



Balkan Cities Network

SARAJEVO MEETING





Ekrem İMAMOĞLU,

Term President of B40 Balkan Cities Network, made his first visit to Sarajevo to organize a B40 Network meeting. At this meeting of the B40 Balkan Cities Network held on April 25, 2022, in Sarajevo, he got together with the founding members of the B40 Network, the Mayor of Sarajevo, Benjamina KARIĆ, and the Deputy Mayor of Laktaši, Darko STANKOVIĆ, as well as the Mayor of Tuzla, Jasmin IMAMOVIĆ, and the Mayor of Zenica Fuad KASUMOVIĆ, who were invited to become members.

The B40 Network meeting held in Sarajevo was an important meeting to evaluate the possibilities and opportunities for the Balkan cities in line with the search for 'Better Cooperation, Better Future'. Esteemed Mayors exchanged views to implement a more inclusive, more sustainable and stronger local government approach in the cities of the B40 Network. They evaluated the action plans prepared by the working groups to realize the potential of the B40 Network. Therefore, it was a special and valuable meeting for the B40 Balkan Cities Network, which is a powerful opportunity for the dialogue between the cities of the B40 Network, the friendship between their peoples and the future of the region



Term President İMAMOĞLU,

stated his belief that every effort to be made within the scope of the B40 Balkan Cities Network will be a significant investment for the member cities and an important service for their people.

Mayor İMAMOĞLU said that he cares a lot about esteemed Mayor's interest and support to the agendas and outputs of the working group meetings of B40 Network. Therefore he outlined some of the prominent projects in the action plans prepared by the working groups.



He stated that the main goal of the B40 Network local climate action working group is to strengthen the environment and climate skills of the member cities and to increase solidarity in this area by making collaborations. The actions B40 Network will take on this front, will increase the compliance skills of the member cities to global level climate change policies and to sustainable development policies. He said it would be a great success to bring the member cities to same level and achieve a regional alignment, especially on climate and environment. That is the only way to build an axis of regional compliance. With that in mind, local climate action working group has taken into the action plan such important issues as the preparation of greenhouse gas inventory, and then preparation of B40 Network regional climate action master plan in the medium to long term, the preparation of the B40 Network air quality monitoring system in order to improve air quality in Balkans, cooperating on sea surface and coastal cleaning, waste management and energy management. He said he believes these efforts will play an important role in terms of making climate action a part of corporate cultures in the member cities



He mentioned that local democracy and migration working group has focused on such special areas as supporting the local economy based on cooperatives and entrepreneurship and providing support especially to women and immigrant entrepreneurs on the basis of gender equality. In this way, B40 Network aims to create an urban entrepreneurship ecosystem. Also, in order to strengthen the civil decision-making mechanisms in the member cities, working group have included the following projects into the action plan: Sharing citizens' council experiences, generalization of participatory budget practices, developing and implementing stakeholder governance models with the requesting cities to foster democratic local participation.



Term President İMAMOĞLU said that smart cities and digital transformation working group has prepared projects to make the best use of technology and innovation, the most important instrument, while designing a better future for the member cities. For example, Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality will provide the largest-to-date social solidarity platform, Pay It Forward, to all member cities at no cost, and we will provide technical support for the member cities to implement this campaign. Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality is very happy to provide this benevolence platform to all member cities, and thus to be instrumental in the spread of goodness. The biggest achievement and contribution of the B40 Network is sharing these kinds of practices and multiplying such examples by learning from each other. In addition, B40 Network has extremely exciting projects on the agenda such as creating an open data platform and establishing a B40 Network disaster information system between the member cities. One of the plans is to cooperate with the cities in preparing a smart city master plan and share technical information. The aim is to fully support the creativity and innovation potential of the member cities.

Term President İMAMOĞLU

mentioned that, B40 Network local economic cooperation working group will carry out cultural and artistic activities that will both develop and integrate the cultural power of the member cities. Cultural and art activities will ensure mobility between the member cities, increase diversity for each member and have continuity. The cultural opportunities of each of the member cities are different from each other. B40 Network will develop a cultural axis that will carry these differences together. For this purpose, it will be ensured that the capacities of the member cities, which stand out in terms of dynamism, diversity, and scale in the field of culture and arts, will support other cities with activities such as a festival train, a traveling museum, and a traveling festival. Besides, local economic cooperation working group will enable the member cities to meet with international financial institutions and organizations to discuss their project-based financing needs.

