an image problem. People call it Balkanization, the tweet that got the most retweets during the uprising in the US Congress was the Balkanization of the United States. So now we need to rehabilitate and repair that term. I remember growing up using the words "volunteer" or collaborative in post-Communist Albania. Those were bad words. So, you have to say that volunteering is not a bad word. Everyone is willing to pick up trash or help the elderly or the poor. So now, on the worst day in modern US history, we must reverse the use of the term Balkanization to illustrate what happened in that uprising. This shows us that our image needs to change, and we need to rehabilitate and improve the meaning of the term Balkanization. We need to show that this means cooperation and doing something together today and

onwards. It means pushing each other up and making sure that we share all this innovation. I think we have a fantastic opportunity to turn the metaphor around from being a powder keg ready to explode to an opportunity to explore. If we work together, the power we'll get will become more powerful than we can achieve by working alone. As a result, I think we should do what Atatürk said concerning this image change. You know, when they asked him what the greatest battle was, they expected Atatürk would respond about a certain battle that was really bloody and difficult. But his response was, 'the biggest battle of my life was my war against ignorance. We have a weapon that we can use in our cities against ignorance, against the idea that the neighbor is the enemy. Leaving aside the accounts of the past, we have an opportunity to see different religions, skin colors, languages as a plus on our side. If we all declare war against ignorance, a great future awaits us.'

EKREM İMAMOĞLU

Mayor of Istanbul



Taking the floor again after the participant mayors, Ekrem İmamoğlu thanked all participants and said the following in his closing speech:

"Yes, words are valuable, but words are not enough, we need to put them into practice, and we have to be successful. We're here with that belief. It is our responsibility to grow this belief, to grow this participation. I have often heard the word Europe from all the speakers. We have felt that Europe would be better together with us, and of course, we all want a common European future. Let's express this clearly. Of course, there's a reality here. It's important what my friend Kostas Bakoyannis said that some promises were made but not kept. As the next generation of administrators, I think we should act with an understanding that removes all these handicaps and captures the future. I've received many great invitations, especially here. These fantastic invitations came from the cities and mayors

that I would love to meet with enthusiasm, and I am very happy about that. We'll definitely visit each other in time. We will organize very nice meetings and gatherings to strengthen the B40 Network and strengthen individual relations. I care about that, too. Of course, it shows that both my dear friend Kostas Bakoyannis' desire to hold this meeting in Athens next year and the desire of other cities to sustain this initiative in the years to come means that we are all securing the future of the B40 Network. Taking this opportunity, I would like to refer to Erion Veliaj's remarks because I believe that it is important to focus on the rehabilitation of the term Balkanization. I think it's an important philosophy. We are on the same page with mayors who are in a good mood, share optimistic views, humane thinking and think about people who share the sentiments and tolerance of bringing people together who have all the different languages, beliefs, and lives in the region. This is very pleasing; I already feel that we will realize this rehabilitation quickly."

B40 Balkan Cities Network

BALKAN CITIES SUMMIT / BALKAN ŞEHİRLERİ ZİRVESİ
29-30 KASIM / İSTANBUL





MAYORS' DISCUSSION

The second session of the B40 Balkan Cities Network discussed developing a roadmap with mayors' participation and creating a common platform for Balkan cities. The session also discussed what steps should be taken, the needs and expectations, and how a fund or a cooperation mechanism should be formed.

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Mayor İmamoğlu said that the most important issue for him is to establish a structure where each city is equally and fairly represented regardless of its population or geographical location and freely brings its problems to the table. He added that this was also key to the permanence and sustainability of the B40 Network. He also underlined the need for a secretariat to support this approach institutionally. He underscored that he took office in Istanbul, emphasizing a just, creative, and green Istanbul with happy residents. He also added that knowledge and experience could be shared in line with the common goals of democracy, migration, and climate crisis, which are other common goals. In this sense, he stated that strengthening local democracy should become one of the themes of the B40 Network. Addressing the importance of working with Balkan cities on these issues, Mayor İmamoğlu said that in today's interconnected world, one city's success is not enough. It would be better for this nearby geography to work together to find solutions. He added that the foundation for this goal was laid in Istanbul and that he hopes that other cities will continue this organization every year. He stated that Istanbul is ready to offer support by acting as a permanent secretariat.

Athens Mayor Kostas Bakoyannis, who took the floor after İmamoğlu, said a cooperation model should be introduced based on democracy, human rights, diversity, and pluralism, taking into account the climate crisis and paying due attention to digitalization. He underlined that this digital and green transformation is also a social transformation. In this sense, he underlined the importance of municipalities, as they are the closest to the public and can see the big picture and can take responsibility. To achieve this, he wholeheartedly expressed his support for Istanbul's proposal for a co-secretariat. He also stressed the need to establish a monitoring committee within a year or two. He reiterated his support for the structure, encouraging participants to take action before the bureaucracy. He also reminded everyone that Athens wants to host the next Summit, in the spirit of the birthplace of democracy.

Belgrade Mayor Zoran Radojičić said there are common problems and common issues, and that a simple, specific and understandable agreement should be reached regarding them. In this first step, he proposed setting up an initial model for the production of solutions,

that could then be improved. For this, he said, it could start in specific areas such as tourism. He also underlined that he wholeheartedly supports continuing this committee every year.

Ionut Rusu, deputy mayor of Constanta, said the secretariat should become a resource and that it should collect information from participants and then share it with those who need it. Adding how important digitalization has become for local governments during the pandemic, Rusu said that what is learned from the EU should be shared in line with these goals. He supported the next Summit being held in Athens. In addition, Emiriana Sako, the mayor of Durres, underlined the importance of working together.

