

## **Policy dialogue with local governments at PrepCom2 of Habitat III**

Local and Regional Government organizations, in their capacity as governmental stakeholders and gathered as part of the Global Taskforce for Post-2015 Development Agenda and towards Habitat III, met on Monday 13 April on the occasion of a political dialogue organized at the United Nations Venue in Nairobi.

This special event for local and regional authorities, organized as part of the official programme of the Second Preparatory Committee for Habitat III Conference, aimed to look into a *Global Agenda of Local and Regional Governments*, as well as to begin the preparations for the second World Assembly of Local Authorities, due to take place during Habitat III in Quito in 2016.

In Habitat II, local governments were recognized as one of the main partners of UN-Habitat in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda. Habitat II was also an important step forward in the recognition of the relevance of the networks of local authorities. As a result of the first World Assembly of Cities and Local Authorities, organized in the framework of Habitat II in 1996, local authorities engaged to build a "single voice for local governments and their associations". The Global Taskforce was born in 2012 of the same will to gather all major networks of local and regional governments and ensure joint advocacy towards the Post-2015 Development Agenda and Habitat III.

Over the last 20 years, the partnership between local authorities and UN-Habitat has been expanded and reinforced. Habitat III should be the opportunity to assess this partnership and make a qualitative leap forward in the relations between the UN and local governments, recognizing them with a special status, and afford them a more direct role and increased responsibilities within the governing bodies of UN-Habitat.

The Global Taskforce is convinced that Habitat III will be a key mechanism through which to implement the Post-2015 Agenda at local level and address specific issues related to human settlements that will be the basis for a sustainable future.

**Dr. Joan Clos**, Executive Director of UN-Habitat, opened the session by evoking the importance and special status of the local governments in the Habitat III process, which builds on the Istanbul Agenda adopted during Habitat II and recognizes the governmental character of the constituency – giving them their rightful place in the process as the "closest partner" and "essential" in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda (*Istanbul Declaration* paragraph 12).

**Ms. Jacqueline Moustache-Belle**, Mayor of Victoria (Seychelles) and Co-President of UCLG, recalled the Habitat II Consensus as a greatly visionary agreement acknowledging local authorities as key partners to deliver the agenda. It further allowed for important steps forward in decentralization policies, encouraged the development of new financial mechanisms and fostered investments in urban infrastructure; highlighting that Art. 104 of the Istanbul Declaration recognized the need for strong local governments. Yet she also expressed that while this far-reaching vision has delivered progress, it has not reached its full potential.

**Ms. Maryse Gautier**, Co-Chair of the Preparatory Committee of the Habitat III Conference (France), stressed the importance of promoting sustainable cities, building on the experiences of local and regional governments worldwide, and reiterated her commitment to facilitating a Habitat III process which would be as inclusive as possible and foster the involvement of local authorities as key actors in urban development.

## **Priorities for the new urban agenda**

**Mr. Jean-Pierre Elong Mbassi, Secretary General of UCLGA**, expressed that local and regional authorities are an organized constituency ready to contribute, and called on Member States to provide the mechanisms to ensure the full participation of local authorities in the definition of the Habitat III outcome document by acknowledging the specific accreditation of Local Authorities through Associations of Local Authorities with consultative status to ECOSOC. In this regard, he highlighted that nothing needed to be created, recalling that the simple implementation of rules 64 and 65 of the Istanbul Declaration into UN-Habitat's rules of procedure would allow this specific accreditation.

**Ms. Annemarie Jorritsma-Lebbink**, Mayor of Almere (the Netherlands), Vice President of UCLG and Chair of VNG, insisted on the governance aspect of the future urban agenda, calling for the entrenchment of local democracy to be supported and secured as a cornerstone of local and national governance. She called for clarification in the distribution of resources and responsibilities between central and local governments to enable local authorities to assume the tasks they are allocated, and to allow them to be accountable to the people who elected them. "Urban governance needs an integrated approach, especially for large urban areas and intermediate cities. The consolidation of this multi-level governance framework makes local authorities prominent players in city governance" she said; adding that "strengthening capacities and accountability in local governments is critical to reinforcing people's confidence in public institutions."

**Rev. Mpho Moruakgomo**, President of the Botswana Association of Local Authorities (BALA), Vice-President of UCLG and Bureau Member of CLGF, reiterated that the Habitat II Agenda had made references to the impact of urbanization and already recognized the need for strong local governments, stating: "In the process of urbanization, policies and programmes for the sustainable development of human settlements in both rural and urban areas require strong sub-national governmental institutions working in partnership with all interested parties."

**Ms. Catherine Cullen**, President of the UCLG Committee on Culture, recalled the strong belief that there will not be a sustainable future without sustainable, inclusive cities that are mindful of culture, heritage and patrimony. Urban centres need to work with the diversity of their populations, ensuring social inclusion and social cohesion by allowing and building on cultural diversity. The Habitat III Conference will be instrumental to achieving this cornerstone of our future agenda.

