



# Alejandra Bravo

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**November 25, 2025**

## **Summary Report on U20 Summit in Johannesburg**

In September, I attended the 2025 Urban 20 (U20) Summit as the Mayor's designate. This marks the City's second consecutive year in attendance as an 'Observer City' at the invitation of the host city. This is a testament that the City's coordinated efforts to increase its presence on the global multilateral stage over the past year have been noted and are welcomed given our policy leadership and innovations. These include work to advance priorities shared among global cities, including affordable housing, building inclusive, equitable and resilient communities, as well as mitigating the impacts of climate change.

The U20 was launched in 2018 as an international city diplomacy initiative that supports engagement between the G20 and cities by establishing a forum in which cities develop a collective message that emphasizes their unique role in the sustainable development agenda. It brings together international mayors and designates from G20 cities under a common framework and coordinates a joint position to inform the discussions held by national leaders. Contributions from the U20 are shared with the G20 Presidency and Heads of State, enhancing the role of cities as global economic and political leaders. The main output of the U20 process every year is the development of the U20 Communiqué endorsed by U20 cities, which puts forward a united position to contribute their unique urban perspectives to the G20 process. As part of the Communiqué review process, drafts of the document were circulated by City Clerk's Office – Strategy Protocol and External Relations to City Divisions for input to ensure that Toronto priorities and initiatives were reflected in the final version.

As poignantly stated in the opening statement of this year's Communiqué, a sense of profound global transformation served as the undercurrent of the discussions.



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Cities are increasingly facing interrelated challenges including climate change, rising inequalities, digital exclusion, a global housing crisis, disinformation, financial instability, as well as conflict and geopolitical instability. It is critical for cities, now more than ever, to stand together to help shape a collective global renewal.

Discussion at the 2025 U20 meeting featured a sharpened focus on housing compared to 2024, particularly regarding affordability. While cities shared their commitment to deploy municipal tools, they collectively identified the need for regional and national investments for making progress and bringing good practices to scale. For its part, the City of Rome shared its perspective leading a European *Mayors for Housing* initiative, for which there was broad interest at the U20 table, particularly from North American Cities. Housing was also widely discussed as a means by which to advance shared the priorities in the of addressing climate change, rising inequality, and social tension.

This year, the host city undertook a modified approach to the timing of the U20 Summit, scheduling it two months ahead of the G20 Summit to provide sufficient time for cities to engage with their respective national governments, with the aim of informing the final G20 Leaders' Declaration. The change in timing gave the City an opportunity to meet with the Canadian G20 Sherpa's Office, and convey key messaging from the U20 2025 Communiqué surrounding the roles of cities as essential partners in multilateral collaboration, as well as enabling cities to access direct and intermediated sources of urban finance to scale their actions on key drivers of equality and social inclusion.

While in Johannesburg, I undertook over 20 formal engagements, ranging from panel participation, technical sessions and bilateral meetings to site visits and knowledge exchanges with municipal representatives. Even as an Observer City, Toronto was encouraged to contribute to discussions about the fiscal, social, and economic challenges common to municipalities across the globe, and in addition to deliberations about how to build a municipal agenda that focuses on solutions to the greatest threats we face today.

I note that in the last two years, U20 has gained access to G20 decision-makers. In 2025, Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva attended the U20 meeting of delegates in Rio de Janeiro and then took the U20 Communiqué to his fellow heads of state. This year, there was a corresponding South African national government presence and engagement throughout the meeting in Johannesburg. Finally, U20 has set as an indicator of its impact a deepening local government capacity to influence the agenda of future G20 meetings through national governments and in the reach of the Communiqué.



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Engagement on this type of multilateral forum is in line with the City's International Policy Framework (IPF) which was adopted by City Council in 2002. The purpose of the IPF is to position Toronto as a diverse, economically dynamic, creative and caring global urban centre which respects human rights and champions local democratic government. Participation at Summits such as the U20 helps give the City maximum exposure to a broad range of municipal partners worldwide and thereby enhance the City's international prominence, while providing an opportunity to showcase the City's innovative approaches to addressing urban challenges. In turn, it is an efficient method to facilitate the exchange of best practices with counterparts, which can lead to ongoing bilateral engagement with the aim of improving the quality of life for residents.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. City Council receive this report for information.

Sincerely,

Councillor Alejandra Bravo  
Ward 9, Davenport  
Chair, Economic & Community Development Committee