Edirne Mayor Recep Gürkan said it is important to have a more permanent secretariat and maintain it by the same municipality. He said handing over the secretariat too often could create a disconnect. He said Istanbul was also ideal for the secretariat. While the permanent working group meets once a year, he stressed that working groups should meet more often for other technical committee work. He added that these technical committees could work in digitalization, tourism, the climate crisis and so on. He said that the relevant committees should present the results of their work to the mayors, creating the opportunity for quick action by the secretariat.

Kardzhali Mayor Hasan Azis expressed support for an organizational structure based on a secretariat in constant operation. He pointed out the importance of having a working platform. He added that concrete steps should be taken on this platform. He also proposed analyzing what was done in the run-up to the Athens summit next year and determining the topics that need to be covered. He pointed out the importance of establishing partnerships with scientific institutions once institutionalization is completed.

Mayor of Kırklareli, Mehmet Kesimoğlu, said he agreed with all proposals for the organization and supported the next Summit being hosted by Athens next year. Kotor Mayor Vladimir Jokić proposed the creation of a kind of digital open platform through which the problems and information of cities are effectively shared. In addition to these views, Lactaši Mayor Miroslav Bojić suggested meeting more



frequently. Mayor Kytelis said they welcomed the proposal for a permanent secretary and supported increased cooperation and solidarity. Patras Mayor Konstantinos Peletidis added that it is also important to protect and repay peoples' labor in the face of multinational corporations. Ivan Vuković, Mayor of Podgorica, said they were lucky to seek similar solutions to similar problems and that there would be no permanence without institutionalization. Therefore, he expressed support for this cooperation and institutionalization proposal. Prishtina Municipality representative Merita Maliqi said that more concrete issues can be focused on through working groups, and good organization could be made on different issues. In this way, she added, the effectiveness of the project will increase.

Sevil Liman Kazazi, Director of Tourism and Economic Development at Prizren Municipality, said Balkan cities could complement each other through this opportunity. Balkan cities can be introduced to the world through this platform, and a brand can be created. She added that Turkey could offer guidance in this field. Sevil Liman Kazazi noted that the visa issue among

Balkan countries is also an obstacle. Pula Mayor Filip Zoričić stated that the permanent secretariat is a good idea and stressed that it is important that this cooperation has a simple and understandable political language and vision. Sarajevo Mayor Benjamina Karić said a good step had been taken for peace, stability, and prosperous cooperation.

Skopje Mayor Danela Arsovska underlined that the Balkan Summit is a good step towards resolving problems and cooperation while saying they favor the idea of a permanent secretariat. She also said she agreed with a digital platform for faster communication. Split Mayor Ivica Puljak said he supported forming a permanent working group for an immediate response while also considering digital. He stressed the need to establish ties between universities, adding that it is important for them to be involved in the process. He underlined that this scope could be expanded into joint sports activities.

Mayor of Thessaloniki, Konstantinos Zervas, said they agreed with the organizational framework proposals and that the areas of cooperation mentioned were also appropriate. He added that it would be good to add joint events in sports and culture to this list. Tirana Mayor Erion Veliaj said he agreed that a permanent working group and that tourism was a good area of cooperation for a start. He said it was important to cooperate in the economic sphere. He stressed that working groups should also work together for economic cooperation.

Mayor of Istanbul, Ekrem İmamoğlu, who took the floor to deliver the closing speech after the participant mayors completed their remarks, underlined that all proposals are very valuable and forward-looking, and thanked the participant mayors for their support in establishing a permanent institutional structure for the Balkan Cities Network and for Athens to host the Summit next year. Noting how valuable it is to meet on an equal platform and with a shared denominator, İmamoğlu added that there are appropriate proposals to start cooperation and create working groups in areas such as tourism. Mayor İmamoğlu stated that he was happy with the unifying examples the mayors gave from their cities and concluded by saying that the Balkans would offer an example of tremendous cooperation both in Europe and the world.