Term President İMAMOĞLU said he sincerely believe that the member cities will increase their common benefits by focusing on action, performance, and service for the future of their fellow citizens, thanks to these and many other projects they will carry out from now on. These works will be the starting point for developing joint capacity between the member cities and creating efficiency-oriented methods and solutions.

He expressed his belief that a more human-oriented, warmer and more effective local government approach will emerge in the Balkans thanks to the cooperation projects to be carried out within the B40 Network.



**Benjamina KARIĆ,**

Mayor of Sarajevo, expressed her pleasure to host the B40 Network meeting. She stated that she closely followed the activities of the B40 Network working groups and that she was delighted that such quick action was taken. She expressed their belief that the B40 Network is a very solid ground for better cooperation at the local level and building a common good future in the Balkans, therefore they are very pleased to participate in the work of the B40 Network. Mayor KARIĆ stated that member cities shares their ideas and proposals on the B40 Network working groups. At the same time they set a new way to work together. All member cities work together to create happy cities with happy citizens. She said she believes that B40 Balkan Cities Network will be able to work together even more and to strengthen mutual cooperation between member cities to exchange the best practices. She mentioned that the participation in today's meeting will have a positive impact on the cities and will be used as an opportunity for a constructive dialogue on how to identify the common problems and to find the best solutions. The city of Sarajevo will be fully committed to actively cooperate with member cities in the fields of working groups of B40 Network. She greatly appreciates everything that Mayor İMAMOĞLU have done for B40 Network.

Mayor of Laktaši, could not attend the meeting, since 25 April, the date of the meeting, was celebrated as Laktaši Municipality Day. Deputy Mayor STANKOVIĆ, who attended the meeting representing the Municipality of Laktaši, stated that they are pleased both to be a member of the B40 Network and to take part in this meeting. He said that being a founding member of B40 Network is the biggest achievement of Laktaši in the international area. Expressing that they believe in the importance of this cooperation platform between Balkan cities, STANKOVIĆ stated that the B40 Network will implement very important cooperation projects in the future and Laktaši will be a part of it. He also mentioned that B40 Network permanent secretariat has been set up and started to work just after a few days of Istanbul Summit. It is also an important achievement. By this way member cities got a ground to work together

**Jasmin İMAMOVIĆ,**

Mayor of Tuzla, stated that it is a very significant development that the Balkan cities came together in the B40 Network. He also stated that the visit of Mayor İMAMOĞLU to Bosnia and Herzegovina is very important. He stated that our societies have a very deep connection. Istanbul is a special city which is a victory of the unity of diversity and it has a special kind of experience on putting together the differences and harmonizing the diversity among people. Harmonizing an orchestra of about 20 million people is very impressive experience. Our mission is to ensure that our people have a better quality of life. He said he believes B40 Network is a good opportunity for creating such a good way. He stated that the Municipality of Tuzla will also become a member of the B40 Network. Thereupon, Term President İMAMOĞLU congratulated Mayor İMAMOVIĆ and said "Welcome to the B40 Network".



Fuad KASUMOVIĆ,

Mayor of Zenica, also stated that they believe in the importance of the B40 Network and that they will become a member. Term President İMAMOĞLU also congratulated Mayor KASUMOVIĆ and said "Welcome to B40 Network". He stated that he believes this union, which currently continues with 27 cities in the B40 Network, will be much stronger with the participation of Tuzla and Zenica

Many business people from Istanbul attended Term President İMAMOĞLU's B40 Network Sarajevo Meeting. Mayors who attended the meeting stated that the participation of such a large delegation of business people from Istanbul to the B40 Network meeting with Mr. İMAMOĞLU is an indication of the belief in the B40 Network of the business world of Istanbul.

They also stated that the B40 Network is a very important opportunity for the local development of cities. They expressed that business people from all our member cities will be in communication and solidarity in order to be a facilitator in the business processes in other member cities. Stating that solidarity with the business world is the most important stage in the development of the local economy in member cities, they also mentioned that this is one of the most important goals of the B40 Network.



Ljubisa PETROVIĆ,

the Mayor of Bijeljina, and his associates also attended the B40 Network Sarajevo meeting. He expressed the interest of Municipality of Bijeljina to join B40 Network. Term President İMAMOĞLU emphasized the importance of this interest and said that he is looking forward to finalize the membership of Bijeljina.



After the meeting, esteemed Mayors attended the dinner hosted by Term President İMAMOĞLU. Term President İMAMOĞLU is planning to visit all B40 Network member cities as the B40 Network Term President.



B40  **Balkan Cities
Network**

SARAJEVO MEETING