GLOBAL TASKFORCE
OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS

WHAT LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS BRING TO THE GLOBAL TABLE

Legitimacy, Experience, Organization

#Listen2Cities
#Habitat3

The **Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments** facilitated by UCLG gathers over 30 networks that are active internationally.

Please visit:
gtf2016.org

or write to:
globaltaskforce@uclg.org

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CONTENTS

01 **INTRODUCTION** p. 4

02 **LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS ON THE GLOBAL STAGE** p. 6

The Global Taskforce
- Global Taskforce members
- Global Taskforce partners

03 **WHAT DO LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS BRING TO THE TABLE?** p. 8

Legitimacy as a sphere of the state

Experience on the ground

An organized constituency, ready to contribute

04 **INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS** p. 10

Local authorities vs local governments: a note on terminology

The "closest partner" of UN-Habitat

Habitat III Local Authority Hearings

World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments

05 **DECENTRALIZATION AND LOCAL DEMOCRACY** p. 14

Local self-government

Decentralization and subsidiarity
- International Guidelines on Decentralisation and the Strengthening of Local Authorities
- Decentralization in Habitat II

06 **WHAT'S THE LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENT AGENDA FOR HABITAT III?** p. 17

A territorial approach

The five dimensions of the Global Agenda of Local and Regional Governments

INTRODUCTION

01

The New Urban Agenda that will be adopted at the Habitat III Conference in Quito in October 2016 will guide urban policies in UN Member States over the next twenty years.

This document seeks to explain the role of local and regional governments in the development and implementation of the New Urban Agenda in the context of the constituency's evolving participation in the international community over recent decades.

It aims to serve as a resource for representatives of Member States, negotiators, ministries and other stakeholders beyond the Habitat III Conference as local and regional governments seek a renewed partnership with the UN and an active role in the implementation and follow-up of the New Urban Agenda.

> *"Local authorities form a vital bridge between national governments, communities and citizens and will have a critical role in a new global partnership."*
>
> A New Global Partnership: The Report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, 2013

Habitat III Informal Hearings with Local Authorities Associations

LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS ON THE GLOBAL STAGE

02

Local and regional governments have been **active internationally for over a hundred years**. The International Union of Local Authorities, of which UCLG is the inheritor, was established in 1913.

Over the past century, the international municipal movement has grown in size and proven its ability to contribute innovative solutions to global challenges. The constituency has been increasingly recognized in formal international processes and institutions, including those of the United Nations.

THE GLOBAL TASKFORCE

In 2012, in the wake of the Rio+20 Summit, the major international networks of local and regional government networks created a **Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments (GTF)** to coordinate joint inputs and responses to major international policy processes, particularly Post-2015 and Habitat III.[1] The GTF is facilitated by United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG).

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> *"It is often said that, like all politics, all development is ultimately local. As the world strives for a more sustainable path in the years ahead, particularly beyond 2015, local voices and local action will be crucial elements in our quest. That is why I welcome the creation of the Global Task Force of Local and Regional Governments."*

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon's message to the meeting of the Global Task Force of Local and Regional Governments in New York on 28 May 2013.

GLOBAL TASKFORCE MEMBERS

Together, GTF networks represent around 323,000 sub-national institutions, from small municipalities to metropolises and regions.[2]

UCLG
United Cities and Local Governments and its thematic commissions

ICLEI
Local Governments for Sustainability

AIMF
International Association of Francophone Mayors

ATO
Arab Towns Organization

CLGF
Commonwealth Local Government Forum

MERCOCIUDADES
Network of cities of Mercosur

Nrg4SD
Network of Regional Governments for Sustainability

METROPOLIS
Metropolitan Section of UCLG

UCLG Regions
UCLG Forum of Regions

CEMR-CCRE
Council of European Municipalities and Regions

UCLG-ASPAC
Asia Pacific Section of UCLG

UCLG-EURASIA
Eurasian Section of UCLG

UCLG-MEWA
Middle East and West African Section of UCLG

UCLG-NORAM
North American Section of UCLG

FLACMA
Latin American Federation of Municipalities and Local Government Associations