KEYNOTE SPEECH: PROF. İLHAN TEKELİ

30 NOVEMBER 2021

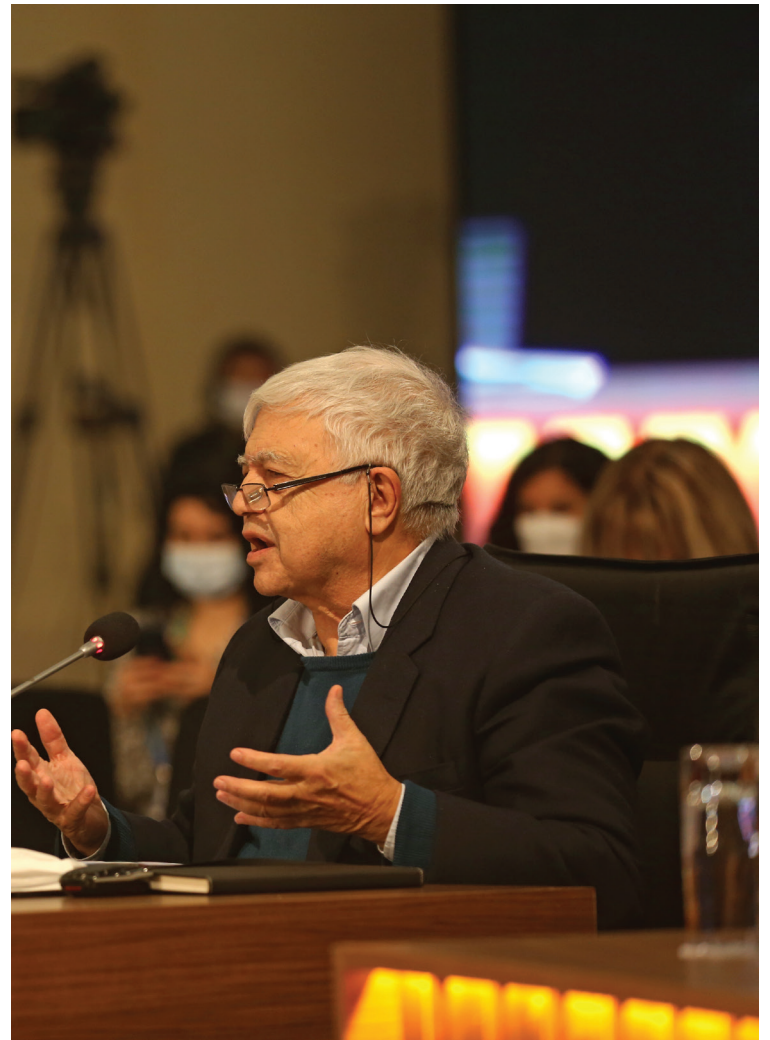
The second day of the B40 Balkan Cities Network started with the keynote speech of Prof. İlhan Tekeli. Tekeli started his speech by stating that a democracy befitting human dignity can only be established locally, not centrally. He said that we are a community of networks, and the Balkan Cities Network is a very important initiative in this sense. Tekeli expressed that not only the right to live, but also the right to live with dignity, should be targeted. Then, he pointed out that democracy can provide people the right to live a life of dignity, but it was important to understand what was meant by democracy. Expressing that the common understanding of democracy today is representative democracy, and that this understanding "instrumentalized democracy as a facilitated way of being in power", Tekeli stated that representative democracy takes the legitimacy of decisions from the majority of votes and that this issue is not questioned. He stated that representative democracy is, however, based on certain assumptions and that the basic assumption is that people are atomistic, that they can exist separately from each other, and the arithmetic sum of these must exceed fifty percent. In response to this hypothesis, he stated that humans are not actually atomistic, that the science of anthropology says so, and that humans can only exist in relation to each other. So, where

does democracy take place in this relationship? Our constitutions are also inadequate on how this democracy should be. In response to the question of how this representative democracy should be, Tekeli stated that governments can gain power with a marginalizing language without being democratic, and that the entire public space was designed according to the principle that it must be a zero-sum game. Tekeli said: "Thus, an oxymoronic concept emerges, and we elect non-democrats through democratic elections. The governments think that what they do is legitimate, and they create a democracy deficit." This democracy deficit creates a conflict between the demands of the people and the actions of the public authority. Tekeli stated that there are politicians trying to reduce this gap in representative democracy through two practical channels and explained that the first of these channels is to create open, transparent, and accountable processes for public participation, and the second is to open the way for civil society institutions to become public agents. He added that the concept of governance also sets a good example for the first path. He stated that these methods can eliminate the democratic gaps that will occur in line with the wishes of a single public agent. He stated that, at this point, there are two types of politicians; the first type looks at the society through the assumption of

them being atomistic individuals, and the second type of politician looks at the society through the human model that says individuals are in relation to each other and that their practices are different. He states that the first type of politician claims: "I love my society very much, but I am also someone who knows these issues and I know what is good for the society" and thinks that democracy is a tool for fulfilling their wishes and legitimizing their plan, while the second type of politician acts on behalf of his society. He stated that the second type of politician does not claim to know the best and he/she proposes a journey taken together, towards an improved society. He also stated that the first type of politician creates a cloud of hope rather than proposing a plan, which means that they aim for power through an illusion, while the second type of politician promises the people a dynamic change for the better.

Expanding on his views on the field and scale of democracy, Tekeli stated that in a country with a management problem, a division of labor between the central administration and the local government should be ensured. Tekeli said that the EU is trying to solve the problem of over-authorization of the central administration with a concept called subsidiarity and added that a central administration often wants too much authority in opposition to the local government. He questioned where the basis and legitimacy of this issue was and emphasized the importance of increasing the power that local governments hold, in order to break such a tendency of the nation-state. He added that the central government could be involved in negative efforts not only by obtaining excessive authority overall, but also, at the local level, by working in a redundant parallel with the municipality. Before discussing the appropriate division of labor between the central and local administrations, he underlined that it is also important to understand these central and local administrations and expressed the need to socialize with local administrations in a social relationship.

While expressing that central governments have the authority to make decisions, set rules, and implement practices, Tekeli further stated that the first function of the central government is to ensure the formation of a new social cohesion by keeping the local governments connected together. He stated that if the center goes beyond the normal functions it should have, an excessive centralization occurs, and this will constantly create a democracy deficit. Tekeli concluded his speech by stating that if we want to improve a country's democracy quality, it is necessary to first improve the quality of the local democracy.





OPEN DISCUSSION

After Prof.Dr. Tekeli's speech, the Mayors took the floor and shared their views and evaluations on this speech.

