


# Diyarbakır, Local Services, and Consensus Meeting Report

2024 - Diyarbakır

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## ABBREVIATIONS

- AFAD - Disaster and Emergency Management Authority
- AKOM - Disaster Coordination Center
- CDP - Conservation Development Plan
- CSO - Civil Society Organizations
- DEM PARTİ - People's Equality and Democracy Party
- DİMDER - Diyarbakır Contractors Association
- DİSA - Diyarbakır Political and Social Research Center
- DİTAM - Tigris Social Research Center
- DSİ - State Hydraulic Works
- DTSO - Diyarbakır Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- EED - European Endowment for Democracy
- GABB - Southeastern Anatolia Region Municipalities Union
- GNP - Gross National Product
- HEVRA - Hevra Support and Counseling Center
- KAMİAD - Public Contractors and Businesspeople Association
- MED-DER - Mesopotamia Association for Linguistic and Cultural Studies
- NEET - Young People not in Employment, Education, or Training
- OIZ - Organized Industrial Zone
- SIZ - Small Industrial Zone
- SPP - Solar Power Plant
- TMMOB - Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects
- TOKİ - Mass Housing Development Administration
- UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

## OPENING SPEECH

### Mesut Azizoğlu – Chair of the Board, DİTAM

I would like to welcome our dear guests, Co-Mayors of the Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality, Ms. Serra Bucak and Mr. Doğan Hatun, Co-Mayors of Bağlar, Kayapınar, and Yenişehir Districts, chairs and managers of the civil society organizations, and the member of the press.

We have gathered here today with civil society organizations and the elected leaders of Diyarbakır for the "Diyarbakır, Local Services, and Consensus" meeting. Before going on to explain the purpose of today's meeting, I'd like to briefly mention where this all started.

We, as DİTAM, launched a project called "What Diyarbakır Lacks in Local Services" in December 2023. Diyarbakır was losing, and we wanted to raise awareness of what was missing and lost in the city with the efforts of civil society.

In order to identify Diyarbakır's problems and propose solutions, we held four meetings on January 6 and 7, 2024 in Diyarbakır with the participation of 80 organizations and individuals. They were titled "City, Environment, and Cultural Heritage", "Socio-Cultural Life and Policies", "Economic Situation and Rural Development", and "Women, Youth, and Children". We published the results of the meetings in our report called "What Diyarbakır Lacks in Local Services". We presented the report and opened it for further discussion at the meeting we held on 27 February 2024.

Then, we developed a project based on our efforts. We applied for and were granted support from the European Endowment for Democracy (EED) to continue our work for another year under the project title "Local Services Monitoring Network." EED will support our project for one year.

The first Diyarbakır, Local Services, and Consensus Meeting has two main purposes. First, we will promote the Local Services Monitoring Network, explain its purpose and function to the public, and get your feedback on the network. Second, we will present the findings and results of our report titled "What Diyarbakır Lacks in Local Services," which was published in February as civil society's contribution to the municipality's strategic planning efforts and discuss them with the co-mayors and other governing bodies.

The Local Services Monitoring Network project aims to:

- ✓ Increase civil society's participation in the decision-making processes,
- ✓ Improve collaboration between municipalities and CSOs to build consensus and support the development of sustainable urban policies,
- ✓ Encourage CSOs to monitor and evaluate municipal services,
- ✓ Communicate the identified problems to the relevant local and national authorities, and push the relevant individuals and organizations to develop solutions,
- ✓ Increase civil society's participation and experience in solving the city's problems.

The network will function as follows:

- ✓ The network will consist of civil society organizations, academics, and activists,
- ✓ Quarterly monitoring and evaluation meetings will be held throughout the year,
- ✓ Experts, academics, and relevant organizations will be invited to these meetings,
- ✓ A monitoring and evaluation report will be prepared for each meeting with the assistance of experts,
- ✓ The reports will be communicated to the municipalities and CSOs in person or by e-mail.

The recommendations and contributions shared in these meetings will shape the purpose and methodology of the network.

We have shared the problems we identified in our project "What Diyarbakır Lacks in Local Services", and the recommended solutions with a report titled "Recommendations for Strategic Planning for Municipalities". We prepared a file based on the results of the project to which 80 individuals and organizations contributed. After economist Mehmet Aslan's presentation, the participants discussed the report. Unfortunately, the report shows that Diyarbakır is not in a good condition.

Finally, I would like to say a few words as to why we decided to carry out a project on local services. We all know that the state has been deliberately neglecting the regions with a high Kurdish population since the early days of the Republic. This neglect is in every aspect of life, as evidenced by the official statistics on the economy, health, and education.

The already unfavorable start of the Kurds had led to an increase in the shortcomings of local and municipal services, especially after taking into account the last 40 years of conflict and the appointment of trustees since 2015.

Nine years under the administration of officials who are unfamiliar with the city's history, culture, streets, and people have exacerbated the problems and shortcomings of local services.

The Diyarbakır City Council, a legitimate institution established as per the Municipality Law that unites all the constituents of the city, has been almost completely dormant since 2015. The City Council returned to work only 15 days ago.

As a result, Diyarbakır lacked adequate municipal services, and the quality of life of the community remained low. The same is true for other cities in the region. This is not only a current problem but also a problem for the future.

Despite all these negative events, Diyarbakır has a very strong civil society. Civil society has become more political in parallel with the recent intense political atmosphere in the region.

Our goal is to make the shortcomings of local services more visible, as they are often neglected due to the intense political atmosphere in Diyarbakır. We also want to compare our municipal services with their Western counterparts. We want to make civil society's efforts, projects, and the data they collected more visible and communicate them to the central and local political organizations. We are working to make the efforts of civil society a topic of discussion for politicians.

The title of our meeting is "Diyarbakır, Local Services, and Consensus." Indeed, it's important to reach a consensus on everything, especially on local services. It is quite difficult to reach an agreement on political issues is rather difficult. However, it is much easier for us to reach a consensus on issues that directly affect our daily lives and the quality of life in the city. As for politicians, they can implement projects and policies that are informed by civil society's findings and the public consensus.

Once again, we would like to thank the Co-Mayors of the Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality, Ms. Serra Bucak and Mr. Doğan Hatun, the co-mayors of district municipalities, the presidents and managers of the civil society organizations for their participation. We would like to thank the people and organizations that contributed to the preparation of this report.

## DIYARBAKIR, LOCAL SERVICES AND CONSENSUS[1]

### Sedat Yurtdaş – Vice President, DİTAM (Moderator)

Welcome, everyone. Today, we have an important meeting: "Diyarbakır, Local Services and Consensus." I'd like to welcome once again the Co-Mayors of the Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality, co-mayors of district municipalities, Amed-based and other regional civil society organizations, journalists, and members of the press.

Diyarbakır and the broader region have lost a lot in the past 8 years due to the appointed trustees in the local administrations. We hope that those who are elected by the public will run our municipalities. We don't want to see the trustees and the problems they caused here again. Those who were once mistreated are now conceited. I hope they don't make the same mistakes against the people here.

More than 80 individuals, experts, and organizations participated in this project and contributed substantial information, documents, and data. Now, I'd like to give the floor to Mehmet Aslan for his presentation on the Recommendations for Strategic Planning for Municipalities.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR MUNICIPALITIES

### Mehmet Aslan - Economist

Hello everyone, dear guests and members of the press. I'm going to share with you the results of our field study. I'm going to present the opinions of 80 civil society organizations that focus on the city, the economic and social life of the city, women, and children. We also contributed to the study.

We held focus group meetings on January 02 and 03. The results of these meetings were then compiled into reports. We prepared a brief on these reports, which you can see on the screen right now.

I would also like to acknowledge the contributions of DİTAM Vice President Mr. Mesut Azizoğlu, Board Members, Sedat Yurtdaş, Moderators, as well as Nevin Soyukaya, Meral Özdemir, Dilan Kaya Taşdelen, and Reha Ruhavioğlu.

What is Diyarbakır losing? How do we categorize them? How should we include them in the strategic plan of the metropolitan municipality? Cities usually use similar methods to implement their strategic plans. I've reviewed a few city strategic plans prior to the presentation. One of the best examples is the strategic plan of the İzmir Metropolitan Municipality, which is called the Model İzmir. I suggest that we name our strategic plan Model Diyarbakır as a tribute.

The shape of the city walls, the emblem of the city, is very important to us. We should use it as a symbol of the city. Diyarbakır has not yet used an emblem based on this shape. Such a symbol can be useful in our international promotional efforts. We can create new stories or modernize existing ones about the turbot. In some legends, the shape of the turbot is attributed to prophet Jonah, for example. We can work on that.

In the focus group meetings, we discussed Diyarbakır in four groups. In a way, we went through the entire city. What do we have in this city? What are the points of contention? What are the positive and negative aspects of the city? We sought the answers to these questions.

[1] The Diyarbakır, Local Services, and Consensus Meeting was held in Diyarbakır on July 23, 2024.

"City, Environment, and Cultural Heritage" was the topic we discussed the most, followed by "Women, Youth, and Children", "Sociocultural Life and Policies", and finally, "Economic Situation and Rural Development", which I moderated.

The recommendations for the strategic plan are as follows:

## 1. City, Environment, and Cultural Heritage

### 1.1. Suriçi's Historical, Cultural, and Social Fabric

- Based on the projects that have enabled the registered buildings and the Diyarbakır Fortress and Hevsel Gardens Cultural Landscape to be included in the UNESCO's World Heritage List, the blocks, plots, layouts, street boundaries, and masses in the 1954 cadastral map should be used to restore Suriçi's urban fabric.
- The World Heritage Site must be protected with a comprehensive approach.
- The 1/5000 Master Development Plan must be revised, and a new CDP should be prepared for Suriçi that includes the Hevsel Gardens.
- The World Heritage Site Management Plan needs to be revised, and new conservation strategies for the site need to be determined, taking into account the current damage and deformation.
- All plans for the site must be implemented through a participatory and transparent process.
- Improvements must be made based on the UNESCO 2023 Reactive Monitoring Mission Report and relevant UNESCO decisions.

### 1.2. Urban Transportation Infrastructure Problems

- Diyarbakır is the only city without a bypass road among the 30 metropolises in Turkey. We must carry out more effective projects and use lobbying and political pressure methods to solve this problem.
- Bypass roads must be planned and built according to the current needs.
- Inner-city traffic plans must be revised.
- Rail transit systems must be used to relieve traffic and solve public transport issues.

### 1.3. Centralized Decision-Making in Urban Planning

- We must take legal action to prevent the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change and the Trustee Administration from illegally cancelling parks and recreational, educational and medical spaces, raising the value of these lands and selling them, or otherwise creating a wheel of bribery and profit.
- Local governments must take the necessary measures throughout the planning, implementation, and decision-making processes.

### 1.4. Urban Infrastructure Issues

- The historical and cultural fabric of Suriçi must be protected.
- Urban transformation and expropriation decisions must be revoked, and urban transformation practices must be stopped in order to protect the collective memory.
- Urban transformation practices must be stopped.
- As for the obligatory urban transformation projects, more appropriate and people-oriented practices that respect the right to property and housing must be implemented.

- Methods and tools must be developed to participate in the development of local and central urban transformation plans.
- As in the case of the Sur-Silvan road, we must prevent large-scale attempts to grant unearned benefits to private landowners,
- Manipulated development plans and reports must be exposed.
- We must expose the strategic reduction of the share of public spaces and green areas in the city by inflating the figures by 50% or even 100% in the population projections.
- We must study the current and projected population data, and find methods to distribute the potential benefits of the projects equitably among the entire population living in the affected areas.

### 1.5. Settlement and Housing Planning Problem

- We should keep the focus on profit-oriented plans and revisions, whether they are in Diyarbakır city center or other districts.
- Being aware of the actions that aim to make a profit is not enough. We should also raise awareness and discuss the concept of "ideological planning."
- Efforts to combat unearned benefits only target interest groups, which can lead to a lack of understanding of the underlying political motives or rationale behind security-oriented practices or those that target the social and historical fabric of the city. Therefore, we must review our objections in a strategic and multidimensional way and share the results with the public.