**Ms. Bernadia Irawati Tjandradewi**, Secretary General of UCLG ASPAC, underlined the need to ensure the well-being of citizens, looking not only at their economic development but also at their happiness. She recalled the crucial role of local and regional authorities in this regard, in providing the services that address the needs of the population. She also called for support for the capacity building programmes of local and regional authorities, raising that these are long-term processes.

**Ms. Janice Peterson**, Chair of the Huairou Commission, spoke of the continued lack of gender-sensitive planning in urban areas and cities. Mentioning the recent tragedies in India and throughout the world regarding violence and crimes against women in public spaces, she called for mayors and local authorities to enforce policies to ensure women's safety, and to take part in the safer cities initiative.

Climate change and disaster risk reduction have the hardest impacts on cities and will need to be tackled as part of the New Urban Agenda, said **Mr. Yunus Arikan**, Head of Global Policy and Advocacy at ICLEI. He mentioned the recently launched

initiative of the Compact of Mayors, which aims to enhancing cities' mobilization and actions on climate change policies and promote their efforts towards the international community and the COP21 in Paris. The Compact has been implemented by C40, ICLEI and UCLG, and supported by the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy, Mr. Bloomberg, the UNSG's climate team and UN-Habitat.

The crucial importance of partnerships between national governments, local governments and organized civil society was also raised by **Mr. Rene Hohmann, Senior Adviser at Cities Alliance**, who highlighted the great achievements of their partnership programme in making cities more inclusive, resilient and sustainable. He argued how successful partnerships could support good urban governance, inclusive planning and social development as well as inclusive economic development to create jobs and foster poverty reduction.

### **Financing urbanization: implications for Habitat III**

**Ms. Lucy Slack, Deputy Secretary General of CLGF**, stressed the great importance that the Commonwealth Local Governments Forum (CLGF) Board is giving to localization in the SDG process, and the need to reflect this in the Habitat III preparatory process. She said that the need for a coherent governance environment to facilitate the effective performance of local governments in the SDGs is considered a key pillar for which a clear legal framework, strong intergovernmental relationships and clarity of roles and functions was required. She further stressed that the ability to expand the scope of local governance stakeholders to enhance partnerships between LRGs and other local stakeholders would be necessary, and called for dedicated funding to support the localization of the SDGs by refocusing existing and new government resources or through a global fund devoted to this process.

**Mr. Patrick Braouezec**, President of the Agglomeration of Plaine-Commune and Councillor of Saint-Denis (France), raised the crucial need for the future urban agenda to take into account the potential of the informal sector in local economic development. He called on governments to adopt ad hoc policies and laws to follow the dynamics of the informal sector. He further insisted on the fact that economic development will not be possible without including the poor, promoting micro-businesses and ensuring flexible territorial management.

**Mr. Amiri Nondo**, Mayor of Morogoro (Tanzania) and UCLG Champion for Development Cooperation, stressed the key role local governments play in supporting and shaping local economies, both in terms of creating an enabling environment for economic activities (e.g. through local development planning or direct investment) and as a catalyst for development, in coordinating stakeholders and promoting partnerships with civil society and the private sector (e.g. for basic service delivery). He further stressed that in many countries, increasing emphasis on local economic development is an important part of the strategies to counter the legacies of uneven development and entrenched poverty.

International institutions and partners can play a critical role in supporting reforms, strengthening fiscal decentralization, creating legal frameworks for public-private partnerships, securing investors and helping to develop sub-national markets, said **Ms. Nomveliso Nyukwana**, Mayor of Emalahleni (South Africa) and UCLG Champion for Development Cooperation. She called for ODA finance to contribute to strengthening domestic frameworks to foster resource mobilization, and for national and local and territorial financing to be balanced, insisting that in many parts of the world, reforms were necessary in order to encourage, secure, and adapt the funds to the needs and capacities of local governments.

**Ms. Eugenie Birch**, President of the World Urban Campaign (WUC) recalled the longstanding involvement of the local and regional authorities in the World Urban Campaign as well as UN-Habitat programmes and policies, and invited the constituency to strengthen this partnership in view of the Habitat III Conference and to take part in the General Assembly of Partners. The General Assembly of Partners was launched by the WUC in 2015 as a platform for all stakeholders engaged in the Habitat III process to discuss their views and bring their joint voices to the procedure.

The delegation of local governments of UCLG and the Global Taskforce are keen to undertake further dialogue with Member States to explain the relevance of their involvement in the Habitat III process and to share the process of the second World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments towards Quito.

Despite our desire to see agreements on the improved participation of stakeholders and local governments, and their accreditation, as soon as possible, we are still hopeful for an inclusive process.

As stated before, in the Plenary Session of PrepCom2, the urban agenda goes beyond big cities and also involves rural links.

The agenda that organized local governments want to bring to Habitat III is not related to domestic affairs, but rather local solutions as contributions to global challenges. The new urban agenda cannot be defined without the local managers and elected representatives accountable to the inhabitants.