



## **Sustainable Cities; Key to Sustainability and Development**

**CONTRIBUTION TO 7<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE OPEN WORKING GROUP<sup>1</sup>**

**NEW YORK, 13 DECEMBER 2013, GENERAL ASSEMBLY HALL NLB AT UN HQ**

Local and Regional Government organizations gathered in a Global Taskforce for Post 2015 are fully committed to end extreme poverty in all its forms in the context of sustainable development, and to contribute to put in place the building blocks of sustained prosperity for all.

As the government bodies with much of the responsibility for meeting many of the MDGs and goals suggested for post 2015, they commit to ensuring that local and regional governments fully assume these responsibilities and to demonstrating how poverty reduction, prosperity and sustainable development can be combined.

Gathered in New York on 13 December to contribute to the work of the Open Working Group and to engage on the on-going intergovernmental process on financing and preparing for the Habitat III, members of the Taskforce affirmed their support in the definition and implementation of a new development agenda.

They reiterated the need to ensure that the new development agenda is people centred and focused on the actors and institutions that need to build sustainability and prosperity

**The members of the Global Taskforce consider a stand-alone goal on “sustainable urbanization” critical if the potential of cities and city governments is to be mobilized to overcome the main challenges of a sustainable future.**

**An urban goal should be transformative and progressively measurable, building on the successes of the past.**

Such a goal would not have urbanization as an aim but would focus on managing urbanization and ensuring a territorial approach to development so as to bridge the urban rural divide and put local governance and collaboration between citizens and their governments at the heart of the agenda.

A goal, built around sustainable urban development, should propose an alternative development agenda underlining the importance of local accountable governance and foster the creativity of local stakeholders. It should build on the political commitment of local and regional governments and their capacity to bring together all stakeholders of a territory.

## **KEY MESSAGES of the Special Session**

The **UN Secretary General** met the members of the Global Taskforce at a special session on 12 December and welcomed their work, stressing that the whole Post 2015 Agenda needed the full involvement of local governments.

During a luncheon offered by the **Group of Friends of Sustainable Cities**, the Ambassador of Sweden acknowledged the key importance of subnational authorities in basic service provision and in bridging inequalities.

At the Afternoon Session held in the General Assembly Hall on 13 December (see full programme [here](#)) the **UN Deputy Secretary General** reiterated his conviction that all actors were required to fulfill the ambitions of the new development agenda. He equally highlighted the crucial role played by local and regional governments in ensuring some of the key services needed for a life of dignity such as access to drinkable water, transportation and inclusion policies.

The **Co-President of UCLG** and Mayor of Victoria, Jacqueline Moustache Belle underlined the risk of badly managed urbanization and the need to engage the constituency of local governments to contribute to the global agenda.

*"The post 2015 agenda needs to promote stronger support to effective decentralization aiming at strengthening city management and a new urban partnership that bridges the rural-urban divide. It will necessitate a multilevel governance framework and adequate attention to creating the conditions for universal service provision with special attention to the most vulnerable" she affirmed.*

The **Minister of Local Government of Ghana**, Mr Opong Fusu, highlighted that in Africa there is an increasing awareness that urbanization is key to Africa's sustainability agenda. He further presented the New African Agenda initiative championed by the Presidents of Ghana and Nigeria, aiming at supporting African countries to urgently address the challenge of rapid urbanization on the continent in a positive way. The Minister concluded by stating: Africa strongly supports a stand-alone goal on sustainable urbanization.

The **Executive Director of UN Habitat**, Dr. Joan Clos stressed that there was not spontaneous sustainable urbanization. Cities need to be planned and managed adequately. Local authorities require adequate resources and enabling environments to deliver inclusive sustainable cities.

Navid Hanif, **Director of the Office for ECOSOC**, Support and Coordination, highlighted the special momentum built around cities and urbanization. He highlighted the importance of decentralized cooperation in the development agenda and announced the decision of ECOSOC to dedicate one of its sessions to Sustainable Cities in May 2014. He further recalled that the Development Cooperation Forum will continue to build the case for decentralized cooperation and called upon members of the Taskforce to actively participate.

**CLGF Chairperson**, Mayor Lawrence Yule, recalled the high level mandate given to developmental local government and its role in the post-2015 Development Agenda by Commonwealth leaders with respect to the setting, implementation and monitoring of local development targets. He also called upon delegates to join the celebrations of 2014 as the Year of Developmental Local Government.

Councillor for Lille and **Chair of the UCLG Working Group on Culture**, Catrine Cullen, affirmed that talking about sustainable urbanization was a transversal vision of the needs of populations, in particular those in more disadvantaged situations. She further emphasized

the need to include in the agenda the relevance of cultural vitality in cities addressed from the broadest possible perspective and including participatory processes that empower the most vulnerable.

Olav Kjørven, **Special Advisor on the Post-2015 Development Agenda of UNDP**, stressed his conviction that a local approach with an active role by cities was needed to achieve the global goals. He further expressed the commitment of his organization to continue working closely with local government representatives and ensure their full involvement on the agenda.

Councillor Berry Vbranovic, Former Chair of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and **Deputy Treasurer of UCLG** highlighted the role of local governments as development partners. He recalled the key role of city-to-city and association-to-association collaboration in knowledge sharing for sustainability.

Corinne Woods, **Director of the United Nations Millennium Campaign**, expressed the commitment of the Campaign to broaden consultations with all stakeholders and to drive discussion to the next level by promoting new partnerships. She called upon elected officials and their networks to make concrete proposal on the format that such new partnership should take.