### 1.6. Generation of Unearned Benefits

- These structures unite around the distribution of profits. We must fight against them not only with the civil society organizations of urban planners and architects, but also with the participation of the broader society.
- We should create structures such as the "City Council", which will focus specifically on unearned income and political development issues, and we should provide them with executive and financial support.

### 1.7. Illegal Housing and Occupation Attempts

- The security-oriented approach of the central government and the trustee administration to the city and the resulting empty spaces are used to justify the occupation and illegal settlements. This is seen as a natural behavior and right of the people. We should build a city-wide reflex against occupation and illegal housing, regardless of the identity, political views, and social background of the occupiers.
- The occupation should not be justified by creating a narrative based on an "us" and "them" mentality.
- Municipalities must take urgent action against the occupation around the Tigris Valley, the Hevsel Gardens, and the On Gözlü Bridge. The evacuated areas must be redesigned according to the natural landscape.

### 1.8. Class Hierarchy in Settlement Formation

- We should develop ecological alternatives to the established contracting-based approach.
- We must prioritize the development of plans as alternatives to large projects that are designed to generate high profits, dominate the market, and shape the demand.
- We need to keep in mind that demand isn't based solely on market conditions and offer a counter-argument to enable low-income families to own housing.

### 1.9. Rampant Increase in Water Consumption

- Contractors' cost-driven approach to water management and the lack of environmental alternatives in the plan exacerbate the water use problem. First, a systematic standard for water use must be developed.
- To prevent potholes caused by unregulated water use and drilling, as in the case of Konya Plains, there must be mandatory annotations in the development plan that ensure the recycling and reuse of gray water.

### 1.10. Unavailability of Skilled Labor Due to the Housing Development Approach

- The employment of skilled labor should be considered an integral part of the housing process.
- More architects, engineers, and technicians would be employed if there were more housing projects on small plots of land for middle and lower income groups.

### 1.11. Urban Problems Caused By Insufficient Urban Infrastructure

- Municipalities must revise all infrastructure plans based on the city's current and future needs.
- Clean water and wastewater systems need to be renewed based on current needs.
- Contractors' cost-driven approach to water management and the lack of ecological alternatives in the plan exacerbate the problems. A standard for water use must be developed first.
- Zoning plans must include mandatory annotations to ensure the recycling and reuse of gray water for irrigation purposes.
- In addition, individual solutions can be developed for wastewater reuse (e.g., using bath water to flush toilets).

### 1.12. Utilizing Rainwater and Stormwater

- Stormwater drainage, sewage, signaling, and biological treatment issues need to be addressed.
- We need to focus on methods to collect and use rainwater without treating it or adding it to the sewage system.
- We should ensure the use of rainwater and stormwater in new settlements and housing projects.
- The necessary infrastructure systems must be installed to prevent the discharge of waste into the Tigris River. There must be adequate mechanisms to enforce sanctions without discrimination.
- All citizens of the city must be open to preventive sanctions regarding the pollution of the Tigris River.

### 1.13. Disturbance of Urban Green Spaces

- Diyarbakır and the Tigris Valley are essential parts of the city's ecosystem. Since the Tigris Valley and Hevsel Gardens are both registered as World Heritage Sites, they need to be considered as a whole.
- The Site Management Plan needs to be revised to include strategic conservation measures and developed according to the overall structure, ecosystem, architecture, and landscape of the city.
- Centralized decisions and targeted revisions of development plans to change the status of green spaces must be eliminated.
- "Urban aesthetics" shouldn't just be a popular concept, but should be at the heart of the process.
- Landscape should not just be about planting. We should approach this issue in a systematic and multidimensional way. Municipalities and relevant professional organizations should work together to address the problems of water consumption caused by planting trees on traffic islands.

- Noise and air pollution, carbon dioxide emissions, and other technical factors should be taken into account in landscaping works
- Landscaping should no longer be done haphazardly.
- Landscaping projects must become mandatory for all construction processes, especially for new settlements, regardless of the size of the project. We should opt for holistic solutions rather than local, temporary ones.

### 1.14. Traffic and Parking Problems

- Commercial building projects such as shopping malls, hospitals, and banks must be designed with the traffic load they will generate in mind.
- There needs to be a parking standard for the city.
- Certain locations should be prioritized for use. There should be fines or penalties for irregular parking.
- The main public streets and squares must be protected and prevented from being occupied.
- Considering the ever-increasing population, the current transportation system, and the car ownership rate in Diyarbakır, we can't expect traffic to be minimized easily.
- Traffic must be managed with more people-oriented practices. We must develop a more people-oriented and livable place by implementing methods that limit traffic at certain times of the day by promoting public transportation.
- The inner-city transportation network must be planned and revised to be more accessible to people with special needs.

### 1.15. Lack of a Pedestrian-Oriented Transportation System

- The city must have a people-oriented transportation plan, not a car-oriented one.
- There should be no more grade-separated intersections that divide the city in half and make it difficult for pedestrians to cross streets.
- Ergonomic adjustments should be made, such as adjusting the height of steps to encourage the use of overpasses.
- Overpasses with lifts must be a standard in construction projects.
- A comprehensive approach that encourages pedestrians to walk must be developed.
- Crosswalks must have accessible and facilitating features such as sound alarms or voice prompts.

### 1.16. Abandoned Buildings

- We must reject *de facto* urban transformation processes through interventions in abandoned buildings. There should be a consensus on how necessary they are. Transformation processes should be planned with the space and people in mind.
- There should be an ecological transformation in Suriçi, as opposed to the profit-oriented and commercialized changes of physical spaces, which aim to rob the city of its identity and destroy the urban memory.
- The traditional socio-cultural fabric must be preserved.
- The central government and the municipalities must abandon urban transformation policies based on the demolition of derelict buildings. Instead, they must develop participatory projects to improve the area physically, socially, and culturally.

### 1.17. Damages to the Tigris River and Tigris Valley

- Problems related to the Tigris River should be prioritized by the city and its citizens.
- Securing the status of the Tigris as a river, beginning from where it originates, is a prerequisite for the protection of its 635 species, including birds, fish, reptiles, and insects.
- Once the Tigris is legally recognized as a river, we should work on issues such as sand pits, occupation of the river banks, the 100-meter protection strip, etc.
- We need to develop a systematic solution for issues such as extraction of water from the river, use of river sand, waste discharge, and pollution.
- In order to minimize the damage to the river, we must prevent the construction of cafes and restaurants on the banks of the river, including the *On Gözlü* Bridge.

### 1.18. Issues in Disaster Planning

- Forming a search and rescue team should be recognized as a necessity.
- There should be a high-risk building inventory for the city. All buildings in the city should be registered based on their risk level, and determining the seismic safety level of buildings must be a mandatory practice.
- Relevant professional organizations and experts from universities must be consulted for strengthening buildings, urban transformation, in-situ transformation, and social housing projects. These projects must be for the public good and not for profit.
- Social, economic, and spatial development must be considered as a whole.

## 2. A City for Women, Youth, and Children

### 2.1. Solidarity Networks in Support of Social Life

- The participation rights of women, youth, and children must be restored by creating new representative organizations similar to those that were active until 2015.
- We must identify the problems of the residents of Sur, Yenişehir, Kayapınar, and Bağlar districts firsthand and develop solutions accordingly.
- A framework for governing the city with women, youth, and children must be developed after the implementation of administrative mechanisms.
- The local solidarity networks that were reinstated under the Zımzım Daycare Centers must be maintained.
- Before 2012, the community had playrooms. Parents and their children visited these playrooms, where families and women could share their problems and concerns. The playrooms gave parents an option and raised their awareness. That is why we need to reopen the playrooms.
- There must be safe places such as Bahçeyê Zarokan and Zarokistan daycares where working parents can leave their children.
- There must be spaces for children where they can play with their peers under the supervision of professionals and communicate in their mother tongue.
- Women's centers with facilities that women and children can use must be opened in the neighborhoods.
- There must be structures that facilitate social life, promote solidarity, respond to the needs of community members, and open channels of communication.
- We must implement projects for a more child-friendly city.
- Living spaces should be designed with children's physical and cognitive development in mind.
- There should be places where children and young people can have a quality and healthy social life.

## 2.2. Widespread Substance Abuse and Addiction

- We need an overarching framework to develop a solution to drug use.
- We must adopt a preventive approach rather than reintegration/rehabilitation of drug users, keep new and potential users away from drugs, and encourage families to be more aware and responsive.
- We must create a citywide anti-drug sentiment and implement policies based on expert opinion.
- The Hevra Institution, an organization that conducts field research on addiction and drug abuse, should become active again.
- The municipality must take preventive measures.
- The sale of single cigarettes in shops near schools must be prohibited.
- Organizations must work together to reduce drug use.
- We must identify and work on places where drug use is widespread.

## 2.3. Drugs and Political Shaping

- Social structures for women, youth, and children must be reopened.
- Activities for the disadvantaged groups in the city must be reinstated through the organizations such as Aram Tigran and Cigerxwin City Conservatories, educational support centers, sports events, the Sarmaşık Foundation.
- We must open Zarokistans that for the development of children, neighborhood daycares, and playgrounds.
- Strategies for the prevention of drug use must be developed.
- The magnitude of the problem can be estimated by taking samples from the city's sewage system and testing for drugs. Using the data from these tests, we can create a map of drug use in the city, determine the severity of drug use by neighborhood, and develop more radical solutions for the areas with the most severe problems.
- Unregistered, abandoned buildings must be identified as they are conducive to drug use, and necessary measures must be taken.
- The addiction problem must be addressed as a whole, including the introduction of or access to drugs by children, and the desperation that drives them to commit crimes as a result.

## 2.4. Reviewing Spatial and Urban Plans

- Current spatial and urban plans need to be reviewed to create a city that is inclusive of people with disabilities, women, children, youth, and people with special needs.
- Local governments need to approach spatial design, application, and the integration of all different communities in the city as a macro-level policy effort.
- For example, the signs and panels in museums need to be placed at a height that children can see.
- 3D models of cinemas, stages, museums, schools, hospitals, train stations and other public places should be built to make them more accessible. New models of accessibility and inclusion need to be developed.
- The projections and plans for the city must assume that there are between 140 and 150 thousand disabled people in the city in order to develop better solution strategies.

## 2.5. Women's Organizations that are Disempowered by the Trustee Administration

- Disempowered women's organizations, especially shelters, need to be reinstated.
- We need to address women's shelter and housing needs.
- We must build shelters and take necessary measures to ensure the safety of women before they enter a shelter to address women's issues and meet their needs.

- Systems need to exist that allow women to report what they are experiencing. These systems need to be revitalized to remain active and strong.
- We need to create a gender-sensitive mentality and support it through education and activities.
- There must be panic buttons in public places for women and children. Municipalities need to review or implement multiple channels and ways for women and children to contact authorities when they feel unsafe.
- Women- and child-friendly budgeting must be implemented.
- Local governments and the community should create employment opportunities for women.

## 3. Sociocultural Life and Policies

### 3.1. Damage Caused by the Appointment of the Trustees and Participation

- The human, cultural, and social damage caused by the trustee administration must be recorded and analyzed.
- Participation in the administrative processes is necessary for a more populist municipality.
- Actors with different points of view need to be part of the decision-making process.
- All communities in the city should be involved in the governance of the city.
- The local administration should cooperate with mukhtars, professional organizations, labor organizations, civil society organizations, foundations, associations, and citizens' initiatives representing different views.
- We must take advantage of the knowledge and experience of culture and art organizations such as Amed City Theater, Ma Music, Zarok Ma, Wêjegeh Amed, Amidart, and Mordem, as well as new civil society organizations working with women, youth, and children.
- These organizations should work with local administrations by monitoring and inspecting them.
- Local governments and civil society should take the necessary steps to strengthen their cooperation.

### 3.2. Preserving Urban Identity

- Projects aimed at strengthening the urban identity of Diyarbakır must be implemented.
- The cultural, linguistic, and religious plurality of the city must be protected.
- The preservation of the city's diverse and multicultural structure must be recognized as the norm, and the city must be governed accordingly.
- The religious and cultural history of the city must be accurately represented, and a history/tourism policy that reflects the city's diverse and multicultural structure must be implemented.
- Relevant institutions, individuals, and groups should be able to actively participate in policies related to the city's identity. They should be part of the consultation and monitoring mechanisms for the protection of the city's identity.
- All communities and belief systems should have the right to express themselves freely, regardless of their religion, sect, or philosophical and political views.

