UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC)

UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL)

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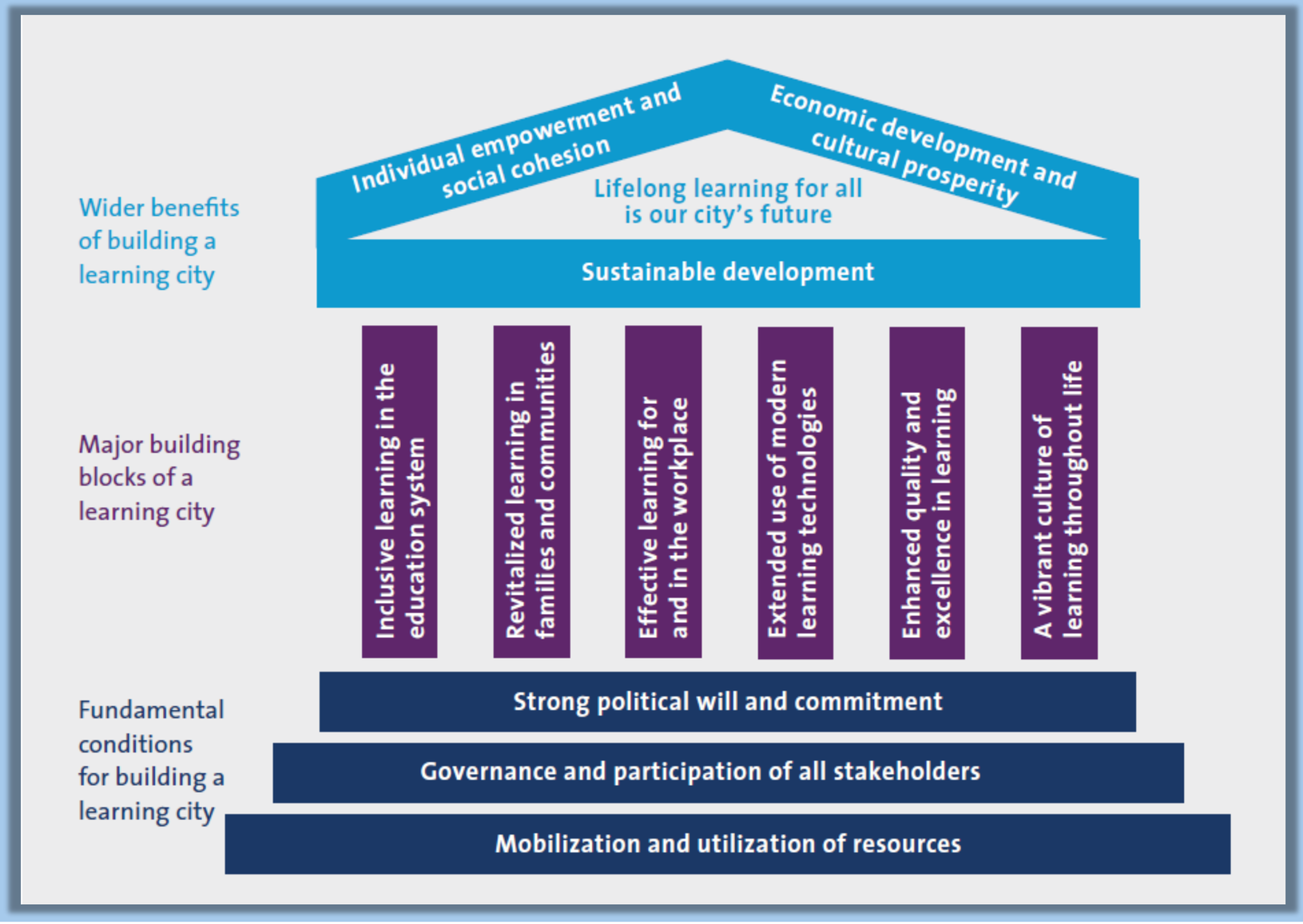
The Learning City Concept – the city as an ecosystem for LLL



SDG 11: SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

SDG 4: QUALITY EDUCATION

What is the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC)?

- The GNLC was **established in 2013** to support cities in developing lifelong learning policies and practices, and **opened its membership to cities in 2015.**

- The GNLC is an **international policy-oriented network** that provides inspiration, practical knowledge and good practices. It is coordinated by UIL (Hamburg).

- The GNLC supports and improves lifelong learning practices in cities around the world by promoting **policy dialogue** and **learning** among member cities, building **connections**, fostering **partnerships**, strengthening **capacities** for lifelong learning, and developing **tools** to encourage and recognize progress in building learning cities.

