

Intervention
on behalf of Global Task Force of Local and Regional Governments
by
Frank Cownie, Mayor of Des Moines, Iowa
Member of US Conference of Mayors Executive Committee;
ICLEI US Board of Directors and ICLEI Global Executive Committee
at the UN High Level Meeting on the UN-Habitat Independent Assessment
Report and Follow-up and Review of the New Urban Agenda,
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ICLEI is the leading global network of more than 1,500 cities, towns and regions committed to building a sustainable future.

Dear President, distinguished delegations of the United Nations, representatives of cities and regions all around the world, dear colleagues from all stakeholder groups,

Mayors, governors and all subnational leaders have a simple mission: to transform political aspirations in the UN documents into concrete actions for the benefits of millions of people and protect their livelihoods - on a daily basis.

In this journey, we all share similar success, opportunities, threats and challenges, in the North or South, in small towns or megacities, coastal or highland, urban or rural.

Our biggest asset is the inspiration, vision and capacity that stem from the principles of Agenda 21 for sustainability that were adopted in Rio in 1992 which is rolled out in thousands of communities worldwide since then, including my city Des Moines, in Iowa in the United States.

It is no surprise to see that over these 25 years, most concrete and innovative examples of leadership of local and regional governments have been experienced through Rio Conventions on climate, biodiversity and desertification, as well as programmes on sustainable production and consumption.

We are extremely delighted to see that this spirit is now enshrined into all elements of 2030 agenda for sustainable development, and we are now able to bridge these perspectives with the New Urban Agenda, taking into account huge diversity of partners of an urban life.

Let's be clear - time for negotiation of sustainability is already over.

We don't have to invent the wheel again – integrated, sustainable, urban and territorial development is the same wherever you live; decent and affordable services, low emissions economy, shared society, preserving our public goods and ensure preparedness to increasing disaster.

Our challenge now is to expand this perspective to every village, town, city, county, metropol, region, or state of the world.

And it is very clear, this challenge is so huge that no one single mayor, no one single minister, no one CEO or no one activist can achieve alone – this can only be done when we all act together and lets not forget, 2014 UN Climate Summit in this house already set an extremely important precedence for such a renewed thinking that we are all grateful & proud

And that is why todays debate is so important. On the eve of rolling out a new era of sustainable development in a renewed United Nations, lets seize the potential of all levels of governments to deliver services, mobilize resources, engage citizens, protect our common goods and transform our livelihoods.

Mayors, governors and all other subnational leaders, here in the Americas, in Europe, Africa, in Asia, in the islands of our one global ocean, together with our networks are unified as a global constituency to offer our support and ask for your collaboration to turn this dream into a reality.

Over the next couple of months, we urge you as the diplomats of our nations to align this last phase of negotiations on follow-up and review of the New Urban Agenda with the efforts of a new United Nations that leaves no one and no leaders behind.

We invite the UN Secretary General, in his reform proposals, to include a dedicated chapter on engagement of stakeholders in this new UN, with a specific focus on engaging with all levels of governments here in the General Assembly, in all duty stations of the UN and with every resident country coordinator. And of course to engage us in developing these proposals

If not now then, when? If not you and us, then who? I thank you.