### 3.3. Transformation of Cultural and Artistic Activities

- Culture and art institutions should be strongly involved in the implementation of cultural policies aimed at preserving the city's identity.
- Local governments should have mechanisms that allow these institutions to participate in cultural and artistic production as independent or autonomous organizations.
- The neglected social and cultural life of the city should be revitalized, taking into account that the cultural services offered by the municipality have completely changed in the last 8 years.

- Cultural and artistic production should be more inclusive.
- Diyarbakır must have a long-term, holistic cultural policy.
- Cultural institutions, civil society, and other stakeholders should cooperate in developing, implementing, and monitoring the policy.
- The civil dynamics of the city should be able to relieve the local administration of the burden of cultural policies as well as to monitor and evaluate them.

### 3.4. The Mother Tongue Policy and Its Current Situation

- The deteriorating state of the Kurdish language must be recognized as one of the most urgent problems, and the local administration must formulate and implement a holistic policy with stakeholders.
- Local governments must publish and make available their language policies and their policy documents on the teaching and use of the Kurdish language.
- Social, political, and economic activities in Kurdish-majority cities should be conducted in Kurdish. Kurdish should become the language of the market. Organizations and stakeholders should be encouraged in this regard.
- Kindergartens and centers that provide education to children in their mother tongue should be reopened.
- Local governments should aim to integrate existing centers such as kindergartens while encouraging them to provide Kurdish education services. For example, municipalities should commit to providing human and material support to those kindergartens and daycares that consider using the recommended curriculum.
- Kurdish language activities and entertainment for children should be organized in parks.
- The public visibility of the Kurdish language should be increased, and the reputation of the language should be protected by recognizing works written in Kurdish.
- Local governments should give priority to providing services in the mother tongue and employ staff who can do so.
- Local governments should cooperate with Kurdish publishing institutions, provide multilingual books for children, and distribute them free of charge.
- Activities should be organized to encourage children to read and write in their mother tongue. The use of the mother tongue should become widespread.
- Municipalities should provide billboards or other platforms for the annual campaigns for the inclusion of elective Kurdish language courses in the national school curriculum, which will create leverage to push for a multilingual education policy.
- Students should be encouraged to take elective Kurdish courses, and teachers should be provided with material support.
- Local administrations should work to raise the prestige of the Kurdish language in Diyarbakır, the region, and the country.

### 3.5. Education

- Local governments should develop and implement a long-term policy to improve the quality of education in Diyarbakır.
- According to PISA data, children who do not receive education in their mother tongue are 1 to 1.5 years behind children who receive education in their mother tongue, even if they are in the same grade. Therefore, mother tongue and multilingual education should be seen as a right that dramatically affects the quality of education, and policies that support this right must be implemented.

- Local governments should work with experts and institutions to develop a strategic plan on how to improve the quality of education in the city. The strategy should be implemented in collaboration with relevant institutions and stakeholders.
- Essentials such as poverty alleviation and providing school meals should be the responsibility of the municipalities.
- Municipalities should select a few high-priority schools based on their needs as pilot schools to implement these services and expand from there.
- There should be more supported educational centers with meals and play facilities in low-income neighborhoods.
- Municipalities should work with the various communities in the city to provide support and scholarships to as many college students as possible.

### 3.6. Health

- All citizens must have equal and free access to health care in their own language. This must be the main principle and policy in the provision of health services.
- Protective, preventive, and general public health services should be recognized as important responsibilities of local authorities.
- Projects that aimed at increasing health awareness and literacy must be implemented.
- There should be a system of support, training, and incentives for medical personnel to provide health care in the mother tongue.
- Regular studies on public health issues must be conducted in collaboration with relevant health institutions, chambers, civil society organizations, and trade unions.

## 4. Economic Situation and Rural Development

### 4.1. Ideal Development Axis for Diyarbakır

- We need to discuss and establish the right policies to support development in this environment of ever-changing concepts and methods of income generation with artificial intelligence on its way to becoming an essential part of everyday life.
- We should analyze how the second industrial zone, the textile OIZs, SIZs, and other rudimentary manufacturing sites could be more effective and productive so that the industrial sector can produce better results in terms of the city's development.
- We should evaluate whether industrial development is an absolute necessity in the current paradigm.
- The right economic policies must be implemented based on the answer to the question "What should be the right development axis for Diyarbakır?"
- The use of green energy and solar power must be encouraged.
- We must work to produce medium and high technology for the city.
- Diyarbakır has transportation and logistics advantages that can make the city an important power center if agriculture is integrated with the logistics infrastructure. Local administrations must take this into consideration when developing plans for the city.
- Policies that contribute to Diyarbakır's production must be implemented. Agricultural production and processing must be promoted.

### 4.2. Problems in Agriculture

- We should make an overall analysis of the agricultural sector and find a balance between traditional and modern agriculture.
- There must be a development and transformation policy supported by scientific studies for agriculture and the agro-industry.
- Global agricultural opportunities are changing rapidly, and economic agriculture is becoming more important every day. Where is the world heading? What are the new developments in soilless agriculture? What are the latest innovative livestock, smart farming, and irrigation practices? What progress have we made in improving climate- and drought-resistant seeds in today's extreme climate? The answers to these questions should inform our efforts.
- We need to focus on agricultural products that have been shown in certain academic studies to give Diyarbakır a competitive advantage and work on developing new products.
- The geothermal energy potential of the city must be utilized.
- We must develop a strong agricultural industry and achieve a competitive position in agriculture.
- We should establish licensed silos in order to have pricing power and a say in the market.

### 4.3. Sectoral Issues

- We need to discuss how we can turn the tourism sector, which is an important subcategory of the service industry, into a strong development dynamic for the city.
- Diyarbakır is a service-producing city in terms of the share of different industries in the GNP. Therefore, we have to focus on the improvement of service production.
- We must analyze Diyarbakır from a logistical point of view in order to achieve social welfare.
- We must analyze Diyarbakır in terms of the value added by the service industry and make projections accordingly.
- We must work to make Diyarbakır an important logistics center, depending on the competitive structure of the agricultural industry.
- We can make the city a strategic center that controls the supply chain by transforming the city into a logistics center.
- We must focus on providing value-added services such as warehousing, transportation, inspection and monitoring, cold chain, licensed warehousing, storage yards, insurance and customs procedures, and perhaps packaging in logistics centers to make the city stand out.
- The service industry needs to be analyzed in terms of tourism and exports as the two main components of the industry.
- Policies that support rural development need to be implemented.

### 4.4. Issues in the Industrial Sector

- Industrial infrastructure isn't just about highways, air transportation, or access to railroads and ports. We should also work on land allocation for industrial activities.
- There should be active policies to support SIZs with OIZs,
- We should adopt firm and resistant approaches similar to those that were implemented to recover industrial areas that were later converted into residential areas for TOKİ.

### 4.5. Exclusion of Municipalities from the Economy

- We must prevent the social, political, and economic exclusion of municipalities that have been disempowered by the trustee administration.
- Many projects related to the city are implemented by municipalities, and therefore, "a city without a municipality is an orphaned city" with limited access to power. Thus, municipalities must play a role in the economy.
- As in the case of Istanbul and Izmir metropolitan municipalities, we should establish economic enterprises to provide post-disaster housing, support cooperatives by purchasing their products, and support the development of women's cooperatives.
- Municipalities must ensure economic integration with the city.
- Municipalities must carry out economic activities themselves or through economic enterprises.

## MUNICIPALITIES AND POLICIES FOR THE SOLUTION OF URBAN PROBLEMS

### Sedat Yurtdaş – Vice President, DİTAM (Moderator)

This presentation showed us the extent of the damage caused by eight years of trusteeship. We learned from co-mayors that some municipalities have inconsistent personnel policies to the point where 92 percent of the municipal budget is spent on personnel expenses. Vehicles intended for municipal use are given to others. Municipalities have been disempowered, and a significant amount of their property has been transferred to various other organizations. It's clear that we have a lot of work to do to solve these problems. So, I'd like to give the floor to the Co-Mayor of the Metropolitan Municipality, Ms. Serra Bucak, for her thoughts.

### Serra Bucak - Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality Co-Mayor

Dear guests, presidents of civil society organizations, co-mayors of district municipalities, board members of CSOs, and women… I greet you all with respect and love. We are happy to be here today. This is a very substantial and meaningful project. We would like to thank DİTAM, its board members, presidents, civil society members, and activists who have worked on this project.

The focus meetings, the report of which was also sent to us, were held around the time of the elections. These meetings produced many valuable recommendations. As we can see from the summary report, we have a very busy and challenging five years ahead of us, which we want to be uninterrupted. We are facing great damage due to local governments being disrupted, damaged, and robbed, which led to eight years of standstill in terms of local services.

We will make these meetings a regular activity in the next five years and later. These meetings will empower us, make us Amed, and encourage us to do something. They will encourage us not only to discuss the issues but also to implement policies. Whether we come together in larger or smaller meetings, we all feel stronger together.

I have a somewhat sad but sincere speech for you today. The topic is "What Amed lacks in local services." However, I believe that a more appropriate question would be "Why are local governments made to lose?"

The success of our sustainable joint project is largely due to our ability to demonstrate our identity as a community, and the efforts and expectations of our community. This social structure has not emerged easily or randomly. We, the Kurdish community, and other cities in the region belong to a political party that has experience in local governments since 2000. This political party has shaped the paradigm of democratic governance in the region, for better or for worse. While the discussion today is not centered on political parties, it is crucial to acknowledge the role these parties have played in fostering a tradition of empowering local mechanisms and actors.

This is the tradition of our community. We can't expect it from the ruling party or the main opposition party as this nation was founded on a centralized system that tries to rule over local governments all the way from Ankara. We have consistently opposed this centralized mindset, both politically and socially, particularly since the 2000s, since the days of the Democratic Society Party. We distributed a booklet titled "Why Turkey should not have a centralized government?" in the corridors of the national assembly. The booklet included some important points, including why we should leave central administration and why we need regional governments to become a more democratic country that respects human rights and universal

law. It was 2007, and we were able to hand out these booklets and have a discussion in the corridors of the Turkish Grand National Assembly. Since then, we have gone backwards. How can we reverse this trend and move forward?

We all worry about what we lose as we go backward. That is why the title of your report is a very important topic to discuss. We believe that each point in the report must be carefully and diligently addressed. There are several points that concern all of us. We must consider them and take action now.

We have been in office for three and a half months. During this time, we attended many civil society and focus group meetings. We gathered in the focus group meetings titled "Diyarbakır Plans for the Next Five Years" as part of our strategic plan development process. We discussed many topics, including the city, environment, transportation, social life, women, youth, children, the disabled, illegal housing, infrastructure problems, inner-city transportation, smart cities, social housing, abandoned buildings, earthquakes, disasters, the fight against addiction, and even traffic islands, which were also mentioned in the presentation earlier. We discussed what to do against the eight-year administration that did nothing good for the city, and that neglected the infrastructure, the city's sociology, education, and health. Yes, it's great that we get together and discuss these things and reach a consensus, but it's time to take action. We need to focus on what to do for our city and take concrete steps. As local governments, we want to work with the organizations and initiatives that are leading the way or contributing in other ways.

Over the past eight years, civil society actors in the city have come together quickly to respond to various social issues, including disasters, earthquakes, and the pandemic. They took concrete steps and implemented projects. We are stronger today. Local governments not only have an important role to play, they are also intermediaries that are in direct contact with the city. That's why we should discuss and emphasize the importance of local governments more than ever. The strategic plan for the next five years will be more comprehensive and sustainable. We will be able to implement some of our plans in the short term. Some of them will require a middle to long-term direction with a consensus.

I'd like to mention some of the concrete steps we've taken in this regard. One very important issue is the fight against addiction. We are working to create the necessary space for this. We want to work with experts in the field. However, we lack expert personnel within the municipality. The trustees have not only damaged the city, they have also discarded our human resources. As much as we have reasonable and necessary projects in mind, we have just as many shortcomings and inadequacies in terms of personnel. However, we are currently looking for a solution to this problem.