UCLG-A
African Section of UCLG

CUF
Cités Unies France

FOGAR
United Regions Organization

FMDV
Global Fund for Cities Development

PLATFORMA
European platform of local and regional authorities for development

C40
Cities Climate Leadership Group

UCCI
Unión de Ciudades Capitales Iberoamericana

AL-LAS
Proyecto de ciudades y gobiernos locales de Europa y América Latina

GLOBAL TASKFORCE PARTNERS

CITIES ALLIANCE, DeLog, ENGIE, European Commission, French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Habitat for Humanity, HLP Post 2015, Huairou Commission, ILO, Millennium Campaign, One UN Secretariat, Slum Dwellers International, SUEZ, UN-Habitat, UNCDF, UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, World Urban Campaign, UNACLA

[1] For more information on the GTF's participation in the SDG process, see the publication "Local and Regional Voices on the Global Stage: Our Post-2015 Journey" http://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/our_post-2015_journey.pdf

[2] The calculation of the total number Global Taskforce members includes local and regional government members of national and regional associations.

WHAT DO LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS BRING TO THE TABLE?

03

LEGITIMACY AS A SPHERE OF THE STATE

Local and regional governments form part of the state in all but four UN Member States (Nauru, Saint Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Singapore). This makes local and regional governments different from other non-state actors such as NGOs and the private sector. Furthermore, while mayors and local officials are appointed in some countries, **some sort of local elections are held in 149 of the 193 UN Member States** (up from the 97 countries that held them during the negotiations of Habitat II in 1996).[3]

EXPERIENCE ON THE GROUND

Local and regional governments are the **closest level of government to the citizen** and often have direct responsibility for dealing with vaital daily challenges relating to Habitat III, such as basic service provision, urban planning, transport and environmental protection. This first-hand experience of urban governance will be essential to the development and implementation of an ambitious but realistic New Urban Agenda.

> *"We need to put implementers at the centre of Habitat III... We need institutions that are able to deliver, based on real knowledge about the needs of all inhabitants, including those living in informality."*
>
> Statement to the Plenary Session of PrepCom2 delivered by Jacqueline Moustache-Belle on behalf of UCLG and the Global Taskforce

AN ORGANIZED CONSTITUENCY, READY TO CONTRIBUTE

International associations of local governments provide **a direct line for the international community to the diverse experiences and shared priorities of local and regional governments across the world**. They allow their members to contribute to international policy-making in a representative, responsive, and effective way.

Membership of local government associations is institutional, rather than political, and such organizations are often governed through internal democratic processes. Thus, whenever a mayor or governor speaks on behalf of an international association of local governments in an international forum, he or she represents the common interests and priorities of all of the members of that association, rather than of their own particular city, region, or political party.

Some sort of local elections are held in 149 of the 193 UN Member States

> *"I also want to reassure you, by expressing that our delegation does not come here to make statements about our local political situations. We come here to find solutions, with you, for a sustainable future."*
>
> Statement to the Plenary Session of PrepCom2 delivered by Jacqueline Moustache-Belle on behalf of UCLG and the Global Taskforce

[3] Source: UN-Habitat, Local Government and Decentralization Unit, 2015

INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS

04

Local government networks have held Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) **Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council** (ECOSOC) since 1947.

At the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, local authorities were identified as one of nine '**major groups**' for Agenda 21.

Local governments have been recognized at included in major UN and international meetings such as Beijing +10, the Millennium +5 Summit of Heads of State and the World Water Forum.

In 2000, the **first formal advisory body of local governments to the United Nations,** the UN Advisory Committee of Local Authorities (UNACLA) was set up to strengthen dialogue between national governments and local authorities on the implementation of the Habitat Agenda.

UCLG nominates 10 of its 20 members and Committee is chaired by the President of UCLG.

In 2005, in the year of the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals, local and regional governments demonstrated our commitment to achieving the MDGs with our **Millennium Towns and Cities Campaign**.

In 2008, UCLG advised the high-level UN Panel on the **Alliance of Civilizations** to ensure that the views of the world's mayors and councillors were taken into account in its report to the UN General Assembly.

