



## UCLG in Kazan: absence of a Turkish guest, creative economy and gratitude for Tatar hospitality

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Mayor from the Seychelles insisted on the necessity to strengthen the influence of municipalities on the world stage



Photo: kzn.ru

Kazan became the first Russian city to host a meeting of the exotic at present UCLG Executive Bureau. A correspondent of Realnoe Vremya visited the official opening of the meeting and found out what impressed foreign guests most of all in Kazan, why the already 'powerful' organisation requires to strengthen its influence on the world stage and why cities are that important places for a successful development of the world economy.

### **Absence of a Turkish guest and first visit of UCLG to Russia**

The opening of the event was on 26 May in a pavilion of Kazan Fair and hosted representatives of the organisation United Cities and Local Governments from 97 cities in one place. Mayor of Kazan, who is co-President of this organisation at the same time, became the moderator. President of Tatarstan Rustam Minnikhanov, Mayor of Victory (the Seychelles) Jacqueline Moustache-Belle and an American economist and the author of Creative Class Richard Florida were the main speakers of the plenary session.

It should be noted the 'main character', President of UCLG and Mayor of Istanbul at the same time Kadir Topbaş was not at the opening ceremony – the guest from Turkey was to visit the event later to participate in political discussion and debates on development of urbanism, tourism and business and exchange of the experience of the best urban practices together with the others.

This event has been held e in Russia for the first time, and Kazan was chosen to be a site to organise the first meeting of UCLG in 2016 last year – in Executive Bureau in Porto Allegro. There is one nuance more that makes this event special: this event is the last before the World Congress where new governing bodies of UCLG will be chosen, so the capital of Tatarstan will host the main events within the scope of the candidates' electoral campaigns.



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Photo: prav.tatarstan.ru

### **Personal gratitude to Kazan people from the Seychelles Mayor**

As a tradition, the official part of this large international event opened with a welcome speech of President of Tatarstan. In his speech, Rustam Minnikhanov reminded why UCLG was important literally for every citizen.

'The World Organisation United Cities and Local Governments has become influential and well-known around the world for a short period. It advocates the interests of local governments on the world stage. I suppose such a close cooperation of local and regional governments favours the creation of good life conditions for the population of our cities, and the decisions at global and national level are to be made taking into account the opinion of local governments. We proud that the headquarters of the Eurasian Department of UCLG is situated in Kazan. Our republic is interested in the participation in the work of this organisation,' Minnikhanov delivered his speech.

President ended his welcome speech with an invitation of the foreign guests to the celebration of Sabantuy (literally 'plough's feast', a Tatar summer festivity), which will be on 28 May. The date of Sabantuy, by the way, was specially changed for the guests of UCLG.

It should be said the foreigners were impressed by the Kazan hospitality before the presidential invitation: in her speech, Mayor of Victory Jacqueline Moustache-Belle personally expressed her gratitude to the people of the capital of Tatarstan for such a pleasant attitude and high organisation level of the event.



Moustache-Belle insisted on the necessity to strengthen the influence of UCLG on the world stage. Photo: prav.tatarstan.ru

In addition, the speaker mentioned the role of UCLG: despite the fact the organisation, as world experts estimate, has already been the most powerful and influential body in the sphere of the strengthening the relation of local government bodies, their presentation on the world stage and implementation of democratic principles. Moustache-Belle insisted on the necessity to strengthen the influence of UCLG on the world stage. According to her, it will favour the acceptance of local governments on the world stage and their voice will be heard.

### **'Everyone's creativity is important regardless of their religion or sexual orientation'**

The speech of an American professor, economist and the author of Creative Class Richard Florida was one of the most interesting. He told the guests and the participants of the session why cities were the main driver for the world economy.

Florida opines today many cities around the world, including Kazan, are going through an extremely important period of a gradual refusal of the traditional raw material-based economy, it is substituted by an absolutely new type uniting what makes us people – creativity.

'We can say it is a specialised sphere. However, creativity is in the world economy: neither materials nor machine tools, nothing could be created without it. Everyone's creativity is important regardless of their religion, sexual orientation or nationality,' Florida told.



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As the speaker said, many people are mistaken when they think raw material-based economy is obsolete and cannot be a driver of the economy. However, it is not true: raw material can be successfully used for investments in knowledge that, in turn, is able to cultivate such important creativity.

According to Florida, another transformation of the modern world is that we became an 'urban' world: most part of the population lives in cities. Consequently, cities are the basic factor of the development of the economy – a huge number of people who are able to create innovations are concentrated there. What is more, the quantity of the urban population will increase manyfold in

the next 50 years. So it's time to prepare for either expansion of the infrastructure we have or creation of new cities.

### **How a Mayor from Donetsk People's Republic visited Kazan**

It should be reminded last summer Kazan hosted a Congress of the Eurasian Regional Department of the World Organisation United Cities and Local Governments. The Congress gathered local and regional leaders of the Eurasian regions, which consists of over 100 cities of Russia and near abroad like Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Mongolia, Tajikistan, etc.

Eurasian integration was discussed during the event – the idea actively lobbied by Russia that causes a rejection in the West. What added a bit of spice was that Mayor of Zhdanovka, which is controlled by Donets People's Republic today, and Mayor of Gagauz Comrat (a city in the autonomous region of Moldova that is not interested in euro integration) were among the participants.

By Lina Sarimova