We mentioned in our election manifesto and the city manifesto that we would create a department for the disabled. One of the long-standing problems of our city that no one seems to want to solve is the fact that not a single step has been taken to improve and facilitate the lives of disabled citizens physically, economically and socially. We will make Diyarbakır a pilot city and establish a department for the disabled.

The trustees did not install even a single water main. They didn't want to solve the city's water, sewer, and infrastructure problems. They deliberately rejected all of the infrastructure projects that were put out to tender in 2016. One of the issues we have been discussing the most over the last three and a half months is water management. We are discussing how we can sustainably provide clean water for the next generations.

The city grew to a population of about two million. The zoning of the city was left with an exclusionary, profit-oriented mindset and took a bad turn. This has not only damaged the urban fabric, but also led to various other problems, including water supply, transportation, and other local services. Therefore, we want to implement a zoning policy that addresses these problems and is based on the local government tradition of our district municipalities and the DEM Party. To this end, we want to work with various groups and professional organizations, including the Chamber of Architects.

The city walls and Hevsel Gardens have been damaged by the actions of the appointed trustees and the central government since 2015. They are about to be removed from the World Heritage List. Between 2014 and 2016, the municipality, all civil society organizations in the city, and those working in the field of cultural heritage took on the UNESCO application process and worked really hard on it. We need to step up and prevent further damage to the World Heritage Sites in the city.

Of course, one of our biggest tasks in the next five years will be to make Sur a livable place again. We will work on building a new life, protecting registered buildings, protecting the Tigris River, and ending the ongoing occupation. Occupation is one of the biggest issues in the city. During our earlier years in office, the sidewalks and the bottoms of the city walls were occupied. This is an ingrained culture in the city that we have to fight against. The culture of occupying these places and squatting has been running rampant for the last ten years as a result of a deliberate policy. They want the city to be occupied and split among occupiers so that the same actions of the government won't be noticed. They want the city to be buried under a lot of problems so that the corruption, damage, occupation, and profit-generating schemes at the top remain hidden. This is the current atmosphere, the results of which we have to deal with every day.

For the past three and a half months, we have been working very hard in Bağlar, Sakarya, Ofis, Yenişehir, Sur, and Balıkçılar neighborhoods, taking small steps and talking to people to convince them that the city belongs to us. We are trying our best to remind everyone that the streets belong to us and that we have to protect them. Unfortunately, we face a lot of resistance. This is everyone's problem, not just ours. We are well aware that we cannot solve this problem by ourselves. We cannot solve it with law enforcement. We need a bold, collective struggle.

People mentioned the process of clearing out the city walls. It was an important process with a great impact. We still see the reflections of it today. We also derive our confidence from that process. However, it has been twenty-five years, and the city has become a very different place with a different social structure and dynamics. We have to be aware of this in our struggle, and we have to work together. We need everyone's support to build a clean, sustainable, and livable city with clean sidewalks. Civil society and those who think, "I live here and I want to contribute" can do a lot. We know that we have to work together and in unity to achieve our goal.

Last year, we experienced an earthquake. Many districts already had a housing problem before the earthquake, which made the issue even more urgent. In earlier meetings, we discussed how to handle in-situ transformation. We were aware of the housing surplus. It has been 10-11 years, and we still have a housing surplus. But for whom? What socioeconomic class of people are these houses for? Who is buying them? That's the question. The government zoned the land for housing, causing the city to branch out and grow. And the buyers are tend to be people with a certain social and economic status. What about the rest of the city, like Bağlar, Şehitlik, Ben û Sen, Fiskaya, or Huzurevleri? For example, the streets and houses in Bağlar have been in need of reform, reinforcement, and in-situ transformation since the early 2000s. The damage caused by the 8-year-long trustee administration, as well as the economic and social crisis caused by the pandemic and the earthquakes, made the situation even worse and more complicated.

So, we need to develop a new perspective on the housing crisis that affects people who don't own a home and struggle to pay their rent. We have two main goals. One of them is the in-situ transformation. To do that, we need a reserve area of at least four apartment buildings. We are already looking for a suitable land to build social housing. Our second goal is to build social housing in other neighborhoods without forcing people to move. We can guarantee everyone's right to housing by guiding everyone to buy or live in a healthy, accessible, and affordable home through cooperative housing without forcing anyone to take out loans that are impossible to pay off. We can make Amed a model city and spread it to other cities in the region. We have the power, the faith, and the spirit -and most importantly, we need it more than ever.

The aftermath of the earthquake is clear as day, and we all see it. We identify it, recognize it, and call for action to repair it. If none of us wants to turn a blind eye to the damage, we can't leave it to the local governments. We need to work together with all actors in the city, with capital owners, professional organizations, civil society, the chamber of architects, TMMOB, and legal organizations. We need a collective approach and a new perspective on the solution.

Thank you to all of you here today. These discussions and recommendations are invaluable to our strategic plan. Our strategic plan development team and department heads are here today. We've been taking notes at every single meeting we attended over the past three and a half months. We understand our responsibility. We want to do our jobs diligently and thoroughly. We need unity and solidarity more than ever.

Thank you to DİTAM for gathering us here today. Thank you all for your efforts and courage. Thank you.

### Sedat Yurtdaş - Vice President, DİTAM (Moderator)

Thank you Co-Mayor Serra Bucak for your heartfelt speech with clear solutions and recommendations. There is no doubt that democracy at the national level depends on democracy at the local level. If there is no democracy at the local level, there is no democracy in the country.

Now I'd like to give the floor to Doğan Hatun.

### Doğan Hatun - Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality Co-Mayor

Hello everyone, and thank you to DİTAM for gathering us here today. I would also like to thank everyone who participated in this very meaningful project.

Mehmet Aslan touched on many of the problems of the city in his presentation. Serra Bucak also clearly expressed our current situation. We can only solve the problems of the city together, in solidarity. We can't solve them by relying only on the municipality, but we can solve them by working together with civil society organizations and the public. Amed has the power to solve these problems. We know and experience this power. Our city has a culture of living together and solving its problems together for thousands of years. It's deeply rooted in us. That's why we believe in our ability to solve these problems.

We have been observing, recording, and taking notes on the problems of the city since the trustees were appointed, and we have developed a discourse about them. We've been having these meetings for years now, and we all know what the problems are. We also know what the solutions are. Both the city and the local office have suffered a great deal of economic and psychological damage. Our will to solve the problems of the city will reverse this damage. Our goal is not to establish an administrative approach that focuses on paying off the municipality's debt caused by the trustees, but to solve the city's problems. We can slowly but surely pay off the debt once these issues are resolved. We will contact İlbank (İller Bankası A.Ş., English: The Bank of Provinces), the World Bank and development banks. We will also apply to international grantors for funding the projects aimed at resolving these issues. We will apply to international organizations for funding infrastructure, sewage systems, and drinking water systems. We have the capacity to do this. Are we not supposed to provide services and offer solutions to the problems of this growing city just because they have left the municipality with millions in debt?

We may receive a 72 million euro grant from the Development Bank of Japan for the drinking water and sewage systems of Ergani and Farqin (Silvan). This grant will come through İlbank. İlbank claimed that the

money would only be spent on this project. So, we can find resources to solve these problems if İlbank doesn't confiscate the money. We have the capacity to do this.

We will continue to hold the trustees accountable for the debt and damage they have caused. We won't let them live comfortably after this plunder. Do we let them spend millions that could have served this city for their own benefit? Of course not. It was paid by, and therefore belongs to, the people of Amed and must be used to serve the people of Amed. These resources were not meant to be enjoyed by the trustees and their supporters. Nevertheless, we believe that justice will prevail, and they will be held accountable.

We have also prepared for disasters. After the February 6 earthquakes, we founded a Disaster Coordination Center (AKOM) within the municipality to respond to crises, including earthquakes, pandemics, floods, landslides, and other disasters, based on the experience of civil society. We have decided on its location. The architectural project is currently being prepared. We will share the project with civil society organizations when it's ready. We have also reached out to AFAD. Once the project is ready, we'll put it out to tender and open the center to the public. We are planning to build a bigger facility in Amed for training, drills, and logistical purposes for first responders, including the fire department. Many Kurdish-majority cities near us lack adequate disaster response resources. We want to work in coordination with these cities as well.

I would also like to touch on the issue of mother tongue, which is often brought up during election periods. Unless Kurdish becomes the language of everyday life or education, assimilation will deepen even more. We are discussing how we can make Kurdish an official language and what steps we can take to prevent assimilation from erasing what we have achieved so far in terms of language. As a first step, we've named all the departments and offices in the municipality in two languages. We will consult with language CSOs and experts to translate social and technical terms related to municipal services and use them in our projects. If Amed goes back to Kurdish, I believe other Kurdish-majority cities in the region will follow. The biggest assimilation efforts are directed at this city. So, we have to show the biggest resistance. We will share our efforts with CSOs over time. Together, we will identify our shortcomings and criticize our plans. We will implement projects together according to our priorities. We are also working on Zarokistans and Zımzım daycares. If everything goes according to plan, we will open these daycares in a few locations in September.

The Mesopotamian Water Forum on the status of the Tigris River was held in Sulaymaniyah in 2019. The problems faced by all the cities and countries through which the Tigris River flows for about 1900 kilometers were discussed in detail. I also attended the forum. We conducted research on how Diyarbakır benefits from the Tigris River from the Dicle Dam to the Batman border and beyond to Cizre and Rojava. About 60 kilometers of the river from the dam to the bridge in Bismil still don't have the status of a river. This section is not even considered a stream; it's unclassified. There is another unclassified river in Africa, for example. The people living along the river organized and worked together to claim it as a river. Rivers are just like people; they need an identity. If the state refuses to give it a river status, we have to claim it ourselves and protect it.

In this sense, the UNESCO Cultural Landscapes project is a great opportunity for us. We need to re-evaluate our protected heritage sites with public authorities. This is not just up to the municipalities, or just civil society, or just Amed. It requires diplomatic relations. We have to set up a committee and talk to the people, political parties, and relevant authorities. There will always be sand quarries until the Tigris is legally recognized as a river. If the Tigris does not have the status of a river, any politician can implement a project in the UNESCO Cultural Landscapes and open the river basin for profit. In other words, the river basin is still in danger.

About the cafes that are occupying the area around the On Gözlü Bridge: This is not just about occupation. I also can't imagine that any tourist who visits these places will ever come back to Amed. These shops have

serious predatory practices. Not all of them, of course. I'm sure some of them are honest business owners. They charge exorbitant amounts of money, up to two thousand TL for a pot of tea for five people. This damages the image of our city. We ask everyone to show solidarity. We need your support to make the area a better social space for the public and tourists for the sake of the city's identity. The municipal police alone can solve this problem. We can only do this if we unite as a city, including all organizations and political parties. We must take action regardless of the identity of the owners of these businesses. It's the face of our city and an important place in terms of the city's identity. We want to solve the problem through dialogue, not enforcement. So, we want the public to know that we are willing to find a solution if you are. We can find a solution by reaching an agreement and acting in solidarity with dialogue. It's easy to bulldoze the area or deploy law enforcement. However, we believe in dialogue, and we want the public to know that. We ask for your support. The Tigris River does not belong to the businesses that occupy the area; it belongs to all of us. We want the public to benefit from the area fairly and freely.

I would like to remind everyone of an important aspect of urban transformation. More than two and a half years ago, I was the co-spokesperson of TMMOB. Münir Karaloğlu was the governor of Amed at that time. There were many illegal buildings in the city. We, as TMMOB, identified all of them and asked the authorities to confirm whether they were illegal or not. They confirmed that all the buildings were all illegal and that they would take action against them. However, they didn't keep their promise and didn't stop the illegal construction. They also didn't do anything about the commercial buildings that were making huge profits. So, we, as the chamber, filed a lawsuit against the trustees. We made a press statement in front of the Courthouse in Amed. But the very next day, the governor of this city went to Ben û Sen, Fiskaya, and Peyas and demolished the houses that were built 40 to 50 years ago. We confronted him and asked him why he did nothing about the illegal buildings on his way to these neighborhoods but instead destroyed the roofs over the heads of the poor people who built these houses almost 50 years ago.