425

UNESCO Learning Cities

91

Countries

>498

million inhabitants

9

Membership cycles

6

International Conferences on Learning Cities

>50

Cities recognized with the UNESCO Learning City Award

UNESCO Learning Cities: Regional Distribution

44

UNESCO Learning Cities in Africa

128

UNESCO Learning Cities in Asia and the Pacific

53

UNESCO Learning Cities in the Arab States

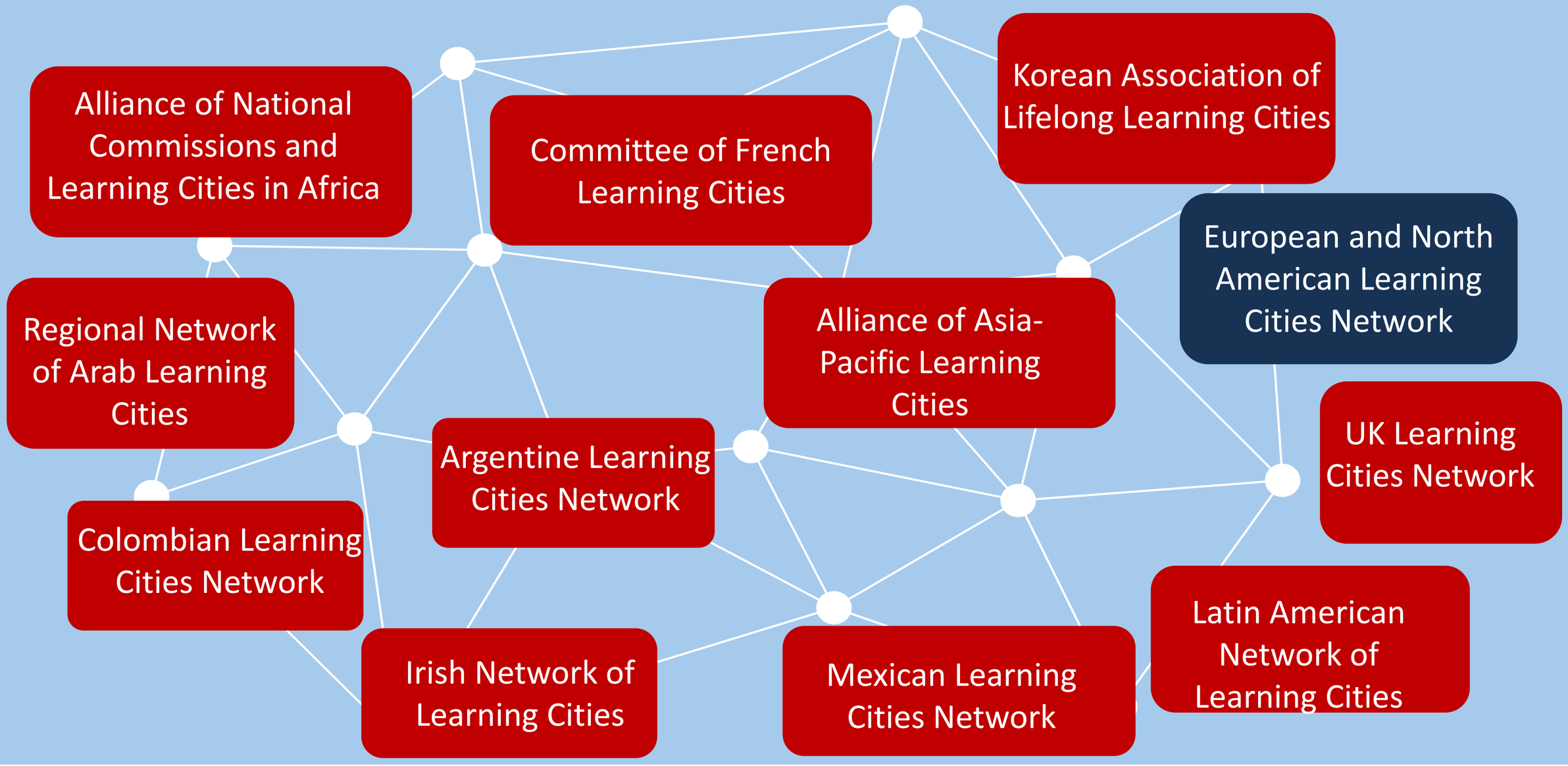
67

UNESCO Learning Cities in Latin America and the Caribbean

133

UNESCO Learning Cities in Europe and North America

National and Regional Networks



An evolving GNLC: strengthening what we do

A network that grows, learns and transforms

Building capacities

- **GNLC Academy courses** on ESD, health and well-being (WHO), ageing societies, AI, and the foundations of Learning Cities.
- **Online ESD courses** in English, French and Spanish**.**
- **Greening Communities Guidance:** practical guidance and webinars to integrate sustainability and environmental action into learning cities.