Ekrem İmamoğlu, the Mayor of Istanbul, took the floor first. Starting his speech by stating that democracy is a very valuable concept, İmamoğlu said that both correctly defining democracy and finding the method of implementing democracy are also important goals. Emphasizing the importance of Prof.Dr. Tekeli's concept of democracy deficits and the use of local practices to close that gap, İmamoğlu added that his most important weapon in the struggle against antidemocratic concepts, especially regarding Istanbul, was transparency. Expressing that he wants to be known as the most democratic Mayor of Istanbul, İmamoğlu cited the participatory budgets and projects initiated for this purpose as examples. İmamoğlu expressed that these were effective steps taken toward ending the democracy deficit. He also pointed out the importance of digitalization efforts and the use of the "Istanbul is Yours" application, that were initiatives developed in this direction. Stating that common sense and participatory democracy offer good solutions to today's problems, İmamoğlu concluded his speech by emphasizing the fact that

the citizens of Generation Z, accustomed to using the newest technologies, will play a very important role in the construction of a new type of democracy.

Prishtina Municipality representative Merita Maliqi began her remarks by saying, "We are in a system with centralized power, but we have seen examples where the local system continues even if those in the center change." She expressed that in this system, while things get easier if the central and local people are from the same political party, there has always been a conflict when they are from different parties. Maliqi stated that today's system does not always work properly, and it needs

In the announcement of the summit, "The development of smart and digital cities as the foundation of a new democracy; solutions to immigration problems as well as the needs of countries and cities that host immigrants and the economic integration of the Balkan Region are some of the key issues discussed at the summit." statements were included.

Vijesti, 29.11.2021

to be revised at certain points. She concluded her speech by pointing out the necessity of a political system that would resolve the conflict between the center and the local.

Mayor of Patras, Konstantinos Peleditis, who took the floor right after Maliqi, started his speech by saying, "We can't do anything locally that does not comply with the rules set by the central government". "Democracy is a beautiful word, but it also contains power," he said. He stated that the real power here is economic power. Mayor Peletidis concluded his words by saying that the laws are made to fulfill the economic demands, so in order to talk about a real democracy, the majority has to hold the economic power in their hands.

Emphasizing on the importance of pluralist democracy, Mayor of Pula, Filip Zoricic, said that transparency is the key word, and it is very important in the decision-making mechanism.

Mayor of Belgrade, Zoran Radojicic, stated that he agreed with the views expressed by Tekeli in his speech and commented on the importance of a humane understanding of democracy.

Mayor of Kardzhali, Hasan Azis, expressed his opinions about representative democracy. He stated that the municipality is a mirror, and the citizens should be able to see themselves in this mirror. From the idea that everyone can find themselves and their voices in the municipality in a participatory democracy, Azis said, "My thesis is that local democracy is the actual basis of democracy."

Mayor of Kırklareli, Mehmet Siyam Kapakoğlu, said that local governments, being the first stages of democracy, always have some conflict with the central government and that excessive authority is very harmful. He warned that to have meaningful justice, the powerful must be fair. He emphasized the importance of being a politician who thinks about the next generation, rather than the next election. He concluded his speech by stating that democracy is not the domination of the majority, but a system in which the rights of the minority should be guaranteed.

Mayor of Mytilene, Stratis Kytelis stated



that it is the duty of the local administration to protect democracy and in order to achieve this, it is important to observe the rights of the people in terms of economy.

Mayor of Split, Ivica Puljak, said that the secret of Homo Sapiens' success is that we are interconnected and that we need each other. He emphasized the importance of cooperation and democracy in order to continue this.

Mayor of Kotor, Vladimir Jokic, said that there is now a new digitalized youth and that this trend will continue to develop, and we will see a new face of democracy. He emphasized that those with economic or political power can no longer oppose this transformation. He stated that this will be a knowledge-based transformation and that optimism about democracy's future should start from this.

As the concluding speaker, Deputy Mayor of Constanta, Ionut Rusu, said, "It is greatly encouraging to listen to everyone's ideas and to think of putting those ideas into practice," and congratulated Ekrem İmamoğlu for the Balkan Cities Network initiative.



PRESENTATION OF THE OUTCOMES OF TECHNICAL SESSIONS

This section includes the summaries of four moderators who are experts in their fields, from presentations of the results of technical sessions on local climate action, smart cities and digital transformation, local democracy and migration, and economic cooperation.

Yunus Arkan, Director of Global Advocacy at ICLEI was the first speaker to present the results of the technical session on Cooperation in the Field of Climate Action. He began his speech by thanking those who worked at the organization. In the technical session, Arkan stated that they had discussed the numbers revealing the extent of the danger related to global warming and the extent of the potential damage. He stated that the actions at the national level were not sufficient. Arkan also said that we have numerous opportunities in dealing with the climate crisis at the local level and noted that the emphasis on multi-level participation in COP26 is important. Outlining the cities network for climate study that took place in Fiji in 2017, Arkan spoke of three areas where the B40 Network can help cities in this context. First, local action, and then, the national and European-wide strategy in a more collective dimension.

Arkan urged further discussion about what can be done at the global level. In this regard, he defined raising awareness, bringing stakeholders into the process, and sharing data as priority steps. He emphasized factors such as changing transportation habits and the active participation of young people, as highlighted at COP26. Arkan also pointed out that climate finance is an important issue, but that small steps that do not require a lot of resources can also have big effects. He noted that with the spread of good practices and experience among Balkan cities, such as Istanbul, Tirana and Athens, municipalities with relatively flexible structures can work to accelerate the positive action on the climate. Summarizing the issue of determination and access to finance in climate action with the chicken and egg analogy, Arkan stated that it is now possible for Balkan cities to talk about a stronger and innovative Balkan strategy on a global scale. Arkan, who completed his remarks with the slogan "everything is going to be alright" in the era of climate change, noted that this positive spirit in Istanbul can now spread to the Balkans, and an important opportunity has been seized for the climate Conference to be held in Egypt next year.

