



**ICLEI**  
**Local Governments for Sustainability**  
Founded 1990 as the  
**International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives**

# **Charter**

**As approved by the ICLEI Council  
in Athens, Greece on 7 November 2003**

**Function of the ICLEI Charter**

The Charter is the constitution, or statute, of ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability.  
The current version was approved by ICLEI’s membership at the Council Meeting  
in Athens, Greece on 7 November 2003.

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### **Preamble**

On 5-8 September 1990 a World Congress of Local Governments for a Sustainable Future was held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York City, USA under the organizational auspices of the United Nations Environment Programme, the International Union of Local Authorities, and the Center for Innovative Diplomacy.

Representatives of more than 200 local governments from 43 nations, 25 national municipal associations, and numerous other governmental and non-governmental organizations and corporations, comprising over 400 Congress participants, participated in four days of discussions on the critical role to be played by the world's local governments in addressing our global environmental crisis.

On 8 September 1990, the Congress delegates came into session and resolved, by affirmative vote of the majority, to adopt a Charter for, and thereby establish, the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI).

On 30 June 2000 in Dessau, Germany the Council convened and approved a revision of the Charter, in particular amending the association's mission to include sustainable development.

On 7 November 2003 in Athens, Greece the Council convened and modified the name of the association and its Charter as below.

This Charter shall be the constitution and statute of the association.

## **Article 1. Name, Seat and purposes**

### **1.1 Name and Seat**

The International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) was established as an international local government association in the year 1990. Its name shall from 1 January 2004 be “ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability” (hereafter referred to as the “Association”).

The Association’s seat shall be the location of its international headquarters (World Secretariat).

### **1.2 Relationship to Founder Patrons**

The Association shall maintain its formal institutional relationships with its founder patrons, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA), the latter from 1 January 2004 merged into the newly established World Organisation of United Cities and Local Governments.

The Association shall seek an agreement with United Cities and Local Governments whereby ICLEI serves as the World Organisation’s environmental and sustainable development agent.

### **1.3 Mission**

The Association’s mission shall be to build and serve a worldwide movement of local governments to achieve tangible improvements in global sustainability with special focus on environmental conditions through cumulative local actions.

### **1.4 General Mandate**

The Association shall build an active and committed municipal membership of local spheres of government (local and regional governments and authorities) as well as international, regional, national and sub-national local-government associations.

### **1.5 Work Mandate**

To support its members, the Association shall:

- (a) mobilize and provide support to local-level initiatives that address specific priority problems of local and global significance;
- (b) help develop and strengthen local capacity and expertise;
- (c) support networking among and exchange of experiences between local governments, especially between developing and industrialized countries;
- (d) work with groups of local governments and partner organizations in order to research, develop, pilot and implement local initiatives for sustainability;
- (e) function as a clearinghouse for information, and as a training center, on local sustainable development and environmental policies and programs;
- (f) provide technical support services and consultancy to aid the implementation of local sustainable development and environmental policies and programs;
- (g) evaluate and report on the impacts of local actions;
- (h) work with private corporations and research institutes to develop and exchange environmental knowledge and appropriate environmental technologies;
- (i) promote the role of local government as a necessary innovator and implementer of sustainable development and environmental policy;

- (j) campaign for meaningful policy making authority for, and adequate resourcing of, local governments; and
- (k) raise and dispense of funds to fulfill the purposes of the Association.

### **1.6 Representation Mandate**

The Association shall serve as an international representative for its members and campaign participants by providing advocacy before national and international governments, agencies and organizations and multilateral bodies to increase their understanding and support for local sustainable development and environmental protection activities. Through such advocacy, the Association will work to achieve an effective division of responsibilities and resources for sustainable development and environmental protection between the various spheres of government.

### **1.7 Principles**

The Association shall promote, and ask its individual members to adopt, the following Earth Charter Principles to guide local action:

