

Declaration of Cities Coalition for Digital Rights

We, the undersigned cities, formally come together to form the **Cities Coalition for Digital Rights**, to protect and uphold human rights on the internet at the local and global level.

The **internet** has become inseparable from our daily lives. Yet, every day, there are new cases of digital rights abuse, misuse and misinformation and concentration of power around the world: **freedom of expression** being censored; personal information, including our movements and communications, monitored, being shared and sold without consent; ‘black box’ algorithms being used to make unaccountable decisions; social media being used as a tool of harassment and hate speech; and **democratic processes** and public opinion being undermined.

As cities, the closest democratic institutions to the people, we are committed to eliminating impediments to harnessing technological opportunities that improve the lives of our constituents, and to providing trustworthy and secure digital services and infrastructures that support our communities. We strongly believe that **human rights principles** such as **privacy**, **freedom of expression**, and **democracy** must be incorporated by design into digital platforms starting with locally-controlled digital infrastructures and services.

As a coalition, and with the support of the United Nations Human Settlements Program ([UN-Habitat](#)), we will share best practices, learn from each other’s challenges and successes, and coordinate common initiatives and actions. Inspired by the Internet Rights and Principles Coalition ([IRPC](#)), the work of 300 international stakeholders over the past ten years, we are committed to the following five evolving principles:

1. **Universal and equal access to the internet, and digital literacy**

Everyone should have access to affordable and accessible internet and digital services on equal terms, as well as the digital skills to make use of this access and overcome the digital divide.

2. **Privacy, data protection and security**

Everyone should have privacy and control over their personal information through data protection in both physical and virtual places, to ensure digital confidentiality, security, dignity and anonymity, and sovereignty over their data, including the right to know what happens to their data, who uses it and for what purposes.

3. **Transparency, accountability, and non-discrimination of data, content and algorithms**

Everyone should have access to understandable and accurate information about the technological, algorithmic and artificial intelligence systems that impact their lives, and the ability to question and change unfair, biased or discriminatory systems.

4. Participatory Democracy, diversity and inclusion

Everyone should have full representation on the internet, and the ability collectively to engage with the city through open, participatory and transparent digital processes. Everyone should have the opportunities to participate in shaping local digital infrastructures and services and, more generally, city policy-making for the common good.

5. Open and ethical digital service standards

Everyone should be able to use the technologies of their choice, and expect the same level of interoperability, inclusion and opportunity in their digital services. Cities should define their own technological infrastructures, services and agenda, through open and ethical digital service standards and data to ensure that they live up to this promise.