'In the Balkans, where the regional organization is weak, the B40 Network is very important to fill this gap and will provide very good opportunities on an important issue such as climate change. The fact that Glasgow COP26 coincides with the importance of local governments in combating climate change shows that this summit is a unique step.'

Yunus Arkan

Director of Global Advocacy at ICLEI

The next speaker, Oxford University Faculty Member Emre Eren Korkmaz, presented the results of the session on Smart Cities and Digital Transformation. He began his speech by saying that humanity is going through a very important technological revolution. He stated that artificial intelligence, blockchain, virtual reality and digital technologies have changed our lives and that there are great opportunities as well as challenges. He underlined that local governments should protect their citizens from new risks while also considering these developments as an opportunity for positive change. Addressing the smart cities issue in three categories, Korkmaz first talked about "providing adequate services to the

citizens", which covers areas such as waste management and traffic control. In the second step, he mentioned the topics of "participation/democracy" and for the third step, "addressing global problems such as climate and migration". He stated that the smart city approach should be adopted not only by purchasing sensors, cameras, software or adopting these investments, but also by adopting clear strategies with guidelines and ethical standards in the grand scheme of things. On how to pioneer smart cities and digital transformation and how to make investments in this field, Korkmaz mentioned digital inequality, which deepens existing inequalities. He expressed the risk of spreading fake news, manipulations and hate speech. In this context, he also emphasized priorities such as the security of the obtained data and not creating a surveillance society. Speaking about the Digital Citizenship and alternative credit scoring project implemented in cooperation with Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, Korkmaz stressed that many possibilities, from data-based studies for cities to those that can be created in the Metaverse platform, need to be evaluated correctly.

Taking the floor to present the results of the





technical session on Economic Cooperation for Balkan Cities, METU Political Science and Public Administration Faculty Member Tarık Şengül started his speech by saying that the B40 Network should have a complementary structure to other existing networks, especially the European Union, as opposed to an alternative organization, and that it is important to establish these structures with relations between multi-layered networks. Şengül emphasized that geography is an important resource and power, but also stated that it brings with it fragility. He said that Balkan cities have common problems that

are experienced in different ways, such as the climate and refugee issue, and that they need to work together to address these problems. Expressing that the topics of economy, climate change, smart cities and migration discussed at the summit are related to each other, Şengül emphasized that resources and opportunities should be used effectively in the fight against these problems. He mentioned that the cities of countries such as Turkey, where the necessary regulations at the national level are not sufficient, are often left alone in responding to climate problems and emphasized that regional networks are

very important in this context. He said that geography is the solution itself.

He stated that these problems have local repercussions, and a new economic logic should be created. He emphasized that the network should be trust-based and improvement-oriented, and for this purpose, the concept of "trust" should be well understood. Suggesting that cooperation can be realized in more concrete sectors such as tourism, Şengül pointed out that many problems can be solved by creating strong and widespread networks.

Before proceeding to the results of the technical session on Urban Democracy and Migration, Özen Tümer, Senior Expert on Gender Equality and Inclusion at the EBRD, expressed her warm wishes and thanks to the organization and introduced the results of the session with the following words: "Urbanization is one of the most important driving forces. When we look at the latest global developments, urbanization can also create opportunities for us if we can handle it correctly. We can create a better life for everyone. We can strengthen economic development, but if we do not address it correctly, this issue can also lead to inequalities. It can also impede progress and hinder inclusivity. That's why inclusivity is at the center of the discussions here." While Tümer mentioned that inclusivity is also about equal access to basic services, economic opportunities, and employment, as well as social rights and participation, she also underlined that necessary infrastructure should be provided to ensure access to these services for the most vulnerable. She stated that in order for municipalities in the B40 Network to cooperate in this field and meet their financial needs, common goals should be developed by taking immigrants into account. For example, she stressed that the evaluation of low-carbon technologies in line with the currently targeted green future can provide a good entry point for promoting an inclusive economy and an opportunity for cooperation for the region. While talking about green and digital skills, especially in the local employment market, she highlighted that the necessary



skills should be predisposed to refugees as well, and that only in this way can they get out of dependency on social assistance. She also expressed the idea that city councils and digital systems can be powerful tools for these. She said that all this emphasis on inclusion also needs to be addressed in terms of its impact on women, youth, the aging population and people with disabilities and multiple disadvantages. In conclusion, she shared that the technical session she moderated were strongly focused on the questions of "How can we ultimately live together in a more peaceful world?" and "How is peaceful coexistence possible?"



FEEDBACK FROM THE MAYORS



In this part, participant Mayors shared their assessments and feedback with respect to the results of technical sessions of which the presentations have been made for.

Mayor of Split, Ivica Puljak, speaking first, started by thanking the four speakers who moderated technical sessions and said that B40 Network should involve youth in strategies for various problems, especially climate emergencies, due to young people being extremely conscious about climate-related issues and other problems. The Mayor also emphasized that the B40 Network should take a leading role in smart cities and digital transformation, and that B40 Network cities should be inspired by Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality. On the other hand, he said that B40 Network provides an opportunity to establish a trust-based network for the mentioned economic cooperation. On urban democracy and migration, he concluded by underlining that B40 Network should be the leader in terms of our cities being inclusive.