In 2008 UCLG became member of the advisory group of the First **UN Forum for Development Cooperation** and represented local and regional governments at the Third **OECD High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness**.

In 2010, local governments were acknowledged as a **governmental stakeholder** in international climate change negotiations for the first time in the Cancun Agreement at COP 16.

[4] Paragraph 42: "We reaffirm the key role of all levels of government and legislative bodies in promoting sustainable development. We further acknowledge efforts and progress made at the local and sub-national levels, and recognize the important role that such authorities and communities can play in implementing sustainable development." (See also paragraphs 22, 43, 76, 85, 98, 99, 101, 134, 135, 136, 137, 253)

To contribute to the **Rio+20 Summit** in 2012, over 250 local and regional government representatives met at the Urban Summit, organized by UCLG and UN-Habitat with the support of Cities Alliance, UNACLA and the City of Rio. The Outcome Document of the Rio+20 Summit was unprecedented in its recognition of of the role of local and regional governments in sustainable development.[4]

In 2012, the President of UCLG and Mayor of Istanbul was appointed to the UN Secretary-General's **High-Level Panel** of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda to represent the perspective of local and regional governments on the Post-2015 process.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES vs LOCAL GOVERNMENTS: A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

The terms "local authorities" and "local governments" are used interchangeably in UN resolutions.

For example, in Resolution 25/4 on Implementation of the strategic plan for 2014–2019, "local authorities" appears in paragraph 4 and "local governments" in paragraph 5. Similarly, in the 15 Resolutions approved during UN-Habitat 24th Governing Council in 2013, the term "local authorities" was employed 20 times while the term "local governments" was used 12 times.

Our reading is that there is no substantive difference between the two in general usage or in UN language, and that both refer to the tiers of public administrations that are closest to the people, whatever particular names and structures they take in each country.

THE "CLOSEST PARTNER" OF UN-HABITAT

On 30-31 May 1996, international associations of local and regional governments met in a World Assembly of Cities and Local Authorities (WACLA) in Istanbul and issued a final declaration on Habitat II as our official contribution to the Conference.[5]

The Istanbul Declaration at Habitat II recognized local authorities as the **"closest partners"** of UN Habitat and as "essential in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda.[6]

According to Article 102 of the Habitat Agenda: "*The municipal level of government can be an effective partner in making human settlements viable, equitable and sustainable, since its level of administration is closest to the people. Governments must recognize the essential role of local authorities in providing services and empowering people*".

Since 1996, local government representatives have had a special relationship with UN-Habitat and, through Rule 64, have the right to participate as observers in the UN-Habitat Governing Council.

Subsequent resolutions by the General Assembly have reaffirmed and reinforced this partnership:

In 2013, the General Assembly, resolved to encourage *"**effective contributions from and the active participation of all relevant stakeholders, including local governments**, major groups as identified in Agenda 21, the relevant United Nations funds and programmes, the regional commissions and specialized agencies, the international financial institutions and other Habitat Agenda partners, **at all stages of the preparatory process and at the conference itself**."* [7]

In 2014, the General Assembly emphasized *"**the importance of wide participation of all relevant stakeholders, including local authorities, in the promotion of sustainable urbanization and settlements**"* and called on Member States *"to ensure effective participation of local governments and all other stakeholders in the preparatory process and in the Conference itself"*.[8]

[5] For the full WACLA Declaration text, see http://habitat.igc.org/wacla/dec-eng.html

[6] Article 12 of the Istanbul Declaration on Human Settlements Habitat II (1996) A/CONF.165/14

[7] Resolution 67/216, December 2012

[8] Resolution 69/226, December 2014

RESOLUTION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON HABITAT III PARTICIPATION MODALITIES

In December 2015, the General Assembly adopted Resolution A/RES/70/210, which contains rules on the participation of local authorities and other stakeholders in the Habitat III process.

The text of the Resolution acknowledges the organization of the second World Assembly of Local and Regional Authorities (page 4). It also invites Local Authorities to "exchange views with countries on the zero draft of the outcome document of Habitat III during "Informal Hearings" and includes a specific Rule (Rule 64) regarding the participation of representatives of local authorities.