Connecting

- **International Conference on Learning Cities (ICLC),** the GNLC's main global gathering, held **every three years.**
- **Regional, sub-regional and national subnetworks,** bringing cooperation closer to cities' priorities and contexts.
- **Regional meetings** and other events organized by cities themselves, expanding opportunities for exchange and collaboration..

Sharing, peer learning and recognition

- Annual GNLC **Webinar Series.**
- **Thematic working groups** (e.g. ESD).
- **UNESCO Learning City Award**, presented **every three years.**

Measuring and advancing

- **New set of indicators** to support cities in monitoring their progress and identifying strengths and areas for improvement.
- Generate **evidence** on the **impact** of lifelong learning.

GNLC Academy

- **GNLC Strategy 2025–2030**, launched at ICLC6.
- The Academy will position itself as a **global reference point** for the implementation of lifelong learning and the development of learning cities.
- It will be strongly linked to **UNESCO's normative work** and **priorities**, including the priority areas of **GRALE**.
- **UIL**, in collaboration with **Shanghai Open University (SOU).**
- The Academy's work will be organized around **three strategic pillars:**
  - ❑ ***Capacity development;***
  - ❑ ***Data and knowledge creation;***
  - ❑ ***Multilateral collaboration.***
- The GNLC Academy will operate through a distributed **hybrid model**, designed to combine global coordination with regional contextualization and implementation.

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Annual Global GNLC Academy Campus (2026)

First Academy Campus:

- **Exclusively** for UNESCO learning cities **(32)**
- Mayors, deputy mayors, education officials and other representatives
- **Capacity development** and **peer learning**
- **Online** preparatory phase (7–25 September)
- **In-person** campus – Shanghai (12–17 October)

The 2026 Academy Campus focuses on:

- **Foundations** of learning cities
- **Ageing societies**
- **AI** and digitalization
- Education for **Sustainable Development** (ESD)
- **Health**
- **Communication and advocacy**
- Strategic action **planning**

Thank you

Learn more:

www.uil.unesco.org

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Towards a revised monitoring and evaluation framework

01 New set of indicators under development

- Strengthen a **common understanding** of what constitutes a **Learning City.**
- Facilitate coherent **monitoring** and **evaluation**, enabling cities to identify strengths and areas for improvement.
- Generate comparable **evidence** on the progress and **impact** of lifelong learning.

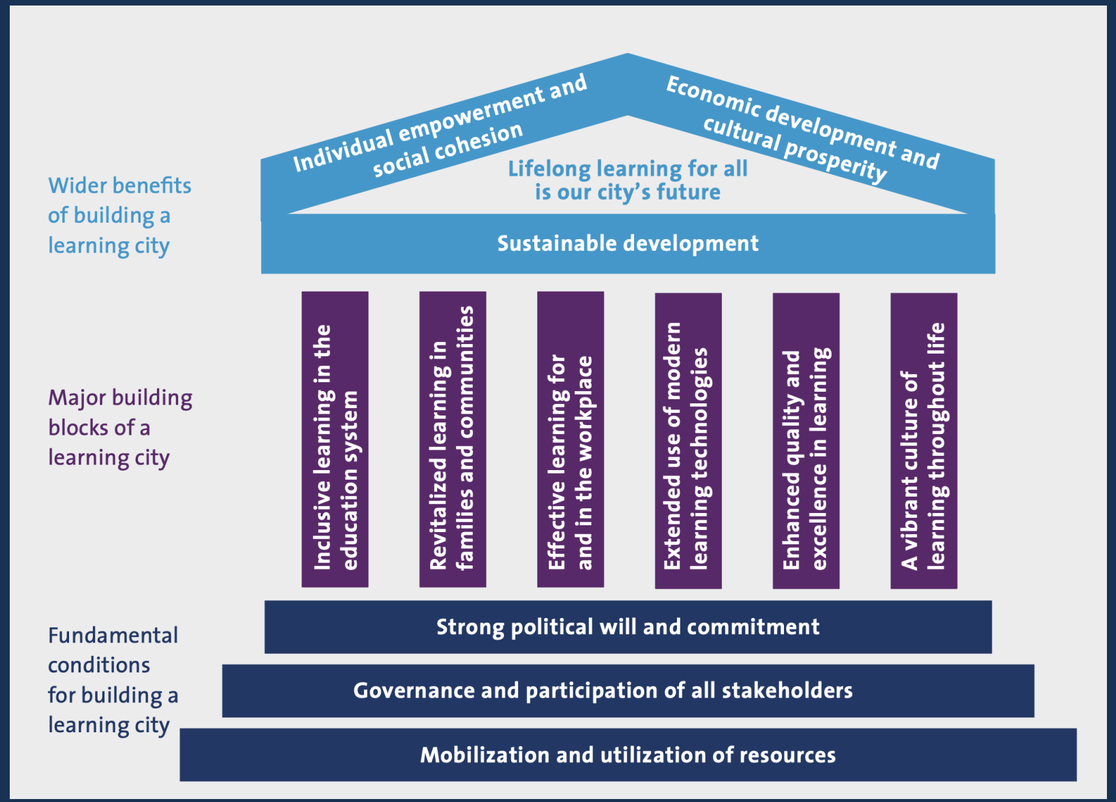
02 Development process for the new indicators

