

23 April 2020

**Open Letter II Chair Peter Kurz, Mayor of Mannheim
Global Parliament of Mayors**

Global Parliament of Mayors
The Hague

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We are still all together in this serious, very severe crisis that is pervading our societies, our countries and our cities at every level. We, as mayors, remain at the forefront of developing, applying and rethinking appropriate measures to manage this crisis on a daily basis so that it causes as little harm as possible. I therefore repeat emphatically that without evidence-based action and sustainable leadership we cannot achieve this goal now.

We are not groping in the dark, but things are not bright either. Here and there, across our globe, we can clearly see what a lack of leadership entails - it costs lives. Political action cannot be handed over to other entities, although we are always advised by scientists and expert advisors.

We can draw some conclusions from developments so far:

1. Dialogue and cooperation between the different levels of government will be even more decisive in the next phase “after the shutdown”.
2. It has already been demonstrated that involving local governments in decision making processes secures efficiency, effectiveness and accepting measures.
3. Following up decisions to reopen businesses and institutions has to be local or regional because it requires responsive adjustments, if the rate of infections is rising too fast again.
4. The actions we might need to take will be more comprehensible for affected people who do not care about distinctions between sectors. They are only interested in whether the actions are evidence based and convincing on first sight.

The crisis is a challenge given our convictions about international cooperation and solidarity. We experienced a setback. Although the cause of the crisis knows no geographical borders, collaborative international politics has been rather absent. This has to be changed urgently. The people still share a sense of belonging - fortunately not limited by national boundaries.

Solidarity must point in every possible direction and it must take into account the many different local situations. These will take many forms but it can start with us, the

mayors, in moments when countries sometimes forget what solidarity means. The networks and platforms set up to share ideas, concepts and practices are a good start. Visible and effective programs of direct help via city-to-city-cooperation should follow.

This would additionally underline that empathy and solidarity are the right leitmotifs for our actions as opposed to panic and egoism.

We must not underestimate the psychological component. Rightly we focus on the physical threat to people from the virus, but we must keep in mind the integrity of the psyche. Here as leaders we can contribute by pursuing a positive communication strategy that does not conceal or downplay the seriousness of the situation, but that does not spread panic either. Responsible and sustainable leadership must not allow this to happen, nor dismantling democracy irreversibly - often a goal of scare tactics.

In overcoming the pandemic, we must continue to act with a great openness about possible solutions, and our actions must be guided by evidence from scientific research whilst remaining appropriate. We have to imaginatively develop measures which replace the heavy restrictions of shutting down public life, e.g. by better tracing and containment, mobile phone apps or compulsory masks.

However, given the great uncertainty in which the world community is currently living, there is one certainty - we will overcome the pandemic, but on the way we must ensure that our systems - both social and economic - remain functional.

My esteemed colleagues, we must remain in exchange, support each other and, as mayors, together with the governments of our countries, seek solutions for our future coexistence, across national and intercontinental borders. The Global Parliament of Mayors with its Campaign and Platform "Corona Crisis: Mayors Act Now" is the place where this exchange can happen easily. We look forward to a time when we can once again stroll freely with others across the squares, hold free political discourse in a café, or when we can once again feel easy and more confident to be at sports and cultural events in the community – to that moment when the city becomes the city again: the culmination of human life.

This is what we stand for as mayors and this is what we are preparing for in our common thinking. I am convinced that we will overcome this crisis as cities and as a world community.

Yours sincerely,



Peter Kurz
Chair Executive Committee
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Mayor of Mannheim