



GSEF2016 Declaration in Montreal

Current context

Around the world, we are witnessing increased income inequality, a polarization of societies, persistent or increasing social exclusion and an inability to meet environmental challenges. Added to this is an important political challenge: managing urban growth by ensuring a decent quality of life, access to basic needs (housing, water, sanitation, energy, transportation, security, etc.) and an environment that enables individual and collective empowerment.

Commitment to the Social and Solidarity Economy

We, the 1500 people from 330 cities in 62 countries, participants at the 2016 Global Social Economy Forum -GSEF2016 in Montreal, strongly reaffirm that more intelligent, equitable and sustainable cities are possible and that an economic development model that places people at the center of economic, social and political activity exists. We call this the *social and solidarity economy (SSE)*.

The SSE seeks to integrate economic efficiency, social inclusion, sustainable development and increased participation in the functioning of the economy and urban development. Cooperatives, community-based businesses, social enterprises, credit unions and mutual insurance, social finance and non-profit institutions together constitute the SSE. The philanthropic sector as well as social investors also contribute to its development. In short, the SSE encompasses all those who do not put increased profit as the main or sole purpose of economic activity. In order to progress, the SSE must assume its full place alongside the private and public sector.

The SSE is essential for all societies and questions our current development model. It gives hope to vulnerable individuals and groups who are unable to find decent work, and lack access to housing or adequate services that conform to the minimum standards of living. The SSE supports a development model that protects the environment through collective ownership of natural resources and through sustainable forms of production. The SSE is also the foundation for revitalizing participatory democracy through collective action at the heart of economic and social activity. Democratic processes and collective decision making inherent in the SSE are essential to meet our challenges.

Besides the State there are cities, local authorities and collective action

These challenges facing humanity cannot be solved by one country alone. The contributions of municipalities, towns and local authorities are also essential, all the more so because governments and regional authorities are closest to its inhabitants and help promote a vibrant democracy and recognize the right to the city.

Facing these challenges also requires governance that requires the active participation of all stakeholders, supported by researchers, to reinforce the expertise and capacity of local governments to better serve the needs and aspirations of communities. We share the conviction that the SSE contributes to the elaboration of a new development model by changing our ways of thinking and acting.

Moreover, we reaffirm our commitment to international solidarity in facing these challenges through the dissemination of information, the exchange of best practices and through mutual support which can include financial support. This solidarity manifests itself through public action for a more equitable world, and the establishment of an enabling international agenda for the future.

We thus reaffirm our commitment to cooperate with GSEF in order to promote the significant contribution of the SSE to meeting current challenges, including the implementation of the United Nations 2030 and the New Urban Agenda of Habitat III, that strive to achieve a quality of life in cities reflecting the aspirations of their inhabitants.

Resolutions

Building on the strength of the 2013 Seoul Declaration, we commit to work for the development of our cities in order to:

1. Recognize the central role of SSE organizations to overcome the current challenges and to promote a renewed participatory democracy
2. Multiply participatory governance spaces
3. Build an inclusive movement for all men and women of all ages and origins.
4. Build public-private-community partnerships to meet the needs and aspirations of our communities
5. Share our visions, experiences and achievements to promote social innovation, including through CITIES, a strategic partner of GSEF
6. Recognize and support youth as important actors for the future of the SSE movement.