The **Local Authority Hearings**, convened by the UN, are the first UN consultative process to recognize and treat sub-national governments as a specific constituency. This represents an important step forward for the visibility and influence of local and regional governments at international level.

The Hearings will allow local government representatives to give feedback on the **Zero Draft** of the New Urban Agenda in advance of PrepCom3 in Surabaya, Indonesia from July 25-27.

WORLD ASSEMBLY OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS

The World Assembly is the mechanism through which the local and regional government constituency brought its political voice to the Habitat II and III processes.

In a landmark achievement for our constituency, the contributions of the World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments is acknowledged in the New Urban Agenda adopted at Habitat III.

- **Article 8**
  "We acknowledge the contributions of national governments, as well as the contributions of sub-national and local governments, in the definition of the New Urban Agenda and take note of the second World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments".

Significantly, paragraph 169 calls for continued collaboration with the World Assembly in the follow-up and review of the New Urban Agenda, stating "We note the importance of continuing to engage in the follow-up and review of the New Urban Agenda with sub-national and local governments associations represented at the World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments".

It is the aspiration of the constituency to ensure that the World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments, convened by the Global Taskforce, will continue to play a key role as the political voice of local and regional governments in the follow-up and review of the New Urban Agenda.

DECENTRALIZATION AND LOCAL DEMOCRACY

05

Local and regional governments are advocating for **local democracy** and **self-government** to be at the heart of the new Urban Agenda, within a framework of multi-level governance and **decentralization** according to the principle of **subsidiarity**.

The closer a government is to its people, the better it is able to understand local challenges and opportunities, target resources effectively, and be held accountable by its citizens. That's why we believe that decentralization, within a framework of multi-level governance, is one of the most effective ways to foster development.

The role of decentralization and local democracy in good governance and development has been increasingly recognized over recent decades by both UN Habitat and the international community more broadly.

[9] For full text and list of ratifications, see http://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/122

[10] Habitat III Issue Paper on Urban Governance http://unhabitat.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Habitat-III-Issue-Paper-6_Urban-Governance-2.0.pdf

[11] Resolution 21 HSP/GC/21/3

LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT

1985 saw the adoption of the European Charter of Local Self Government by the Council of Europe. This was the first international agreement on the status and rights of local authorities and has since been ratified by 47 European countries.

> *"Local self-government denotes the right and the ability of local authorities, within the limits of the law, to regulate and manage a substantial share of public affairs under their own responsibility and in the interests of the local population".*

European Charter of Local Self Government, Part I, Article 3. [9]

DECENTRALIZATION AND SUBSIDIARITY

The United Nations Inter-Agency Task Team charged with preparing the Habitat III process defined decentralization and subsidiarity as follows:

*"The process of reorganization of the State that involves a **gradual transfer of responsibilities originally concentrated in central government towards other spheres of government** (federal states, regional, provincial governments or municipalities) accompanied by the necessary resources to fulfill such responsibilities. The principle behind these processes is the belief that **decision making and implementation are more efficient if taken as closest to citizens as possible** (subsidiarity principle)."* [10]

International Guidelines on Decentralisation and the Strengthening of Local Authorities

In 2007, the Governing Council of UN-Habitat approved the **International Guidelines on Decentralisation and the Strengthening of Local Authorities**.[11] The Guidelines represented a landmark step towards the development of an international framework on decentralization and remain the reference for internationally agreed language in this field.