- (1) Respect Earth and life in all its diversity.
- (2) Care for the community of life with understanding, compassion, and love.
- (3) Build democratic societies that are just, participatory, sustainable, and peaceful.
- (4) Secure Earth's bounty and beauty for present and future generations.
- (5) Protect and restore the integrity of Earth's ecological systems, with special concern for biological diversity and the natural processes that sustain life.
- (6) Prevent harm as the best method of environmental protection and, when knowledge is limited, apply a precautionary approach.
- (7) Adopt patterns of production, consumption, and reproduction that safeguard Earth's regenerative capacities, human rights, and community well-being.
- (8) Advance the study of ecological sustainability and promote the open exchange and wide application of the knowledge acquired.
- (9) Eradicate poverty as an ethical, social, and environmental imperative.
- (10) Ensure that economic activities and institutions at all levels promote human development in an equitable and sustainable manner.
- (11) Affirm gender equality and equity as prerequisites to sustainable development and ensure universal access to education, health care, and economic opportunity.
- (12) Uphold the right of all, without discrimination, to a natural and social environment supportive of human dignity, bodily health, and spiritual well-being, with special attention to the rights of indigenous peoples and minorities.
- (13) Strengthen democratic institutions at all levels, and provide transparency and accountability in governance, inclusive participation in decision making, and access to justice.
- (14) Integrate into formal education and life-long learning the knowledge, values, and skills needed for a sustainable way of life.
- (15) Treat all living beings with respect and consideration.
- (16) Promote a culture of tolerance, nonviolence, and peace.

The Association shall develop, and encourage its members to use, a framework for measuring performance in the area of sustainable development and environment.

## **Article 2. Association and its Members**

### **2.1 Definitions**

The Association is composed of its members. “Council” stands for the general assembly of members.

### **2.2 Categories of Membership**

The Association shall have:

- (a) Full Members (cf. 2.3)
- (b) Associate Members (cf. 2.4).

The category of Charter Member has become obsolete.

### **2.3 Full Members**

Full Members of the Association shall be local spheres of government (local and regional governments and authorities), as defined in the particular country, and international, regional, national and sub-national associations of such municipal governments and authorities, which support the Association’s mission, mandate and principles as stated in the Charter. In case of doubt the Executive Committee determines the eligibility for full membership of a type of government or authority in a country.

### **2.4 Associate Members**

Individual locally elected and appointed officials, as well as state, national, and international governments, government agencies, and governmental officials, private corporations and non-governmental organizations may become Associate Members upon application.

### **2.5 Obtaining Membership**

Membership may be requested by submitting an application, through which process the Charter is explicitly accepted, and paying an annual dues fee. The Executive Committee reviews applications and accepts or rejects the application according to criteria specified in the By-Laws. Membership becomes effective with acceptance in writing by the Association and receipt of the first annual dues fee.

### **2.6 Termination of Membership**

A Member may terminate its membership by notifying the Association in writing. Membership can also be terminated by the Association if the requirements for membership are not met. Membership expires with the end of the period for which the membership fee has been paid.

### **2.7 Membership Dues**

Members have to pay an annual dues fee. The membership dues structure and procedures shall be regulated in the By-Laws.

## **Article 3. Council**

### **3.1 Council Meetings**

The Association shall hold a Council Meeting every three years. The Council Meeting serves as the Association's general assembly.

### **3.2 Powers of the Council Meeting**

The Council Meeting shall

- (a) have sole power to amend or revise this Charter,
- (b) establish policy directions of the Association and adopt the ICLEI Strategic Plan,
- (c) elect members to the ICLEI Executive Committee, and
- (d) deal with all matters placed on its agenda.

### **3.3 Procedure**

The Council Meeting shall be chaired by the President. The procedure shall be determined in the By-Laws.

## **Article 4. Executive Committee**

### **4.1 Executive Committee**

An Executive Committee shall be elected by the Members of the Association. The Executive Committee shall have twenty-one elected members. The twenty-one elected members shall be elected from among current dues-paying Full Members. The Immediate Past President and Immediate Past Vice President are ex-officio voting members of the Executive Committee for one term; they are not eligible to be elected President or Vice President, nor to receive proxy votes.

### **4.2 Eligibility for Executive Committee**

Executive Committee members shall be officials (elected or appointed) of dues-paying Full Members of the Association. Candidates must be nominated by the Member authority or association and endorsed by at least two Members from different continents. A nomination by a Member authority or association of a candidate who is not an official may be exceptionally accepted by the Executive Committee upon request. Provisions regarding the termination of a mandate shall be made in the By-Laws.

### **4.3 Geographical Representation**

The Executive Committee shall have at least one seat for a member from each of the following regions:

- Africa (sub-Saharan)
- Eastern Asia
- Southern Asia
- Oceania
- Western & Central Europe
- Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia
- North Africa, Middle East and West Asia
- Latin America and Caribbean
- North America.

The remaining seats shall be allocated according to a formula which takes the number of member local governments as well as population represented in every region into account. Details are to be regulated by the By-Laws.

