

Public Services International Delegation Visits UCLG

PSI recently met with the senior staff of United Cities and Local Governments – UCLG – which is a global federation of cities and local governments. The aim of the meeting was to seek areas of common interest. This statement was jointly agreed.

There was a common understanding that universal access to quality public services is a shared goal of the two organizations. *“Sub-national governments are increasingly responsible for delivery of services to all people living within their geopolitical boundaries, and as such are responsible for the terms and conditions of employment of many of the workers who are members of unions affiliated to PSI,”* affirmed the PSI representatives.

A number of possible areas of interest were identified:

Financing public services: this is one of the most significant challenges for UCLG members, who face many unfunded mandates from national governments when responsibility for service delivery is decentralized. Sub-national governments are often also severely limited in their abilities to raise taxes, so it was suggested that the two organizations share good practices of taxation at local level.

Financing for development: the Post-2015 development agenda has a track dedicated to financing. UCLG and PSI may be able to collaborate in this process.

Governance of public services: this includes a wide range of issues, such as policy making, participatory governance, procurement, and corruption. A particular emphasis was put on *public-private partnerships*, especially the critical area of contract negotiations between corporations and public authorities. It was proposed that the organizations share information on the costs and benefits of PPPs, including loss of competence and expertise on the part of local authorities, as well as the difficulties of regulating the private sector. The representatives of PSI also proposed an analysis of the trend towards “re-municipalisation”. The core areas of concern of the trade unions are staffing, job creation, labour standards, and skills building. Finally, it was proposed to work on the promotion of *public-public partnerships (PUPs)* or peer-to-peer exchanges.

PSI International drew the attention of UCLG to the current Trade in Services Agreement TiSA negotiations, which include a focus on services with potentially important implications for how local governments are able to work.

UN New Urban Agenda: in parallel to the Post-2015 Agenda, the UN will debate the new urban agenda that will be adopted in the Habitat III Summit in 2016. UCLG wants to hold a broad consultation with its members and partners to explore how the new urban agenda can help to build more inclusive and sustainable cities. Both organizations share many concerns about issues that will be at the centre of the debates, i.e. access to quality basic services and infrastructures, resilient cities, decent jobs and participatory democracy.

Migration: although migration policy is typically set by national government, it is local governments who must absorb and integrate migrants. Migration policy issues require the input of local authorities and trade unions, and there is the potential for collaboration in this area.

Disasters: this is an area moving very quickly up the global agenda. Natural and man-made disasters impact heavily on local authorities, who are responsible for disaster prevention and recovery. Public sector workers are often called to place themselves in danger during and after the events in order to save lives and property. The organizations discussed the possibility of sharing information about existing initiatives and developing proposals for joint action.

More about UCLG <http://www.uclg.org/>