Now we are in charge of governing the city, and we want you to know that we will take care of this problem. The Minister of Environment and Urbanization visited Amed two days ago. We wanted to meet with the minister, but they didn't even bother to invite us. Deputy Interior Minister Münir Karaloğlu repeated what he said in the past: We will demolish Fiskaya, we will demolish Ben û Sen, we will demolish this and that… Thousands of buildings were damaged in the earthquake. So, why didn't the Provincial Director of Environment and Urbanization demolish these severely damaged buildings? They also use any structure that can remotely be considered an abandoned building as an excuse to start an urban transformation project. One thing I can say about why abandoned buildings are not demolished is this: The Ministry of Environment and Urbanization follows the TOKİ policy. In other words, the ministry wants to turn every expired building into a source of great profit and plunder. They want to displace people in order to increase their profit. But where would these people go? They want the people, the community, and the culture gone. And they don't do anything about these abandoned buildings to create more destruction and plunder.

I ask the Minister of Environment and Urbanization to hear us out. We all live in this city. We are the elected co-mayors of this municipality. You have to listen to what we have to say if you want to do a project here. The people of this city elected us; you can't ignore us. We are here because of the people. We need to negotiate and agree on the projects you want to implement here. We want the Provincial Directorate of Environment and Urbanization, the Regional Directorate of Foundations, and the Regional Directorate of Highways to work with us, too. We want to reach an agreement with the State Hydraulic Works about the city's drinking water. We want to work with them to prevent our city from running out of water in a few years. But they don't even respond to our requests for meetings.

The trustees did not do a single thing about the city's sewage or drinking water systems during their 8 years in office. They didn't open a new water main for service. They didn't even unclog any pipes. The population has increased by more than 500 thousand people. So, there is not enough water for the whole city. The

Presidential Strategic Plan must allocate an extra budget for Diyarbakır. We can solve this problem by working with civil society and the public authorities. We have options.

We have been working on the strategic plan for two months. We held group meetings with the mukhtars, institutions, chambers, and professional organizations of 17 districts. This meeting organized by DİTAM is a good example of this kind of effort. These meetings give us the opportunity to see the issues that fell through the cracks during the strategic plan development process. Let's make this into a 5-year plan. Thank you again, DİTAM, for your efforts.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR MUNICIPALITIES: QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

### Sedat Yurtdaş - Vice President, DİTAM (Moderator)

First, I'd like to give the floor to our founder and the Chairman of Diyarbakır Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Mr. Mehmet Kaya. He is a good friend who has supported our work from the very beginning. I think he has very important things to say on this subject. Please, go ahead, Mr. Kaya.

### Mehmet Kaya – President, Diyarbakır Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DTSO)

Thank you. Serra Bucak called employers into action. We have to respond to it as the representatives of 23 thousand employers. About ten thousand of our twenty-three thousand members are in the construction industry. Diyarbakır-based companies have carried out significant projects in the country's construction sector. Not only that, almost all Kurdish investors want to participate in a project related to Amed.

The textile OIZ is subject to the Region 6 Incentives. However, almost all of the 76 investors who have invested in the textile OIZ are from İstanbul, Ankara, or İzmir. If we take a closer look at these investors, it seems that they are all originally from this region but have migrated to the West. They grew their businesses in Istanbul and around the world, and they continue to grow by returning to the region and investing in it. So there is an emotional connection.

The construction industry has potential. For example, there is an association called the Public Contractors and Businesspeople Association (KAMİAD), which was founded by contractors from all over Turkey. KAMİAD is also the umbrella organization for many other associations, including the Diyarbakır Contractors Association (DİMDER), and its vice president is from Diyarbakır.

We have the power. Our businesspeople feel ownership of the region. We're ready to step in. As the businesspeople of the city, we either take part in or support these projects. We are ready to support these projects. This is not about profit. This is about giving back. We just need to have a positive attitude and discuss what we can do together for the city.

You will be the leaders of the city for five years. Municipalities are responsible for governing the region. The president of the Southeastern Anatolia Region Municipalities Union (GABB) is also here with us today. We can develop projects together. We can do this together.

Before concluding my speech, I would like to mention three issues. We, as Kurdish people, often hold meetings and do macro-level analyses of the region. Since we have many problems, the meetings take a long time and become very exhausting. Still, we are not above falling into the trap of "making it up as we go along." But we haven't even started yet. So, instead of expecting to see all of our big problems to be solved at once, we should tackle them one at a time. We can develop a plan to solve one problem in a year, and another in, say, 100 days.

We have to create a good economic model for the city. We can't solve any problems without local contributions to the economy. We are now in the twelfth and final year of the regional incentive program, which the government was very proud to introduce back in 2012. This means that if you had opened a factory in Diyarbakır, you could receive incentives for 12 years. The incentives are over this year.

Recently, the statistics about the incentives that aimed at eliminating the development gap between the regions have been published. Cities in the first and second regions, such as Istanbul and Izmir, used 61% of the total incentives. On the other hand, the fifth and the sixth regions used a 10% of the incentives each. Istanbul on its own received 4 trillion TL in incentives while Diyarbakır received 470 billion TL. In other words, Istanbul received 10 times more incentives than Diyarbakır.

At face value, the rules and conditions of the incentive system should support the sixth region. However, it won't work unless the needs of the region are properly identified first. That's why we have to make sure the results of these programs are used correctly at the local level.

Another thing that is being discussed the most at the global level is the NEETs, or the "Young People not in Employment, Education, or Training." The NEETs in Diyarbakır are almost 3 times higher than the national average. What's more interesting is that NEETs in Diyarbakır come from both impoverished and wealthy families. This is the worst case scenario. We are far above the national average. This is one of the biggest obstacles to investment in our city, which could potentially go on for generations and hinder the sustainability of the city's capital.

The metropolitan municipality is the main body to address these issues. We need to start as soon as possible after identifying the problems, solutions, and potential deviations by holding meetings with all stakeholders with a narrower focus. We have a long way to go, but we must have faith in overcoming the obstacles and embrace the journey and its results.

Whatever the parameter, be it quality of life or socioeconomic development, the results will show us that the policies implemented over the last 20 years have clearly failed. We need something new. We need to step up to the plate to build something new at the right time and on the right foundation.

### Reha Ruhavioğlu – Kurdish Studies Center

I'd like to thank DİTAM for working on this project since January 2024 and allowing us to discuss these issues with their true stakeholders. I would like to say a few words about strategic plans. Strategic plans are mostly a formality for many municipalities. They are almost carbon copies of each other. However, Diyarbakır has a unique set of conditions. We need guarantees for the implementation of these plans. But unfortunately, we live under a kind of monarchy. Strategic plans are basically government programs. So, yes, we can talk about our problems all we want, but those who are really in charge should be aware of how big of a commitment this is, and I'm sure they are.

The local government has to show us that they are setting rational and realistic goals, taking into account the needs and resources of the city. For example, if you say you are going to open 300 Zarokistans in 5 years, I'd say that's not a realistic goal. I wish we could open 3000 of them. But the main thing is that we need an observable and realistic plan that is developed based on our resources. We talk a lot about things like stakeholder ethics and culture, but I don't think we have a strong culture of collaboration. Yes, the trustee administration disrupted a lot of things in our everyday lives, but I think we didn't have strong stakeholder relationships before that. So, if we give the right roles to the right stakeholders and do a good division of labor with this strategic plan, I believe we can quickly overcome this economic devastation and build more meaningful cooperation with civil society.

Let me give you a more concrete example. Let's say the local government has the resources to open two Zarokistan daycare centers in one year. Here, we have the Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Diyarbakır Bar Association. Why don't we encourage them to open one of their own so that we can reach

a total of four daycare centers? This kind of sharing of responsibility is important. There are organizations in Diyarbakır that have the resources to do this. Maybe not the ones at this table, but there are some with big budgets. We should make these organizations a part of the responsibility.

We should be able to monitor the main and subcategories of the strategic plan. This meeting is a part of the Local Services Monitoring Network. We can have meetings once or twice a year to monitor the process. We can hold the local government accountable. I don't mean that in a hostile way. We can show the municipality their progress. We should know what percentage of progress has been made and see if the municipality has set realistic goals and is working on them consistently. As friends, we have to encourage each other to do better. Of course, some priorities are non-negotiable and we must devote the necessary time and resources to them. If you ask me, I wish you would spend all our resources on Zarokistan daycare centers. But I know that's not possible. So, we have to address the mother tongue and addiction issues without compromising the city's water, cleaning, and infrastructure needs.

The Chamber of Commerce and Industry says they are ready to step in about the employment situation in the city. So, if we make zero progress in, say, three years, we should have the right to ask why that's the case. We should know the nature of the cooperation, the stakeholders, the parties involved, and the whole process. For example, Mehmet Kaya should be able to decide to have regular meetings with the co-mayors or their secretary-general to monitor the progress. This would make the stakeholder relationship more meaningful and ensure smooth progress.

Municipalities have a fundamental duty to ensure that the people are happy living in this city. However, people living in Kurdish-majority cities are not as satisfied as the national average. We are not happy with our lives in these cities or in this country. Is a Kurd who has migrated to Izmir feel more satisfied with life in Izmir? If the answer is yes, we need something tangible to feel satisfied with living in this city. Only our common identity keeps us satisfied with the city. According to surveys, living in Diyarbakır has a score of 3.5, living in Turkey has a score of 4, and being satisfied with Diyarbakır has a score of 7. The only reason why people living with such dissatisfaction, terrible employment rates, and low income are happy to live in this city is the identity of the city. We need to draw strength from our identity and bring other aspects of our lives to a level we are more satisfied with. Sometimes, a solid detail gives us an idea of how the whole mechanism works.

When we were discussing the city law with Selçuk Mızraklı before the elections, I mentioned to him that the house I bought had no solar panels. The building was only three years old, but there was no solar power. I asked the contractor about it. He said that Diyargaz (Diyarbakır gas company) didn't allow it. I looked up who owned Diyargaz. I thought it was a municipal enterprise. Anyway, Selçuk Mızraklı asked his friends and got back to me. He said that the contractors were misleading the public and that it wasn't illegal to install solar panels. So I told him that it was then his responsibility to make it mandatory for new buildings to use solar energy as much as possible. You have to think about installing a solar power system at the beginning of the construction. Otherwise, it would be very expensive and difficult. The city gets a lot of sunlight for 10 to 11 months a year. But I don't see it being used much except for the SPPs.

We know that our city is in ruins. We all know that our job is very, very difficult. Hopefully, we will take care of everything. And five years later we'll look back and say that we are glad we maintained this solidarity for five years.

### Assoc. Prof. Dr. Vahap Coşkun – Lecturer at the Faculty of Law, Dicle University

I'd like to briefly list my suggestions in bullet points:

1- The first thing we expect the local government to do is to fulfill its basic municipal duties, such as collecting garbage, cleaning the streets, and providing basic transportation services without any interruption. These must be met before you consider large projects or apply for funding. We've set a standard. Anything below that standard will harm the legitimacy of the municipality and the support it gets. Therefore, they must work extremely hard to provide these basic services well.

2- The local government must focus on social municipality practices during this five-year period. This is the right thing to do, both ethically and politically. It's ethically the right thing to do because the local government has a moral responsibility to reach out to the most vulnerable of the population in times of economic crisis. It's politically the right thing to do because it allows you to reach more people beyond your core audience. This is one of the main reasons why the metropolitan municipalities of Ankara and Istanbul won the elections by a wide margin.

3- Some projects sound cool and are talked about a lot in public, like the light rail systems. I don't have the technical knowledge, so I don't know how feasible it is. However, I asked people whose opinions I trust about this project, and I realized that it's not as positive of a project as it's made out to be. So, we shouldn't rush into it and make our decision after consulting experts about it.

4- Diyarbakır has a very young population. Many children are studying for the high school and university exams. We need more libraries and classrooms. The local government should work hard to support the existing classrooms and libraries. For example, you can serve tea or coffee to the students who visit the libraries. You can open reading halls or classrooms in parks. Libraries are full to the brim until midnight. The municipality must provide services to these libraries. They should also provide support to the children from families who don't have the financial means to prepare them for the exams. This shouldn't be limited to the exam periods, but should be done all year round.