Mayor of Mytilene, Stratis Kytellis, stated in his speech that the rights of immigrants were mentioned in the discussions, and they agreed on this issue, and underlined that all the immigrants going to other cities in Europe passed through their islands and this situation has caused them great difficulties. Stating that the city welcomes immigrants at all costs, Mayor Kytellis added that after this situation, they faced many financial, economic and social problems and the island was badly affected. Mayor Kytellis also underlined that the problems of the local people should be brought to the agenda in the face of the problems experienced with immigration and that this responsibility should be shared by all countries.

Afterwards, Edirne Mayor, Recep Gürkan, stated that migration should not be on the shoulders of only one city or a country, and that this burden should be shared, and added the following: "Look, one day in February 2020, 350,000 irregular refugees have arrived to my city, Edirne, to the Greek border within 24 hours and my city has a population of two hundred thousand. Can you imagine? As you look at those people, you want to give them whatever you have, whatever you have in your kitchen, whatever you have in your pocket. However, it is not enough, you cannot establish such an organization in such a short time. This is a really big problem, and this is not only a problem for Europe, but also for the whole world, but in terms of cleaning the garden of your own house, European Union needs to leave the mentality of just giving money and leaving you with taking care of the rest, it needs to be changed."

Mayor Gürkan, thanking the B40 Network organization and offering his best wishes; "As a Balkan child, I express my gratitude. It was a union we had longed for almost since I was born. Perhaps such a strong organization is emerging in the Balkans for the first time since the Balkan pact. All the local mayors who received the support of the local people and came to power through elections are present here. I believe that this number will increase exponentially in a very short time." While concluding his remarks, Mayor Gürkan, who included some words from Gabriel García Márquez, stated, "poverty is not that your hand is empty when you put it in your pocket, but that you have no hand to hold it when you take it out. Yesterday our hands were empty, today we hold 24 hands."



DECLARATION & SIGNATURE

Before the reading and formal declaration of the founding document of the B40 Balkan Cities Network, Mayor İmamoğlu took the floor. He stated that the meetings and technical sessions carried out within the framework of the summit were extremely valuable, and that a related publication will be shared with the concerned stakeholders, and that all steps from the summit will be sensitively followed. Thanking the moderators of technical sessions one by one, Mayor İmamoğlu underlined that climate change, smart cities, economic relations and especially the immigration issue were discussed, but that member cities had other issues in addition to these main topics.

Mayor İmamoğlu stated that Istanbul will support both the secretariat and coordination

'The declaration signed at the end of the summit pledges all mayors to commit to transparent and inclusive local governance based on data and shared information. It was also decided to plan projects and work activities that will contribute to the strengthening of local democracy and good neighborly relations in the region and to establish work units between cities.'

Makfax, 30.11.2021

for the second meeting to be held in Athens and invited the member cities to activate their own networks so that a network meeting with more participants can be held in Athens. By referring to the preparation



Mr.İmamoğlu announced that the next B40 summit will take place in Athens next year. He also added that 'I can already feel that we will do very valuable work in the future. This B40 network will definitely do the Balkans and Europe good. It will definitely bring great added value to the region. The B40 network would also be a very good preparation position for our world.'

Nezsbeezer, 30.11.2021

process of the Declaration, which is aimed to create an important value especially for the European continent, İmamoğlu stated that "The declaration I am about to read has been created together with the participating municipalities. After the first draft proposed by Istanbul had been shared with the invited municipalities, their opinions and suggestions were received, and this final text was created based on these suggestions. Therefore, I wish that this declaration, which has been created with a common mind and to be signed by everyone, will be beneficial to B40 Network and bring beauty, peace, tranquility and success to Balkan cities." He then read the text of the Declaration in the presence of the participants. Afterwards, the summit was concluded with a family photo taken after the Declaration had been respectively signed by the participating parties.



SIGNATURE



B40 Balkan Cities Network Declaration

This declaration was finalized by the participating mayors and municipality representatives after the first **B40 - Balkan Cities Network** kickoff meeting hosted by Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality on 29-30 November 2021.

We, as the leaders of the local governments of the participating Balkan cities and the founders of the B40 - Balkan Cities Network;

- Being aware of the potential that sustainable development and peace present for the cities in our region,
- With a shared vision for a European future,
- Aspiring to establish a fruitful cooperation in areas of common interest,
- Knowing that climate change and other global challenges we face requires working together towards common solutions at local, regional and global level,
- Recognizing that good governance requires a resilient, democratic, transparent, and inclusive local governance, based on data, science and shared wisdom for future cities,
- Emphasizing the critical importance of the localization of the New Urban Agenda and other international agreements and plans, particularly the Sustainable Development Goals,

Under the framework of the B40 - Balkan Cities Network, established at the Istanbul Summit, in line with the abovementioned common values, we declare to;

- Work together through this Network to strengthen the dialogue among our cities,
- Cooperate in the fields of economy, culture, innovation, sustainability, and solidarity,
- Develop new areas of cooperation focusing on reversing the effects of the climate change, and strengthening local democracy and good neighborly relations in our region,
- Evaluate the difficulties encountered at the local and regional levels within the framework of reciprocity and dialogue in common platforms by sharing solutions and good practices with the parties,
- Contribute to the recommendation development processes for decision makers at all levels,
- Assist in the planning of the Network meetings and the specification of the meeting agendas in line with the annual priorities to be determined by the Network members and participating in the meetings with Mayors and technical personnel,
- Host and participate in the Network meetings,
- Encourage participation of local communities through participatory activities,
- Provide support to the Network Secretariat.

