

High-Level Political Forum

Open Plenary, 26th June 2015, 10am

Draft Speech of Dr. Kadir Topbaş, Mayor of Istanbul President of United Cities and Local Governments, representing the Global Taskforce for 2015 towards Habitat III.

His Excellency President of ECOSOC,
Distinguished Ministers,
Excellences, colleagues and partners,

We, local leaders gathered in United Cities and Local Governments as well as the Global Taskforce *are keen to contribute to the High-level Political Forum.*

As the level of government with much of the responsibility for meeting any development targets, I would like to bring to you today the commitment of hundreds of thousands of local governments worldwide to address these responsibilities. We are convinced that a way can be found to combine poverty reduction, prosperity and sustainable development.

A ONE AND UNIVERSAL AGENDA

Fellow mayors around the world have entrusted me to stand before you today to call for a new development **agenda that is one and universal** and people centered as well as realistic achievable and mindful of the need of future generations.

CONVERGENCE OF PROCESSES

We welcome the convergence of the Rio+20 and the Post 2015 agenda in the SDGs as we believe we cannot separate sustainability from development. Improving life of citizens is also thinking about resilience of our societies and the possibilities and legacy of future generations.

We are willing to provide inputs and ensure that global goals are achieved through local and territorial contributions.

We find that Financing for Development, the Climate agenda and Habitat III need to be part and parcel of the Post 2015 agenda.

We welcome the recognition of local governments in the preamble of the draft declaration. We also welcome the recognition of human rights and equality as instrumental.

We think it is a missed opportunity not to make a connection with the urban agenda. The urban agenda is not only one of cities but of full territories.

LOCALIZING THE DEVELOPMENT AGENDA TO REDUCE INEQUALITIES

The increase of inequalities within and across countries and regions is stressed in many international forums as one of the Achilles heel of the MDGs.

5% of the world population uses 23% of the global energy supply. Roughly 40% of the world's population lacks access to adequate sanitation, and another 1.2 billion people have no facilities at all. This reality is no longer about least developed countries alone. More than 70% of the world's poorest people live today in middle-income countries, and primarily in cities.

Beyond the provision of basic services, local and sub-national governments provide and maintain infrastructures and local development strategies that are central to the reduction of poverty and disease. It is broadly accepted that climate change adaptation, and disaster risk reduction require an integrated territorial approach and the improvement of urban planning which local and sub-national governments are best placed to provide.

Indeed, the achievement of many of the MDGs' goals and targets depends on local governments and this will be true for the Post 2015 agenda.

Localizing the agenda is not only adapting the targets to the local level but actually working on the competences and resources of the territorial administrations.

The support local governments will receive from other levels of government, international agencies, as well as their capacity to build strong partnerships with civil society and private sector will be instrumental to the success of the agenda.

THE GLOBAL AGENDA IS THE LOCAL AGENDA

If we recognize the above we will need the international implementation mechanisms set up to acknowledge local and regional governments as a specific sphere of government and as key actors of development building.

The gap between decision makers and the citizens needs to be bridged with solid, just and resourced institutions in particular at local level.

Our daily responsibilities at the head of cities around the world allow us to understand the importance of providing universal access to quality basic services; in particular to those which are most vulnerable, women, children, disabled and the poor.

It is in our streets, in our schools, hospitals and police that we learn what the real significance is of the development agenda and where the cornerstones of peaceful societies lead by the rule of law are set up.

The explicit recognition of the specific character of sub-national authorities as accountable spheres of governments in international policy making will be key to the definition of a realistic agenda that will need to open up new political spaces of local and regional leaders at the decision making table.

A POLITICAL MONITORING

We would further like to underline our agreement to ensure a political monitoring of the implementation of the agenda and we commend the efforts made by this Forum to that end.

We would hope for continued involvement of all actors in the discussions and in particular in the review sessions that should start taking place in 2016.

We have high hopes that policy guidance in the forum will allow us to ensure linkages between the different dimensions of the agenda. The complexity of the objectives we have set before us will not allow us to simply aggregate policies. It will demand a new way of working which is very similar to the way we need to work in our cities.

We would be willing to contribute to new multistakeholders partnerships, based on voluntary commitments to achieve the agreed targets. We would hope that the HLPF could provide a framework to present the results of the partnerships and encourage far reaching commitments and policies to be developed.

Excellences, Dear Colleagues,

As Mayors we are often faced with situations that call demand action even beyond direct competences.

The agenda before us requires local, national regional and international leaders to commit jointly.

While accepting the challenges that urbanization represent, I also hope I have been able to transmit the great possibilities that the full involvement of local and regional governments in the development agenda can entail.

Allow me to reiterate our commitment and support and to thank you once again for the opportunity provided to address the Forum..