#### **4.4 Office**

Members of the Executive Committee shall hold office for a three-year term from the date of a Council Meeting to the subsequent Council Meeting, or until the successor Executive Committee takes office.

#### **4.5 Vacant Seats**

In the case that a seat is left vacant by lack of a candidate or by resignation, death or removal, such vacancy shall be filled for the remainder of the term of office through appointment by the Executive Committee. The appointee must meet the criteria contained in Article 4.2 and represent the region where the vacancy has occurred. Gender representation shall be considered.

#### **4.6 President, Vice President**

The Association shall have a President and Vice President who shall be elected by the Executive Committee from among its members. The President, and in her/his absence the Vice President, represents the Association politically and chairs the meetings of the Executive Committee and the Council.

These functions succeed those of Chairperson and Vice Chairperson in previous versions of the Charter.

#### **4.7 Powers of the Executive Committee**

The Executive Committee is the only body other than the Council in a Council Meeting that has the power to decide policy for the Association and to represent the Association politically, both generally and before international institutions.

The Executive Committee shall have:

- (a) the sole power to adopt and amend the By-Laws of the Association,
- (b) the power to appoint and remove the Secretary General, to approve the annual budget and annual work program in accordance with the Strategic Plan, to appoint and remove Advisory Council members, and to approve the establishment of regional, sub-regional and country offices.

#### **4.8 Management Committee**

The Executive Committee establishes a Management Committee which oversees the financial and personnel management of the Association. The Management Committee shall also serve as body for arbitration to resolve conflicts between ICLEI corporations. Powers are delegated from the Executive Committee through the By-Laws. Members of the Management Committee shall be the President, the Vice President and one Executive Committee member from each region in which the Association has operational structures as defined by the By-Laws. Regional members of the Management Committee shall have the title Regional Chair.

#### **4.9 Regional Consultations**

The Executive Committee members in each region shall regularly meet with the Secretary General's regional representative(s) for consultation on how they can politically support the regional implementation of the Strategic Plan and annual workplans.



## **Article 5. Advisory Council**

### **5.1 Purpose and Mandate**

An Advisory Council may be established to assist in raising funding for the Association's programs, and/or in the establishment of collaborative programs and relationships between the Association and other governments and institutions, including private corporations, national and international agencies, and non-governmental organizations.

The mandate of the Advisory Council is purely advisory to the Executive Committee and Secretary General. Advisory Council members shall share no powers granted in this Charter to the Members, the Executive Committee and the Secretary General.

### **5.2 Terms of Reference**

The size, character, and terms of membership of an Advisory Council shall be determined by the Executive Committee.

### **5.3 Appointment of Members**

All Members of the Advisory Council shall be appointed by the Executive Committee for designated terms, and may removed by the Executive Committee.

## **Article 6. Secretary General**

### **6.1 Appointment**

A Secretary General shall be appointed by the Executive Committee.

### **6.2 Powers of the Secretary General**

The Secretary General shall serve as the chief executive officer of the Association and may exercise all of the powers of the Association, except those powers reserved for the Executive Committee and for the Members of the Association by this Charter, the By-Laws, or by law.

These powers shall include:

- (a) the direction of the Association's World Secretariat, international, regional and country offices and agents to ensure the fulfilment of the Association's mandate and the implementation of the Strategic Plan and annual work programs,
- (b) the preparation and execution of the annual budget and work plans,
- (c) the establishment of management procedures and policies, and
- (d) the appointment and dismissal of staff.

### **6.3 Offices**

The Secretary General shall direct the World Secretariat as the Association's international headquarters. The Secretary General may establish regional, sub-regional and country offices, appoint regional, sub-regional and country representatives and delegate powers to these. The establishment of regional, sub-regional and country offices requires approval by the Executive Committee; the establishment of project offices requires prior consultation with the Management Committee.

### **6.4 Legal Entities**

The Secretary General shall effect the establishment of legal entities in the countries in which offices operate in order to ensure lawful, valid and accountable business operations. Each

legal entity shall be controlled by the Executive Committee through the Management Committee to the extent possible under the respective country's law.

## **Article 7. By-Laws**

### **7.1 By-Laws**

The Executive Committee shall adopt By-Laws for the Association that are consistent with the Articles of the Charter. Such By-Laws shall define policies and procedures for operationalizing the provisions of this charter and for the governance of campaigns and programs.

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