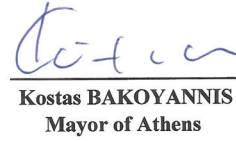
Date: 30.11.2021

On behalf of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality




Ekrem İMAMOĞLU
Mayor of Istanbul

On behalf of City of Athens



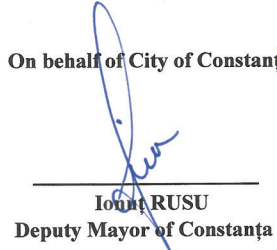
Kostas BAKOYANNIS
Mayor of Athens

On behalf of City of Belgrade



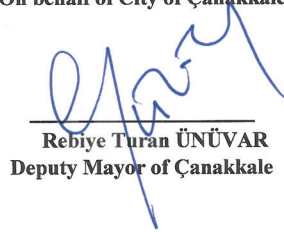
Zoran RADOJIĆ
Mayor of Belgrade

On behalf of City of Constanța



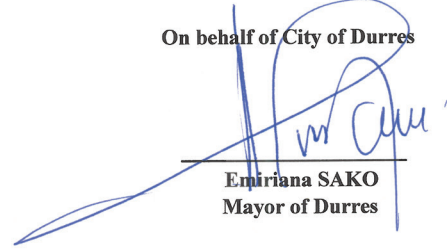
Ionuț RUSU
Deputy Mayor of Constanța

On behalf of City of Çanakkale



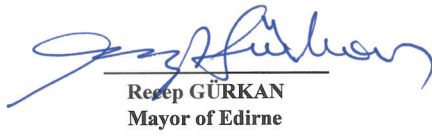
Rebiye Turan ÜNÜVAR
Deputy Mayor of Çanakkale

On behalf of City of Durres



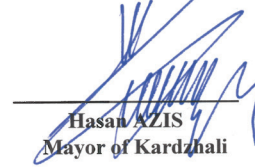
Emiriana SAKO
Mayor of Durres

On behalf of Municipality of Edirne



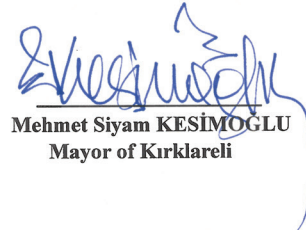
Recep GÜRKAN
Mayor of Edirne

On behalf of Municipality of Kardzhali



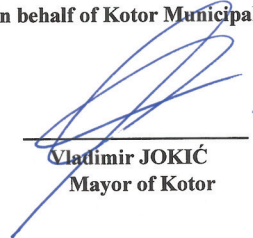
Hasan AZIS
Mayor of Kardzhali

On behalf of Municipality of Kırklareli




Mehmet Siyam KESİMOĞLU
Mayor of Kırklareli

On behalf of Kotor Municipality



Vladimir JOKIĆ
Mayor of Kotor

On behalf of Municipality of Laktaši




Miroslav BOJIĆ
Mayor of Laktaši

On behalf of Municipality of Mytilene



Stratis KYTELIS
Mayor of Mytilene

On behalf of City of Podgorica



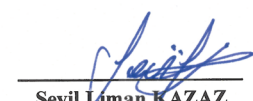
Ivan VUKOVIĆ
Mayor of Podgorica

On behalf of Municipality of Prishtina



Merita MALIQI
Head of International
Cooperation and EU Integration
of Municipality of Prishtina

On behalf of Municipality of Prizren




Sevil Liman KAZAZ
Director of Tourism and
Economic Development of
Municipality of Prizren

On behalf of City of Pula




Filip ZORIĆ
Mayor of Pula

On behalf of City of Sarajevo



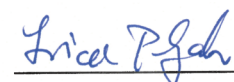
Benjamina KARIĆ
Mayor of Sarajevo

On behalf of City of Skopje




Danela ARSOVSKA
Mayor of Skopje

On behalf of City of Split



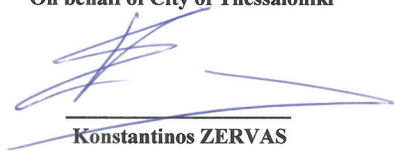
Ivica PULJAK
Mayor of Split

On behalf of Tekirdağ Metropolitan Municipality



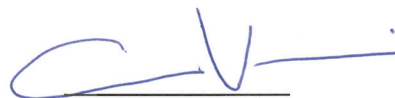
Kadir ALBAYRAK
Mayor of Tekirdağ

On behalf of City of Thessaloniki



Konstantinos ZERVAS
Mayor of Thessaloniki

On behalf of Municipality of Tirana



Erion VELIAJ
Mayor of Tirana



ALKAN ŞEHİRLERİ ZİRVESİ

BUL



MAYORAL PROGRAM

DAY 1 // 29th November 2021

09:30 - 12:30

Opening Session // **Better Cooperation Better Future**

- Video presentation (*launch clip*)
- Opening Speech: Mayor İmamoğlu
- Speeches by the Mayors

(After Mayor İmamoğlu taking the floor as the host for 10 minutes, the rest of the Mayors will deliver a speech for 5 mins each, in the alphabetical order of the city names)

Moderator: Ms. Duygu Demirdağ

12:30 - 14:00

Lunch // **Istanbul Congress Center**

14:00 - 16:00

Mayors' Discussion // **Building a Common Platform Among Balkan Cities**

- Building a Common Platform Among Balkan Cities

Moderator: Ms. Duygu Demirdağ

- Each Mayor will have a chance to speak in the alphabetical order for 3+2 minutes
(3 mins in the first round, followed by 2 mins more in case of need)

