Speaking Notes Closing session

Dear Mayor Morero, Dear Mayor Moya, dear colleagues,

- Conflicts in the Middle East and elsewhere in the world are being imported into our cities. Too often resulting in antisemitism, islamophobia and other kinds of discrimination. Mayors are first in line to act upon the impact.
- Much of the tension in our cities is due to inequality, discrimination, poor education, poverty, insufficient mental care for youth.
- But in a world where narratives of hatred and humiliation are commonplace, we need to insist on solidarity, justice and peace. City leaders need to be supported by national governments in their struggle to keep the peace.
- Democracy and human rights deficiencies can affect cities in various ways, undermining their governance, stability, and development. When the rule of law standards are not upheld, cities face challenges that hinder their ability to function effectively and equitably. Inadequacies in national legal systems, corruption, weak enforcement mechanisms, and human rights challenges can undermine local governance, destabilize urban environments, and perpetuate inequalities. It is therefore essential that cities collaborate. On pressing issues that affect the social fabric in our cities: the lack of affordable housing, the impact of geopolitics in our cities, climate and the integration of migrants and refugees.
- Asking mayors to chose between the four priorities set by the current South African G20 president, is asking for a **Solomonic** decision. You can hardly ask of me to chose between innovation and social inclusion, climate action and economic development.
  My responsibility is to keep the citizens of Amsterdam, safe and prosperous; resilient and free.

- So if you allow me I'll skip making a choice. I can, however, share the messages in the communique I consider key.
- I want to underline the words: **cities must be co-authors**. Indeed cities should be respected and treated as equal partners by national and international authorities.
  Equal partners in ensuring affordable housing, mentally healthy and resilient youth, welcoming, free and democratic societies.
- But too often in our discussions we say that cities need to be **acknowledged**, that cities want **a seat at the table**. Sure! But that **cannot be enough**. Yesterday we agreed that we deserve to be listened to. We deserve an answer to the question why our recommendations are not being implemented at national level.
- So my main message to my and other national governments, as well as to the international community: take cities seriously

Let me finish by thanking all of those that have worked so hard to give us such a great time in Johannesburg. The mayors of Jo’burg and Tshwane and their staff, all those behind the Sarafina musical. If we take back only a bit of the energy and passion we saw on stage yesterday we can come a long way.