5- Diyarbakır has serious problems that the Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality can't solve by itself. Therefore, we have to be in contact with the central government in one way or another. It's safe to assume that the central government will not be willing to do this, but the Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality must consistently demand dialogue with the government, take the necessary diplomatic actions, publicize its own projects, and push the government to do more. The municipality must continue to demand as much as possible. If anyone gives up in the process, it should never be the Diyarbakır Municipality.

6- Parks are the lungs of Diyarbakır, especially in the summer. No matter which park you go to, you can always see a lot of families spending time in parks until 1-2 am. They are also a place for socializing. Municipalities should consider this fact and provide services for the parks, especially during the summer. Cleaning, security, and landscaping of the parks should not be neglected. These are the services that directly affect the public.

7- One of the main expectations of the municipality is transparency. At a time when mass media is so effective, transparency in municipal affairs, tenders, and decisions will surely bolster the municipality's legitimacy and make it legally stronger. The municipality should take the necessary measures to ensure transparency.

8- The municipality was asked to meet with civil society and have more meetings. Personally, I don't want you to have more meetings. On the contrary, I think you should have fewer meetings. If you have too many meetings, you will be perceived as trying to manage things with public relations rather than doing real work.

So, having so many meetings may not be the right thing to do. It would be much better to see you in the field, to see the decisions taken being implemented.

9- I'm concerned about some of the opinions shared in the strategic plan and in this meeting. Sure, the municipality is an entity with certain economic and legal powers. However, they are not a god on earth. We can't expect municipalities to solve all of our problems. We can't put all of our expectations for education, health, culture, and infrastructure entirely on the municipality. So, the municipality must be wary of that.

The municipality is not a civil society organization. We, as the representatives of civil society organizations, have no burden on us. We can say whatever we want. However, politics is not the same as activism. You are the one who will face the public and be held accountable if something goes wrong. The public expects you to succeed and does not necessarily care about the hardships you face along the way. They want to see whether or not you achieved your goal. That's why I think municipalities need to set their priorities right and create a roadmap accordingly.

10- Lastly, I'd like to say that we need to get rid of this victim mentality. We can only paint a negative picture of our situation for hours by blaming the state or the state-appointed trustees. They may all be true. But does that help anyone with anything? These are useless truths, and we should avoid them as much as possible.

### Şiyar Bozhan - President, Chamber of Certified Public Accountants

Thank you, DİTAM and co-mayors, for this opportunity to discuss our city's problems after a long time. They are here with us today because they are our stakeholders and they are willing to listen to our problems.

I think we need a slogan along with our logo instead of this cold, empty phrase that has nothing to do with our city's identity. We don't need that. We need a slogan that reflects the history, and the wants and needs of our city.

As Serra Bucak said earlier, we expect to have a sustainable period five years. They plan to spread their projects over this period. I hope there won't be any incidents. Diyarbakır is a beautiful and rare city with tens of thousands of years of history. There are many beautiful cities around the world with famous pasts, like cities with 500 or 1000 years of history. But a city with a ten thousand year history… That's rare. The fabric of such a city is certainly very important. So, we need to decorate the city with unique elements that reflect the city's history. We can start small. We need smaller projects instead of big ones. There is a proverb in Kurdish that says "If you want to hit a target, grab a small rock. If you don't, grab a big rock." So, we can start small and move forward.

We don't have much to do with the municipality. But we're here today to tell you that we want to help if you ever need us to. We want to move forward with empathy. In the past, we were all stakeholders of the City Council. Today, we are here together in a beautiful atmosphere. We want to experience the joy of moving forward with an entity like the municipality that has the power to do something.

I have a suggestion. I think we need honorary inspectors. There's no point in tying everything to a single authority. We all experience these problems when we are out and about. We witness the traffic, pedestrians problems, accessibility issues, dirty walls, etc. Diyarbakır has a graffiti problem. There are symbols on the walls that don't belong in our city. They should be cleaned up.

The buildings that collapsed during the earthquake are another important problem. I don't know how much responsibility the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization, the rights holders, or the license holders have

regarding the collapsed and abandoned buildings. Legal experts would know. These buildings collapsed because of the weak soil. The Hatboyu area, which used to be a riverbed, is severely damaged. While the area is evacuated, we should work on protecting the financial rights of the property owners. If the municipality is able to undertake large housing projects, it should establish the rights of the owners and green the abandoned areas. The apartments overlooking these green areas will increase in value. Then, they can be taxed to fund the municipality.

We need to be self-critical. Clearing out the illegal buildings around the city walls was a big undertaking, and the process was well managed at the time. However, we also witnessed the construction going on in the Kırklar Mountain. It's a negative reference point. So, if we refresh our memory about the past experiences and compare the positive and negative ones, we will move forward better.

Speaking of greening the city, I think it would be better if civil society were involved in the process. These small symbolic projects are also important. Ankara is known for its Kuğulu Park. It's not a big place by any means, but it's the Kuğulu Park. We need these landmarks and symbols in Diyarbakır as well. They can be historical or natural structures or a bit of greenery. We can make our city more beautiful with these small touches.

## Nahit Eren – President of the Diyarbakır Bar Association

As the president of an association that represents the lawyers of the city, I'd like to say that everyone is pointing to the eight years of damage we have suffered but they are still missing the mark. During a recent meeting with the Kayapınar District Mayor about a social facility, we noticed that there is no technical infrastructure other than a few prefabs and an administrative building. So, how is the Kayapınar Municipality supposed to realize the projects mentioned in this presentation, like the cultural projects, art, education in the mother tongue, and daycare centers?

We've been forced to get used to the appointed trustees, but we have also remained silent about the damage to the city. If we fail to keep our elected officials in office, the trustees appointed by the central government will interfere with the structures we have built and the municipal services needed to maintain them. These structures were developed with the funds collected by the local government or otherwise allocated from the central government's budget, and were shaped according to our identity, colors, and lifestyle. Twenty-eight buildings that belonged to the Kayapınar Municipality have been allocated to the Meat and Fish Products Authority, Religious Affairs Administration, and some historical institutions for 25 years without any possibility to revoke the decision.

This has been going on in front of our eyes. I don't know if we all kind of cowered or didn't realize what was going on. We are talking about participating in the local government with the will of the people instead of relying on the central government. However, all of the structures that have the power to damage or keep alive our culture, language, and identity are now under the control of the central government and its related public agencies, such as the Provincial Directorate of Youth and Sports. How are we going to get out of this situation?

We don't have the means to identify and solve all these problems by working with civil society or professional organizations. What should we do as civil society, professional organizations, and municipalities to fight this plunder as soon as possible? Should we form a committee for that, or should the City Council make a plan? We have to show that our local governments don't have the resources because of the actions of the trustees and we have to hold them accountable. We need to take them back. Elected mayors and city councils have made decisions to revoke the allocation of these resources to these government entities. But

they appealed it immediately. They went to the administrative court in a very organized manner, and the court quickly ruled for a stay of execution for the council decisions.

We have to appeal this first. We have to take back what belongs to us and our children. It is clear that we won't get anywhere with legal action. I don't know if we should expose this or get in touch with the central government to do something about it. But I think this is one of our main issues. This is a concrete example of the damage that our city has suffered. We have a lot of work to do.

### Sertaç Bucak - Diyarbakır Political and Social Research Center (DİSA)

We've been talking about the water problem in Diyarbakır. If I remember correctly, Feridun Çelik managed to solve this problem during his term with a project supported by the German Federal Ministry for Development. Maybe we can contact them again for this issue. The minister at that time was a member of a very conservative party, the Christian Social Union. Today, the minister is a member of the Social Democratic Party. I think it's worth trying.

I also want to talk about incentives. Municipalities can't do everything on their own. The Diyarbakır Chamber of Commerce and Industry should be actively involved to make sure that municipalities can use these incentives for their projects. I think they should guide the municipalities or be a part of the process in some way.

Also, the only option we have is to take legal action for the damage caused by the trustees. We can take it to the European Court of Human Rights, but we're not doing anything about it. We have to do it. We have to keep speaking up about the damage. The Co-Mayors of Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality got 64% of the votes, while the Justice and Development Party candidate got 16%. Yet, whenever the minister visits the region to hold provincial coordination meetings, they invite the mayor of Urfa but not our co-mayors. I think we should have raised hell about this. I found out about this by chance through a social media post by the *Güneydoğu Ekspres* news agency. We need to be vocal about this.

Addiction is another serious problem. There are some European Union funds available for the fight against addiction. We should work to get these funds. There are many Kurdistani people in Germany who work in this field. We can consult them or ask for their help. When I heard that the metropolitan and district mayors are banned from leaving the country, I said to myself that they don't want to see this kind of projects here. But I think we can find other ways.

### Mehmet Demir - Former Co-Mayor of Batman / Doctor

Our municipalities have excellent strategic plans, but they are almost always disrupted. Therefore, our primary strategy should be to prevent the appointment of trustees. We were able to gather with up to 800 CSOs in Diyarbakır and protest. Trustees are not just the problem of the co-mayors or the DEM Party; it's a social issue. Therefore, all political parties and civil society organizations in the region must have this issue on their agendas. Take the Hakkari Municipality, for example. We must all work together as a community to prevent the appointment of trustees; otherwise, our efforts might be in vain.

We can realize our goals under democratic autonomy as defined in the Metropolitan Municipality Law No. 6360 of 2012. All we have to do is to unite the urban and the rural. We have to improve the rural development plan. For example, we can open metropolitan education centers in some villages and provide

agricultural and language education. This was added as a clause in the Metropolitan Municipality Law No. 5216. The law permits metropolitan municipalities to support agricultural and animal husbandry projects.

The central government is trying to isolate us from the wider society. We need to improve our connections with the community. We can provide mobile veterinary medicine services, animal health and yield services, training in modern farming methods, and set up livestock and agricultural cooperatives to market our products. Even though the irrigation associations are part of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, the metropolitan municipality can also work with them. We can work on these things. We can work on popularizing the endemic plants, vegetables, and fruits of Diyarbakır and develop projects to use them more efficiently.

Based on my experience, I can say that commercial urban transformation projects exacerbate the damage done to the city. They cause economic, social, and environmental damage. These projects should be done more by the metropolitan municipality through MED A.Ş. for example. And if the businesspeople of Diyarbakır want to get involved, they can cooperate with MED A.Ş. and we can transform the Bağlar district in 10 years. If we leave this task to the contractors, the illustrative value of the properties will go up, the environmental damage will increase, and the social reinforcements will be destroyed. Therefore, the process should be managed mainly by the municipality. Even though Law No. 6360 of 2012 favored TOKİ, it also empowered the municipalities.

One of the most important duties of local governments is to create employment opportunities. I'd like to share an anecdote about this. Back in 2011, we went to Polatlı as members of civil society to visit the district governor. He said, in his words, "Workers from the southeastern cities come here to work. We have to accept them because there is no one else to do their work. But we don't let them into the city. We keep them in camps. To prevent them from staying here, we cut off their water and electricity at the end of their work and prevent homeowners from renting their properties to them."

The most important role of local governments is to create jobs. We have to do that to keep people from leaving the city. Municipalities are as important and effective as chambers of commerce in developing and transforming the city, building a comfortable life, and creating jobs. We need strong cooperation, especially in agriculture and animal husbandry.

The monthly income of the Batman Municipality was 15 to 19 million, and the personnel expenses alone were 14,5 million. We couldn't get a loan from any bank or İlbank, even though we were legally entitled to six percent of our income. So, municipalities should have commercial enterprises. If we are financially dependent on banks or İlbank, we won't be able to get out of this mess.

Moreover, municipalities have to serve the whole city and not just the working people. We can't use our resources efficiently if we follow the demands of one group of people. For example, Batman municipality had 50 buses and carried 21,000 passengers. We were able to reach a capacity of 45.000 passengers simply by smart planning. This allowed us to save 8.000 liras in fuel. We have to use our resources effectively and efficiently. We need to work with people who know what they are doing.

