



2003 International  
Healthy Cities Conference Belfast

# **Belfast Declaration for Healthy Cities**

## **The power of local action**

The Belfast Declaration was adopted on 22 October 2003 by mayors and senior politicians from cities in Europe attending the International Healthy Cities Conference, which celebrated fifteen years of the European Healthy Cities movement and the launch of phase IV (2003-2007) of the WHO Healthy Cities project.

This political Declaration expresses the clear and strong commitment of cities throughout Europe to health and sustainable development. It highlights the priorities and new challenges for cities to address and work on, and it identifies ways in which national governments and WHO can support action aimed at fostering health for all at local and city levels.

We, the political leaders of our cities, towns and local authorities attending the World Health Organization's International Healthy Cities Conference in Belfast, Northern Ireland, United Kingdom from 19 to 22 October 2003,

Celebrating 15 years of the Healthy Cities movement in Europe and beyond;

Recognizing the power of local action;

Acknowledging city leadership in health and sustainable development;

Knowing that the key determinants of health lie outside the direct control of the health sector;

Building upon our broad experience and scientific evidence base;

Committed to the continued improvement of the health and quality of life of all our citizens;

Guided by the key principles of equity, sustainability, intersectoral cooperation, community empowerment and solidarity;

Understanding that health should never be the exclusive concern of any one political party or professional discipline, and that all should adhere to these guiding principles;

Drawing upon the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development 2002, which emphasizes the importance of partnerships at all levels and of good urban governance,

Hereby pledge ourselves to:

- build strong partnerships, alliances and networks;
- design supportive environments to meet the needs of all citizens;
- tackle the wider determinants of health; and
- create effective policies, strategies and tools for action.

## **A call for action**

As political leaders, **we commit** ourselves to:

**Reducing inequalities and addressing poverty**, which will require local assessment and regular reporting on progress to reduce the gaps;

**City health development planning**, which provides our cities with a means to build and maintain strategic partnerships for health;

Promoting **good governance and creating inclusive cities** that ensure all citizens have a key role in shaping services and influencing city policies and plans;

Building **safe and supportive cities** sensitive to the needs of all citizens, actively engaging urban planning departments and promoting healthy urban planning practices;

**Promoting health impact assessment** as a means for all sectors to focus their work on health and the quality of life;

Taking an active role in shaping and implementing **national, European and global** strategies, and contributing to localization of the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals;

**Demonstrating the relevance** of our work and maximizing the impact and strategic standing of Healthy Cities within countries and as international players;

Systematically monitoring, documenting, evaluating and **communicating our work** so that we and others can learn and benefit;

Strengthening **international friendship and solidarity** between cities and regions, mutual support and sharing of resources, knowledge, information and experience;

**Expanding national networks of Healthy Cities**, as they represent a tremendous foundation of political commitment, innovation and dynamism for the whole movement;

Acknowledging our responsibilities for **supporting Healthy Cities in other regions**, enabling their pioneering work and knowledge to become globally accessible.

## **Action by others**

**Cities cannot act alone. We call on:**

**national governments:**

- to recognize that national policies on health and sustainability have a local dimension and acknowledge the significant contribution that cities can make towards them;
- to acknowledge that national networks of Healthy Cities have a part to play in country health development and to support their coordinating and capacity-building role; and

**the World Health Organization**

- to provide leadership and strategic support in work towards the goals of Phase IV (2003-2007) of the WHO Healthy Cities Programme/movement;
- to strengthen inter-regional cooperation on Healthy Cities;
- to join forces with other international organizations and agencies to meet urban health challenges.