The International Guidelines recognize that sustainable development is made possible by *"the effective decentralization of responsibilities, policy management, decision-making authority and sufficient resources, including revenue collection authority, to local authorities, closest to, and most representative of, their constituencies."*

Decentralization in Habitat II

There were eight references to decentralization in the Habitat II Agenda in 1996, plus one in Article 12 of the accompanying Istanbul Declaration:

- **Art. 12** of the Istanbul Declaration

  *"We must, within the legal framework of each country, **promote decentralization through democratic local authorities and work to strengthen their financial and institutional capacities** in accordance with the conditions of countries, while ensuring their transparency, accountability and responsiveness to the needs of people."*

- **Art. 68.(b)**

  "Establish appropriate processes for coordination and decentralization that define clear local-level rights and responsibilities within the policy development process;"

- **Art. 180.**

*To **ensure effective decentralization and strengthening of local authorities and their associations/networks**, Governments at the appropriate levels should:*

- *Examine and adopt, as appropriate, policies and legal frameworks from other States that are implementing **decentralization** effectively;*

- *Review and revise, as appropriate, **legislation to increase local autonomy** and participation in decision-making, implementation, and resource mobilization and use, especially with respect to human, technical and financial resources and local enterprise development, within the overall framework of a national, social, economic and environmental strategy, and encourage the participation of the inhabitants in decision-making regarding their cities, neighbourhoods or dwellings;*

In 2001, at Istanbul +5, the UN assessed progress on decentralization since Habitat II as follows: *"**We welcome the efforts made so far by many developing countries in effecting decentralization** in the management of cities as a means of strengthening the operation of the local authorities in the implement of the Habitat Agenda."* [12]

[12] Art. 13 of the Declaration on Cities and other Human Settlements in the New Millennium, Resolution S-25/2 of 11 June 2001

[13] In Resolution A/RES/66/207 the UN decided to convene "A third United Nations conference on housing and sustainable urban development (Habitat III) to reinvigorate the global commitment to sustainable urbanization that should focus on the implementation of a "New Urban Agenda."

"For local government to play its full role in supporting the achievement of the SDGs by 2030, it needs to be empowered. Decentralization of governance functions to local government is ongoing in many countries. To be fully effective, local government management and service delivery capacity need to be strong, and resources need to be adequate."

Helen Clark, Special Address to the Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF) Conference 2015 "Challenges and Opportunities for Local Government in the New Global Agenda", Gaborone, June 2015

WHAT'S THE LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENT AGENDA FOR HABITAT III?

For local and regional governments, the Habitat III process cannot and should not be separated from the SDGs or other major international commitments regarding climate change, disaster risk and gender equality, among others. **We call for a single**, universal agenda. In our towns, cities and regions we see how the issues of poverty, development and sustainability are interdependent and inseparable, so it is essential that the related international agendas complement and reinforce one another if implementation is to be coherent and successful on the ground.

A TERRITORIAL APPROACH

The goal of the Habitat III Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development is to draw up a "New Urban Agenda" for UN Member states.[13]

Local and regional governments understand 'urban' in its broadest sense, encompassing everything from small towns to large megacities. Local and regional governments understand that **sustainable urban development requires a territorial approach** that understands the dynamic and bidirectional relationship between urban areas and their wider peri-urban and rural surroundings.

06

THE FIVE DIMENSIONS OF THE GLOBAL AGENDA OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS

We have identified five principles that we believe should guide the development of the New Urban Agenda:

01

"Lead local coalitions to develop a shared vision for the future of our cities"

Elected local leaders are uniquely placed to develop a strategic vision and plan in partnership with citizens and public and private.

02

"Put the Right to the City at the heart of the Agenda"

Local and regional governments are on the frontline of strengthening democracy at local level. We are in a unique position to promote citizen participation in the co-creation of the city, particularly the inclusion and empowerment of women in local public life.

03

"Connect cities and regions to unlock local potential"

Local and regional governments can use our knowledge of local actors and of the opportunities in our cities and regions to boost economic development and environmental sustainability.

04

"Drive bottom-up national development"

Cities are increasingly the motors of national economies; promoting innovation, creativity and connectivity in cities and territories should be at the top of every national government agenda.

05

"Take a seat at the global table and cooperate in a spirit of solidarity"

Local and regional governments are committed to build on our legacy of decentralized cooperation and international solidarity. Local and regional governments are acting locally to address global challenges (climate change, peace-building, development cooperation) and to manage the impact of global phenomena at local level (the integration of migrants, the mediation of globalizing economic and cultural forces). **We can contribute to more transparent and accountable global governance if we are recognized as partners in international and regional institutions and included in international development policies.**

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OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS

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