16:30 - 17:30

On-site Visit to Waste Incineration and Biomethanation Facility // İstaç

18:00 - 18:30

Eminönü – Alibeyköy Tram Line **On-site Visit and Tour //** 11 stations in 15 mins

- Visit to the Command Center and Briefing
by *Ms. Pelin Alpkökin / Head of Rail Systems Department*
- Abording the tram car exclusively allocated for our guests
Tour along the Golden Horn shores, description of the Historical Peninsula
by *Deputy Secretary General Mr. Mahir Polat*

19:30 - 21:00

Inaugural Dinner // **Çırağan Palace**

- Speech by Mayor İmamoğlu
- Music performance: Muammer Ketencoglu

21:30 - 22:00

Transfer to the Hotels

DAY 2 // 30th November 2021

09:00 - 09:30	Keynote // A Democracy Befitting Human Dignity can only be built Locally Speaker: Prof. İlhan Tekeli
09:30 - 10:30	Open Discussion <i>Optional -Mayors who wish to speak could take the floor for 2 mins</i>
10:30 - 11:00	Mapping Show and Cooperation Areas
11:00 - 12:30	Bilateral Meetings between Mayors <i>Mayors of Athens, Durres, Kardzhali, Kotor, Laktaši, Mytilene, Pula, Sarajevo, Skopje, Thessaloniki, Tirana and Trikala will be received in the alphabetical order for a duration of 10 minutes each</i>
12:30 - 14:00	Lunch // Istanbul Congress Center
14:00 - 14:40	Presentation of the Outcomes of Technical Sessions
14:40 - 15:30	Feedback from the Mayors <i>Discussion to institutionalize the B40 Balkan Cities Network Mayors will be given 2 minutes to take the floor (optional)</i>
15:30 - 16:00	Closing Declaration & Family Photo Speech by Mayor İmamoğlu
16:15	Departure from the Congress Center to Kabataş Pier
17:00 - 19:00	Bosphorus Boat Tour Guide: Mr. Aydın Kudu
19:30 - 21:30	Gala Dinner // Feriye Restaurant <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Orchestra Performance: Hüsnü Şenlendirici• Speech by Mayor İmamoğlu
21:30 - 22:00	Transfer to the Hotels

TECHNICAL PROGRAM

DAY 1 // 29th November 2021

09:30 - 12:30

Opening Session //
Better Cooperation Better Future

- Video presentation (*launch clip*)
- Opening Speech: Mayor İmamoğlu
- Speeches by the Mayors

(After Mayor İmamoğlu taking the floor as the host for 10 minutes, the rest of the Mayors will deliver a speech for 5 mins each, in the alphabetical order of the city names)

Moderator: Ms. Duygu Demirdağ

12:30 - 14:00

Lunch //
Istanbul Congress Center

14:00 - 16:00

Cooperation on Climate Action

Moderator: Yunus Arikon / Head of Global Policy and Advocacy, ICLEI

Smart Cities and Digital Transformation

Moderator: Emre Eren Korkmaz / Lecturer, Oxford University

16:30 - 17:30

On-site Visit to Waste Incineration and Biomethanation Facility // İstaç

18:00 - 18:30

Eminönü – Alibeyköy Tram Line
On-site Visit and Tour // 11 stations in 15 mins

- Visit to the Command Center and Briefing
by *Ms. Pelin Alpkökin / Head of Rail Systems Department*
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Inaugural Dinner //
Çırağan Palace

- Speech by Mayor İmamoğlu
- Music performance: Muammer Ketencoglu

21:30 - 22:00

Transfer to the Hotels

DAY 2 // 30th November 2021

09:00 - 09:30	Keynote // A Democracy Befitting Human Dignity can only be built Locally Speaker: Prof. İlhan Tekeli
09:30 - 10:30	Open Discussion <i>Optional - Mayors who wish to speak could take the floor for 2 mins</i>
10:30 - 11:00	Mapping Show and Cooperation Areas
11:00 - 12:30	Urban Democracy and Migration Moderator: Özen Karaca Tümer / EBRD Senior Expert of Gender Equality and Inclusivity, Turkey Economic Cooperation for Balkan Cities Moderator: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Tarık Şengül / Lecturer, Department of Political Science and Public Administration / METU
12:30 - 14:00	Lunch // Istanbul Congress Center
14:00 - 14:40	Presentation of the Outcomes of Technical Sessions
14:40 - 15:30	Feedback from the Mayors <i>Discussion to institutionalize the B40 Balkan Cities Network Mayors will be given 2 minutes to take the floor (optional)</i>
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21:30 - 22:00	Transfer to the Hotels



MAPPING SHOW AND COOPERATION AREAS



PHOTO ALBUM



































Balkan Cities Network

ISTANBUL SUMMIT

29-30 NOVEMBER 2021

B40

Balkan Cities Network



CITY OF ATHENS



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CONSTANTA



CANAKKALE BELEDIYESI



BASHKIA DURRES



EDIRNE BELEDIYESI



ISTANBUL METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY



KIRJALI



KIRJALI BELEDIYESI



MUNICIPALITY OF KOTOR



MUNICIPALITY OF MYTILENE



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MUNICIPALITY OF MYTILENE



PRISHTINA



GRAD PULA



GRAD PULA



Grad Sarajevo
City of Sarajevo



GRAD SPLIT



GRAD SPLIT



TEKIRDAG



CITY OF THESSALONIKI



BASHKIA TIRANË

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