The **President of FOGAR** and Prefect of Azuay (Ecuador) Paul Carrasco called for a new social contract that bonds local governments and the citizens they represent beyond elections. He called for solidarity among territories and the need to foster the creation of service hubs in urban areas to bridge the rural urban divide.

The need to plan beyond administrative boundaries and intergovernmental collaborating was also highlighted by Carles Llores, Director of Development Cooperation of the **Regional Government of Catalonia, representing nrg4SD**.

Councillor of Nantes, **UCLG Spokes Person on Climate Change and representative of CUF**, Ronan Dantec stressed the need to partner with civil society organizations and ensure that the transformative shift of urbanization was acknowledged by all Major Groups. A positive impact of urbanization is not only in the hands of local governments but of all local stakeholders. He further stressed the need for a serious commitment on climate change in the Sustainable Development Goals being developed.

Philip McPhee, **President of Caribbean Association of Local Government Authorities** and Board Member of CLGF, stressed the important role that local governments had to play in disaster preparedness and resilience plans. He called for resilience to be fully integrated in the SDGs.

Hon. Noel Arscott, **Minister of Local Government and Community Development of Jamaica**, Chairman of the Caribbean Forum of Local Government Ministers and Board Member of CLGF, endorsed the importance of a localised development agenda and recognised the need to involve the level closest to citizens in order to achieve true results. He further supported the notion of culture as development enabler and expressed his hope that it would find a specific place in the new development agenda.

## THE WORLD NEEDS A STAND-ALONE GOAL ON SUSTAINABLE URBANIZATION IN THE POST-2015 AGENDA

UN projections suggest that almost all the growth in the world's population over the next few decades will be in urban areas in today's low- and middle-income countries. Around one billion people (close to one in seven of the world's population) currently live in poor quality and usually overcrowded conditions in urban areas, lacking adequate provision for basic services. A further 1.4 billion new urban-dwellers are projected between 2010 and 2030. The infrastructures to ensure food, basic services and jobs for this population still do not exist.

However, cities are also places of hope and opportunity. More-urbanized countries have had greater success in attaining the MDGs than less-urbanized ones. Well managed cities contribute to limiting urban sprawl, making public services and infrastructures more accessible, promoting local economic development, reducing disaster risk and contributing to ensuring low greenhouse gas emission levels, improving the ecological footprint of urban areas. Nevertheless, large, densely populated urban settlements require different kinds of basic services and the measurement of poverty is very different from rural areas. The MDGs failed to recognize such differences. If the forces of urbanization are not managed speedily and efficiently, slum growth may overwhelm city growth, exacerbate urban poverty, and derail the future Post-2015 Agenda.

In a rapidly urbanizing world, a "cross-cutting" approach to the urban challenges will probably fail to acknowledge and harness the central role of urban policies and urban governance in ensuring that all cities become drivers of sustainable development. Mainstreaming the urban challenges across separate goals would dissipate the 'Urban Opportunity', failing to mobilize cities and other sub-national governments as essential actors in formulating the critical elements of the Post 2015 Sustainable Development Agenda.

The proposal for a stand-alone goal on "sustainable urbanization" meets the fundamental demands put forward by local and regional leaders to the UN the last year: the 1<sup>st</sup> communique of the GTF (March 2013), the Munyonyo Statement on Local Government's role in the Post-2015 development Agenda (CLGF, Kampala, May 2013), the Bonn Declaration of Mayors (June 2013) in the Mayors Adaptation Forum, the Nantes Declaration (October 2013) and the 4<sup>th</sup> UCLG Congress (Rabat, October 2013). The focus on sustainable urbanization is further developed and supported by the High Level Panel's Report to the Secretary-General in May 2013 and by the United Nations Global Compact in June 2013.

Building on the goals and targets proposed by UN SDSN (2013) and UN-HABITAT, and with the aim of developing common approaches to support the negotiation process for a stand-alone goal on "sustainable urbanization", local and regional governments propose the following areas for the establishment of specific targets in cities:

- 1. Poverty reduction and equality in urban areas:** End extreme urban poverty and universalize access to basic services so that they reach vulnerable urban populations, including those living in slums and informal settlements. Poverty lines should take account of the costs of non-food basic needs (e.g. housing and adequate access to essential services) as well as food needs. To achieve this, poverty lines should to be adjusted within countries to reflect differences in the costs of basic needs. Reducing inequalities requires equal rights to assets, particularly equal rights for all in land tenure.
- 2. More socially inclusive economic growth:** Expand employment, particularly for young women and men; encourage higher productivity by integrating the informal sector and marginalized urban

areas; ensure access to the urban services that support employment generation (i.e. transport, housing and electricity) and invest in urban regeneration, culture and heritage.

- 3. Sustainable and healthy urban environment:** Reduce urban pollution (including improved waste and wastewater management, wider use of clean fuels and reduced air pollution), achieve marked reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, and integrate urban climate change and disaster resilience into national climate adaptation and mitigation plans.
- 4. Urban management and governance:** Sustainable development cannot be achieved without strong, accountable, capable and adequately resourced local governments and citizen participation. A wider concept of public governance, supported by reinforced cooperation between different municipalities and different levels of government to develop more integrated urban policies (multilevel governance) and public participation in decision-making processes (multi-stakeholder approach) is an essential component of stronger local institutions.