- **Consultation** with GNLC **member cities**.
- Input from **experts** and specialized **partners**.
- **Review** and **validation** of the new framework and its indicators.

03 Practical application of the new indicators

- Support cities in **monitoring** their progress and **identifying** strengths and areas for improvement.
- Guide **biennial progress reports**.
- Serve as a reference for the **UNESCO Learning City Award.**
- Generate data for the **Global Monitoring Report on Learning Cities.**

Development of a revised monitoring and evaluation framework for the GNLC



The Key Features of Learning Cities (UIL, 2015) have guided monitoring and evaluation across the GNLC over the past decade.

Need to revisit what it means to be a "learning city"

...in light of major global transformations, such as AI, demographic change and environmental pressures.

Greater diversity across the network

- Growing membership and knowledge base
- Highly diverse local policy priorities
- Very different data capacities: some cities have data at district, organization and participant levels, while others do not yet have data at programme level

Cities' interest in simplifying monitoring and evaluation

- Growing interest in monitoring their own development
- Cities and subnetworks are seeking approaches that simplify monitoring and evaluation at the local level
- Need to demonstrate the importance of lifelong learning and secure support from partners and local governments

2027
A key year for the GNLC

Consolidating progress and opening new opportunities

ICLC7

Foreseen for **June 2027**, with a focus on **AI, peace and resilient communities.**

UNESCO Learning City Award

Applications will open in the **last quarter of 2026**, and the award-winning cities will **receive the award during ICLC7**.

Regional Academy Hubs

An ongoing process to **expand opportunities** for capacity development and peer learning in **specific regions**.

New membership cycle

Applications are expected to open in the **first quarter of 2027**, with an emphasis on strengthening the quality of membership and achieving greater regional balance.

Collection of progress reports

Will be based on the **new set of indicators** for monitoring and evaluating the development of learning cities.

Participation in the GNLC Academy Campus (2026)

32 UNESCO Learning Cities

1. **Abuja**, Nigeria
2. **Nairobi**, Kenya
3. **Lusaka**, Zambia
4. **Muscat**, Oman
5. **Beijing**, People's Republic of China
6. **Changzhou**, People's Republic of China
7. **Chengdu**, People's Republic of China
8. **Nanjing**, People's Republic of China
9. **Ningbo**, People's Republic of China
10. **Shanghai**, People's Republic of China
11. **Shenyang**, People's Republic of China
12. **Shenzhen**, People's Republic of China
13. **Suzhou**, People's Republic of China
14. **Taiyuan**, People's Republic of China
15. **Tianjin**, People's Republic of China
16. **Gwangmyeong**, Republic of Korea
17. **Phayao**, Thailand
18. **Dresden**, Germany
19. **Edmonton**, Canada
20. **Athens**, Greece
21. **Limerick**, Ireland
22. **Turin**, Italy
23. **Chișinău**, Republic of Moldova
24. **Ankara**, Türkiye
25. **Lviv**, Ukraine
26. **Ternopil**, Ukraine
27. **Córdoba**, Argentina
28. **São Paulo**, Brazil
29. **Medellín**, Colombia
30. **Quito**, Ecuador
31. **Chihuahua**, Mexico
32. **Mérida**, Mexico