I believe that local governments can succeed by building strong cooperation and coordination with the existing stakeholders.

## Berivan Gülşen Sincar - Kayapınar District Municipality Co-Mayor

The observations shared in this report and the focus meetings before the elections are very good. They helped and inspired us in our work. Our party also organized focus groups and workshops at the time. Indeed, we are not short of meetings or identifying problems on a macro level. We have extensive political knowledge and background. However, we should go one step further and overcome the obstacles and problems we face.

We fully agree with the need to improve social municipal practices. As a woman, co-mayor, and someone who has been in the field for years, I believe that the most important thing for any group that wants to represent and solve society's problems is its ability to empathize with the people and develop a method.

The problems of the city's disadvantaged communities, which are mentioned in our statement and this report, are very important. We wonder why Diyarbakır is one of the unhappiest cities in the country. We have been focusing on reversing it for a while now. We should know that the last 10 years were just a phase for a city that has a 12000-year-old culture and collective memory with substantial political awareness, strong civil society, and the will to address social issues.

As local governments, our top responsibility is to resolve the obstruction of services. However, at the core of all the problems we are experiencing today are those who polarize us and represent the elite. For years, we have been defending the right to the city and the right of every individual who lives in this city to have a say in the solutions, roadmaps, and decision-making processes. There were dozens of civil society organizations and solidarity cooperatives. But the trustees disrupted the process and deprived the people of their voice.

There has been a shift in social norms recently. Society favors performance rather than discipline. A culture of consumerism is constantly being pushed. We have been working very hard on projects for women. However, the main issues we need to focus on now are employment, poverty, hopelessness, and immigration to other countries. Young people from both impoverished and wealthy families who are not in employment, education, or training no longer feel a sense of ownership of the city they live in. We need to pull ourselves together and realize the impact of our complaining tone on this issue.

We should also consider that we have limited room for maneuver because the youth have lost hope. Municipalities are receiving a lot of job applications and asked for employment opportunities due to poverty in the city. We want to respond to all of them, but we know we can't. We should think about how the businesspeople, industrial sector, and entrepreneurs of the city can help. There is also a crisis caused by a lack of merit and competence.

According to research, 67% of Gen Z are not proficient in technology. This is tragic. We have a duty to support the youth who were left behind, unable to keep up with the times.

As to the addiction issue, before resorting to rehabilitation and other measures, we should focus on the root cause rather than the outcome, as we Kurds have been doing for years. It is crucial to reach out to the youth and defend the rights of any disadvantaged group in the community. We are ready to support the initiatives that work on this issue.

The devastation caused by the trustees, the material losses, the confiscation of properties, and their transfer to other institutions reveal something else. They are not even able to govern themselves. They created a system where they seized the rights of the city by transferring millions of dollars of resources to the institutions that already have their own resources. With the austerity measures in place, they are essentially saying that we can't do anything, we can't govern ourselves, and they will govern us as they wish.

There are hundreds of tangible projects aimed at youth, women, the disabled, employment, and vocational qualification that the city council can develop against this discourse.

We are responsible for creating resources even if we are in financial debt. Even if they take away all of our resources and close all the doors, we have to find a way. Every institution in the city is going through a collective trauma. We have to get out of this state. Their main goal is to degenerate us. The best way to combat this is to plan well for the next ten years and to empower the disadvantaged groups to hold on to the life in the city.

We want to include all this in our strategic plan for the next 5 years. But we don't want to do it alone. Every organization and every constituent of the city should see themselves as part of this process. We need to step up and contribute. We are two months away from completing the planning process. The strategic plan is not the main issue here. What's more important is to be more transparent and solution-oriented in answering the question "How can we revive Amed, and how can we solve these problems?".

### Remzi Azizoğlu – President, Mesopotamia Association for Linguistic and Cultural Studies (MED-DER)

We are working to raise awareness about the Kurdish language. In your opening speech, you said that everyone agrees that Kurdish cities are neglected and underdeveloped. I wish it was only the municipal services that were neglected. They have destroyed everything. They destroyed our language, our art, our history, our demography, our nature, and our unity. They destroyed all our institutions; they destroyed our ability to govern ourselves. They have destroyed everything we have done so far. If we are to plan for a great city in the future, we must return to our former position. To do this, we need to prioritize language, culture, and arts in the strategic plan and other plans. That way we can create the necessary infrastructure. We've already established the City Council, through which we will carry out our projects. This will allow us to achieve justice for the city.

### Yahya Öger – President, Yeşil Yıldız Association

I'm here today on behalf of the association. We are based in Diyarbakır and have representation offices in two other cities. We have been actively working in the field of addiction since 2013. We have also participated in previous meetings of DİTAM. I'd like to share my opinions about a few things before I talk about the fight against addiction. Every local government blames its predecessor for leaving a mess behind. They always mention how difficult it is to build something on top of the mess of the previous term. However, those who have volunteered and dedicated themselves to this work have already accepted the challenge of building something great in spite of the mess.

First of all, I wished that the metropolitan and district mayors, together with their personnel, including department heads and managers, had done something about the littering and pollution in the city. The metropolitan municipality, for example, has two thousand employees. They could employ a thousand of them to do something, at least symbolically, in an area of their choice. Diyarbakır doesn't deserve this pollution. The city center is very polluted except for the main roads.

Secondly, we have been having a serious problem with pest control. This isn't something the central government can do. It's something that municipalities should do with their own resources.

Thirdly, our city has a historical, cultural, and religious heritage. Our neighbor, Urfa, receives an average of 3 million tourists a year. Tourism is one of Urfa's main sources of income. But Diyarbakır hasn't even reached 500 thousand tourists. So, I think we should prioritize tourism, especially religious tourism, to generate extra funds for the city.

We have serious transportation problems. People abuse the passes issued for senior citizens and the disabled. This is not something unique to Diyarbakır. But we know that it is a serious problem. The municipal police have investigated this several times. However, the people of Diyarbakır have lost their sense of belonging. Our society has become more secular and more capitalist, which has erased Diyarbakır's truth. I wish that you, as the municipality, spend more time on the issues that can be manipulated to turn you against the public regarding religious beliefs instead of focusing on the trustees.

I've been living in Diyarbakır since 1986. I'm a proud Zaza from Dimilî. One thing I've seen since 1986 is that we don't tolerate each other very much. I'd like to thank DİTAM for bringing different groups together in these meetings and doing something about the sense of belonging to the city. We need peace and quiet in the city.

I'd like to say to our co-mayors that if we are going to give in to the threats of the occupiers who are carrying rifles around the On Gözlü Bridge, I think we should just quit now.

After the pandemic and the earthquake, we've experienced a lot of problems in terms of the fight against addiction. According to a study done by Hevra, there are about 75 thousand drug users or addicts in Diyarbakır. TurkStat doesn't have a study on this issue at a national level. According to the data we obtained from our field studies, 8 to 10 percent of Diyarbakır's population uses substances. In 2013, the number of female substance users who applied for treatment at medical centers in Diyarbakır was close to 500. This was the first time that Diyarbakır reached such a high number. In other words, we need to act quickly to do something about addiction. Maybe Hevra Amed (Hevra Support and Counseling Center) should be reinstated. We should also get in touch with the other dynamics of the city.

In 2023, we had two children under the age of 12 who were judicially processed for drug-related offenses. Twenty-seven juveniles under the age of 18 were judicially processed for dealing drugs. In other words, we need to take the necessary measures to prevent children from having access to drugs.

There is no need to reinvent the wheel. There are some addiction centers in the US that work with alcoholics and narcotics users. We can adapt their work to Diyarbakır. We should mobilize and do the work as soon as possible. We can't sit around and wait for an addict to come to us so that we can treat them. We have to get rid of this mentality.

Abandoned buildings are not just old, historic buildings. These are the places where addicts go to use substances. We need to get rid of them as soon as possible. Some people even use daily rentals to do drugs. So, it would be better if we started to inspect these rentals as well.

### Ahmet Özmen - Vice President, DİTAM / Lawyer

There are some recurring themes in this meeting. First, we expect everything from the municipalities and civil society because the state and the authorities don't fulfill their responsibilities towards the Kurds. This is a challenge. Secondly, our culture, language, and everything we had has been destroyed, and we have to rebuild everything.

I'd like to talk about two things real quick. First, we, as the Kurdish community and Kurdish organizations, must reject the idea of the so-called "rural culture" that serves the assimilation of the Kurdish people. We should be aware of the fact that everything from drug problems to bag snatching and illegal structures near the On Gözlü Bridge are all related to each other. It's a deliberately crafted and maintained strategy.

Secondly, I'd like to mention the zoning situation of severely and moderately damaged buildings after the earthquake. For example, a 500-square-meter lot used to have a 400-square-meter building area. I'm not sure, but I believe the new zoning law gives less area to work with, which is an obstacle for urban transformation projects.

Also, to Mr. Yahya Öger, please don't take this the wrong way, but faith tourism should be organized by the Ministry of Tourism. Even if we had not seven but seven hundred tombs in Diyarbakır, no one would show up unless the Ministry of Culture and Tourism organizes tours to the city. In the same way, if there weren't any tours from Russia, no Russian tourist would come to Antalya. As to the addiction problem, of course we should fight against drugs and addiction. But as you mentioned, kids are sold drugs in front of schools in Bağlar right under the nose of the governorate and the police, and they do nothing about it. So, I don't think we are the ones to blame for it.

### Edip Berk - Economist

Diyarbakır is the unhappiest city in Turkey. The rate was probably much higher during the trustee period. Cities are like living organisms. They have a history and a culture. Every day in Diyarbakır, about one million people go to sleep, wake up in the morning, wash up and go out, where they come into direct contact with the municipality. Therefore, the municipality must be run by our elected representatives. If the history of Diyarbakır has a meaning for us, it will also impact our collective and personal memory.

Diyarbakır has suffered deeply throughout its history, be it the Armenian Genocide, the Sheikh Said rebellion, the torture of Esat Oktay Yıldıran in the Type E Prison during the September 12 period, unsolved murders during the 90s, and burning of villages. Diyarbakır has been deliberately neglected and deprived. A poet once said, "Diyarbakır is a blessing for us and a burden for others." Still, we continue to protect the identity and culture of our city. Electing our own local governments and mayors is a good example of this. This election is about the city's identity.

For example, while many cities in Turkey have liberation days, such as the liberation from the French or British occupation during World War I, Diyarbakır has a day dedicated to the liberation from the trustee administration. But they make us celebrate the 700th anniversary of the conquest of Diyarbakır. This is nonsense. Let's not let anyone play with the identity and history of Diyarbakır. We are going to reclaim this mindset and accept that we are governing ourselves and our city.

### Elif Turan – Former Chair of the Diyarbakır Chamber of Medicine / Amedspor Board Member

One of the city's biggest problems is substance abuse. The age of drug use has plummeted. There were about 30 suicide cases in Silvan in 10 months. Upon further investigation, we found that almost all of them were drug users. The age of drug use in Diyarbakır has dropped to 9-10 years old. Why do young people turn to drugs? Because they have nothing else to do. In a way, they find "happiness" in drugs.

We can replace drugs with something else. There are some videos circulating on social media that show kids swimming in Anzele Park. The municipality has been trying to do as much as it can for the last 2-3 months, especially for children and youth. We need to do even more. We need to get young people interested in the arts and sports. Because the body releases dopamine during these activities, there will be no need for additional substances.

Diyarbakır and the region in general are very interested in Amedspor. Amedspor is not only a football club. It has many other branches. We expect the municipality to support these other branches as well. Amedspor is also popular in other cities. It also acts like a civil society organization. We can get young people interested if we support the existing interest sports. Kids are very interested in the latest youth setup qualifications. In this way, we can prevent them from being interested in harmful habits.

### Zeki Kanay - The Ecological Society

Using local plants in the city's landscape is important for water saving and many other reasons. I suggest that these plants be grown in the city nursery and used in the city landscape. I also recommend opening museums in each district to showcase their culture and history. Also, I think it would be better to get together with all the CSOs in the city and decide together on a roadmap to fight illegal construction. The public is not really aware of the issue of restoring the status of the Tigris. I think DİTAM should work on preparing a statement to be signed by CSOs in the next meeting and send it to the press, ministries, and other relevant parties.

### Zahit Çiftkuran - Sheikh Said Association

Someone mentioned the lack of religious services. We have been working with mayors until 2016, and we have never experienced any difficulties or interference on their part regarding these services, regardless of religion. Places of worship and mosques are predetermined in the zoning plans of the municipalities. None of them have been interfered with. However, trustees came here and converted all the places reserved for women and children and even some religious places into Quran courses or mosques. Or they took these places from us and reserved them for the people and entities they have control over.

Kayapınar District Co-Mayors are also here with us today. Everyone should know that the mosques belong to all of us. Whenever they need help with something, we'll be there. We can clean up the mosques and other religious places. Kayapınar municipality personnel cleaned all the mosques in their districts recently. Hopefully, we will see more projects concerning places of worship.

### Süleyman İskenderoğlu - President, Yenişehir/Kayapınar Chamber of Agriculture

I'd like to briefly mention two things. First, the farmers have demands in relation to the department of rural affairs under Law No. 6360.

Second, all of the main roads and arteries of the Yenişehir District open up to Seyrantepe. Someone coming from Bitlis, for example, has to pass through Seyrantepe. There is a road under Seyrantepe around the 450 Evler intersection. There are often traffic jams on this road, the main road in Seyrantepe, the Öğretmenevi intersection, Elazığ Boulevard, near Mahabad Boulevard, and in front of the Research Hospital on the Elazığ Boulevard. All of these roads are congested. The city has become unlivable due to the constant traffic.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR MUNICIPALITIES: ANSWERS

### Sedat Yurtdaş - Vice President, DİTAM (Moderator)

If there is anyone who would like to comment or ask a question but didn't get a chance, please write down and send them to us. We will publish the notes from this meeting. So we will be able to include a lot of comments. We have gone way over our time. I'd like to summarize a question I have here. It says, "Are you working on reaching an agreement with the central government about the municipalities? How would you achieve your reform goals?" Ms. Serra Bucak, the floor is yours. Please answer all of the questions briefly. Thank you very much.

### Serra Bucak - Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality Co-Mayor

Thank you all for your valuable input. We have taken many notes. We have very little time left to prepare the strategic plan and set a budget for it. First of all, rest assured that we will do our best to allocate a significant portion of the budget to social municipality practices and poverty alleviation. But this doesn't mean that we will ignore basic services such as infrastructure, water, cleaning, repairs, etc. We will organize the services so that a significant part of the budget is spent on these areas. This meeting has shown us today that we really need to organize them.

There is a fire going on. This fire will either burn us down or we will rise from the ashes and build a new Amed. We are committed to the latter and we will work together with the local administrations and civil society. We will fight against poverty, meet the needs of our community, and bring Diyarbakır to the level it deserves. Being from Diyarbakır is an identity. It is our duty to cherish and grow this identity. We can't leave it as it is. All the damages, earthquakes, crises, and social problems we have suffered have proved to us that the local governments must take the responsibility of rebuilding the city.

As co-mayors of the metropolitan municipality who received 64,09% of the votes, we have promised to serve everyone with an inclusive approach. We still stand by our promise, and we will be inclusive. We will listen to everyone. That may mean that we have longer meetings, but we will find the balance. On the weeks when we have long meetings, we will visit small business owners in the evenings. After those visits, we will come back to office and continue to work. This is the balance we have established over the past three and a half months. We have to organize the inner workings of the municipality. But at the same time, we are responsible for developing projects, meeting with the public, and listening to them. We want to keep this balance by dividing our days as fairly as possible.

We want to meet with all the government agencies, especially the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization, the Governorate, and the Ministry of National Education to discuss our problems. We have been very honest about this. It's not just a political or diplomatic move; it's a necessity. You also have pointed this out. Local governments do not have the capacity to deal with the mountains of problems on their own. It's not possible. It's not possible in Amed, and it's not possible anywhere else in the world. So this is not just a diplomatic approach, it is a requirement.

As we have done so far, we will continue to pave the way and be constructive in our approach to government agencies, including the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization for the abandoned buildings, the Provincial Directorate of Health for public health and preventive measures, and the Ministry of National

Education for the fight against addiction. We mention this a lot, and not just in our interviews and meetings. I'm a permanent committee member of the Municipalities Union along with the Co-Mayor of Mardin Metropolitan Municipality, Ahmet Türk. In the two committee meetings I've attended so far, I have expressed our opinions on behalf of Amed. I have emphasized the importance of the relations with the central government and public authorities. Although not as much as the DEM Party, the municipalities run by the members of the Republican People's Party also suffer from this problem to some extent. That's why we said that we must develop new methods to overcome this problem.

Local democracy is also of great concern to us. I've said this several times at the Municipalities Union. But I noticed that my words hit a wall. When I mention local democracy, people think it is a reference to the Kurdish question. Therefore, we have to continue to develop local democracy to show everyone how important and universal this issue is. This just shows us that we need to talk a lot more about local democracy. Unfortunately, the agency and the voice of local governments were taken away in the last eight years. We need to think about what we can do to include the local governments, municipalities, civil society, and the chamber of architects in the UNESCO process or to make sure that they also have a say in the housing issue other than the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization. We need to think about how we can prevent municipalities from being mere subcontractors of the provincial directorates that act as the executive branches of the central government. This can be done by uniting and demonstrating the importance of local democracy, our democratic governance, and the constructive approach.

We agree with all of your criticisms about cleaning and transportation. This has been a very hard time. Our city is dirty and in need of maintenance. There is environmental pollution. There are collapsed and abandoned buildings everywhere. The city needs repairs and maintenance. Someone said earlier that everyone, including co-mayors and personnel, should come together and mobilize. We also thought about that but then we gave it up because it would turn into a performative action. We need to find other ways to create a sense of belonging.

We don't have foreign relations at the moment, but we are working on it. We are working on establishing a project office and a foreign and diplomatic relations department within the municipality. We can also set up a joint project office within GABB. Or maybe a joint project office with the Diyarbakır Chamber of Commerce and Industry, why not? We should think about our options.

Sure, meetings are important, but they are not enough on their own. We are aware that at some point we have to stop discussing and take action.

Also, the light rail system has been on the agenda for almost 20 years. The project was included in the 2025 Presidential Investment Program. You might think that Amed shouldn't give up on this project since it's already included in the program. But there are many reasons behind it. You may want to see the chaos on the roads relieved with one or more tram lines in the next 15 years. Of course, we know that a 14.5 km tram line won't solve the traffic or the city's transportation problems. However, we can achieve this if we take the necessary steps to change the negative sentiment about the city's transportation and provide the necessary training programs.

We will have three more meetings with consulting and contracting companies. We are already working on our team. Lecturers from the Civil Engineering Department of Dicle University and presidents of relevant chambers visited us. We need to consult relevant parties to solve our problems. So, we have to keep having meetings. We have to meet with businesspeople, investors, and civil engineers.

We should also think about this question: Can we establish an advisory committee within the Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality for major infrastructure projects or projects that will affect the future of the city? How can we manage and facilitate this? We would like to meet with you before the strategic plan is finalized.

We think this is very important as an inspection and monitoring mechanism, and we will do our best to make it work.

The City Council hasn't been able to function for the last eight years. We have thought about forming an executive board based on the previous guidelines. Our friends worked really hard on this, holding preparatory meetings and visiting many organizations. Many of these organizations didn't consider giving members to the executive board until the day of the city council meeting. They realized how important it was once they saw some of the organizations on the executive board. That is normal and understandable. We don't want to force anyone, and we won't set a limit on the number of board members. We can always increase the number if we feel it would be beneficial. We also said this at the City Council meeting.

We also said this: The metropolitan co-mayors shouldn't be the co-chairs of the City Council. We discussed this with the local administrations and civil society. After our discussions, we agreed that the co-mayors should act as the chairs of the city council for a while, since the council has been inactive for eight years. In this way, co-mayors can act as guarantors and drivers of the council. We believe that the co-chairs of the city council should come from the city's own dynamics. We expressed this idea during the meeting. We agreed to be in charge temporarily, let's say for one year. Once the executive board is formed and begins to function properly, we will gladly step down. Also, we don't want the City Council to act as an extension of the municipality. We want the council to be an independent body that leads the way and develops diplomatic relations all actors from mukhtars to political parties, runs assemblies, and develops inclusive plans, ideas, and policies for the city. We won't wait until September 2024 to convene the city council. We expect to convene the council as soon as possible and continue our work.

### Doğan Hatun - Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality Co-Mayor

Thank you, everyone, for sharing your opinions and suggestions that we might not have noticed otherwise. Municipalities should be more transparent. We share all suggestions and comments received by the municipal council on our website. That way, those who couldn't attend the meeting can learn about the decisions. We have also asked the Chamber of Certified Public Accountants to monitor us as an external auditor, to inspect our financial transactions, tenders, procurement decisions, and profit and loss statements, and to share their findings not only with the municipality but also with the public. Transparency is important to us.

Someone suggested that we shouldn't do this job if we are afraid of armed people. We are not afraid, but we don't want anyone to get hurt. Our goal is to keep this city in its best version. However, every problem area in the city is at the mercy of certain groups. That is why we discuss these issues with civil society organizations. So, no, we are not afraid. We are not here to be afraid.

Many of the properties that belong to the municipalities have been transferred to other government bodies for free, such as the Religious Affairs Administration, the State Hydraulic Works (DSİ), the Provincial Directorate of Youth and Sports, and the Ministry of National Education. They all have their own budgets, just like the municipalities. So why don't they use their own budgets to acquire properties for themselves? These properties were built and operated by the municipality for public use for services such as education, arts, and culture. We just want our properties back. That doesn't mean that we are against Quran courses. If the public wants Quran courses, we will gladly do our best to provide them. We have no intention of closing them, we just want our properties that were built with our resources and then immediately transferred to third parties. They belong to the public. They were built with public funds. The Religious Affairs Administration has its own budget and other resources. We want them back to serve our people. We should have the discretion over these properties.

Are we against sports or education just because we want to take back our properties that were given to the Provincial Directorate of Youth and Sports or to the Ministry of National Education? Are we against healthcare just because we want back our green spaces that were given to the Provincial Directorate of Health? We are not against anyone. We want our people to benefit from these places. We respect all religions and we don't have any animosity toward anyone. We are ready to serve all places of worship, regardless of religion. However, no one should portray us as enemies of Islam. We only want our confiscated properties, which were built by and for the people. We need them and we are entitled to them.

We have conducted a comprehensive feasibility study of the rail system. Technically speaking, there is no other project in Turkey with such a good feasibility study, especially for the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th phases of the project. We didn't do a feasibility study for the subway line because it would require a large budget since the ground is comprised of basalt stones, which is difficult to dig through. We believe that there is no need to go underground for a rail system and spend a lot of our budget. Instead, we can build an aboveground system.

We have the resources to provide protective clothing such as gloves and overalls for the children who collect waste paper. We will do some research on this.

The suggestion to use endemic species in landscaping is very good. Of course, we can do that. It would be very beneficial for the city.

Finally, I'd like to say something about encouraging everyone to solve the city's problems. A businessman visited the municipality, and we explained to him our intentions about social housing in the city. He said that he would contribute financially if we made a campaign about it. We also discussed the issue with the Diyarbakır Chamber of Commerce and other civil society organizations. In short, we are not limited to the municipality's resources. We are working to expand. We want to succeed in every field. We will do it together. Thank you.

### Sedat Yurtdaş - Vice President, DİTAM (Moderator)

Ji we hemûyan re gelek sipas! Thank you everyone. Now, I would like to give the floor to Mesut Azizoğlu, the President of DİTAM, for his closing speech.

### Mesut Azizoğlu – Chair of the Board, DİTAM

It's been more than 4 hours. Thank you for your patience. This has made it clear that we need to talk more about local services. This has been the first meeting of our Local Monitoring Network. What we have discussed today is very much in line with the purpose and methodology of the network. We will have a meeting with civil society 3 months later. I'd like to thank you all very much, especially co-mayors Serra Bucak and Doğan Hatun, district mayors, representatives, presidents, and managers of the CSOs and members of the press. Thank you and see you at the next meeting.