



# JOINT STATEMENT TO THE SECOND SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS HABITAT ASSEMBLY

of the Organized Constituency  
of Local and Regional Governments



*Joint Statement to the second session  
of the United Nations Habitat Assembly*

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of Local and Regional Governments

5 to 9 June 2023

**We, local and regional governments from across the globe, representing the populations of metropolises, peripheral cities, intermediary cities, regions, rural areas, and small municipalities, gather as an organized constituency convened by the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments, and facilitated by United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), at the occasion of the second session of the United Nations Habitat Assembly in Nairobi in June 2023 to reiterate our support to co-create a sustainable urban future through inclusive and effective multilateralism for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in times of global crises.**

As the organized constituency of local and regional governments calling for bringing about a new value-based and rights-driven social contract, we reaffirm our commitment to accelerating the localization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and call for the international community to recognize and further encourage the vital role we play in bringing about our common future for territories. As called upon in Our Common Agenda with the recommendation to create an Advisory Group on Local and Regional Governments, we call for structurally integrating LRGs and their networks in decision-making processes, partnering with them to localize the SDGs through quality and equitable local public service provision, and revitalizing multilateralism by driving global transformation from the bottom-up. We celebrate the joint convening and the outcomes of the World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments during the High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly, on the progress in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. We also welcome the recognition of the role played by local and regional governments and their networks in the report of the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism, which praises cities' ability to create multilateral networks and recommends their inclusion in formal mechanisms of global governance, including through a permanent status. We have high expectations for the second session of the United Nations Habitat Assembly and commend it to take note of the growing consensus calling for greater presence of local and regional governments in multilateral governance processes for the achievement of the SDGs and the global development agendas. Only by working together, can we achieve the 2030 Agenda and build a more just, peaceful, and sustainable world for all.

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We have been calling for the recognition of the expanding role of LRGs in guaranteeing equitable access to housing and public services, protecting and promoting common goods and encouraging commoning practices, and caring for all inhabitants. Current global crises further and revealed to which extent public services are commons played an essential caring role. As inequalities worsen worldwide with the commodification and financialization of land and housing markets, the fragmentation of basic infrastructure and service provision, and long-lasting processes of discrimination, exclusion and segregation, guaranteeing the Right to the City for all individuals and communities is a necessity and an extraordinary lever to achieve the 2030 Agenda. Caring is now better understood as a public responsibility, to protect and empower local communities, respect and revitalize nature, and regenerate the architecture of our governance systems towards solidarity and democracy.

As the organized constituency of local and regional governments, we:

- Support the need to rethink our multilateral governance frameworks and celebrate the universality of the United Nations Habitat Assembly as a blueprint towards achieving a new multilateralism that is more networked, efficient, representative, and inclusive, and commend the Localization of the global agendas as a means to drive this transformation forward and bring about meaningful change at scale grounded on social justice, gender equality and sustainability.
- Stress that localization is not the mere implementation of global goals into local contexts. Localizing is a political process based on harnessing local opportunities, priorities and ideas for the social contract.
- Recognize that the renewal of the social contract will only be achieved if we agree on the political dimension of localization based on the principle of subsidiarity. Subsidiarity will be fundamental to envision the future and not leave no one and no territory behind. This will imply a seat at the table for stakeholders who have not historically occupied that position.
- Acknowledge that UN-Habitat has always enjoyed strong commitment from a wide range of stakeholders, and stress the importance of enhancing multi-stakeholder participation and frameworks.
- Recognize the efforts of ensuring the active participation of the local and regional governments in the deliberations of the United Nations Habitat Assembly building on existing rules of procedure. We commend the relevant developments made since the New Urban Agenda in recognizing our constituency as a sphere of government. We particularly celebrate the reference made in our Our Common Agenda, including its preparatory reports and its recommendations.

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- Recall the outcomes of Habitat III and the acknowledgment of the World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments (WALRG) as the New Urban Agenda follow-up and review mechanism, bringing our organized constituency, including the networks gathered around the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments and local government associations, together within the international system.
- Welcome the joint convening of the World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments during the 11th World Urban Forum and the recognition of the need to renew the multilateral system to respond to the challenges and opportunities of this urban era.

### *Localizing the SDGs to achieve the global agendas for sustainability in times of crises*

As the sphere of government closest to our communities, we have a deep understanding of their experiences and aspirations, and since over 65% of SDG targets cannot be achieved without our involvement, we are essential partners and drivers of progress towards the 2030 Agenda. Increasingly overlapping crises and emergencies highlight our frontline role, and our corresponding needs in terms of multilevel governance, devolution of powers, and resources. We are more than mere implementers, we are active actors whose voice, by bringing knowledge, political leadership and bold commitments with transformative solutions, is crucial in the decision-making and policy planning processes that accelerate the SDGs and the other global development agendas and that bring about meaningful change at scale.

As the organized constituency of local and regional governments, we commit to:

- Reaffirming our engagement to localize the global agendas. Whereas we welcome the attention given to localization in the United Nations Habitat Assembly, we recall that the localization of the SDGs is a political process, which must be made more open, more transparent, more inclusive, and above all, driven by LRGs and local communities, from the bottom-up. We call for LRGs to be structurally integrated into all steps of decision-making, implementation and monitoring processes.
- Defending the SDGs as the accelerating guides for crisis recovery, helping to build back better by addressing poverty, inequalities, and environmental degradation. We commit to providing a holistic framework for inclusive, sustainable, and resilient development.
- Advancing pathways towards achieving the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework and the Global Compacts for Migrants and Refugees, and based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Our constituency inspired by the NUA is

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bringing about a new model of development anchored in social, economic, and environmental sustainability.

- Strengthening the Global Feminist Municipal Movement, for a feminist world that cares for our communities and the planet, and guarantees equal rights for all. This includes ensuring that women and girls are fully empowered to achieve their full potential as citizens and fostering a feminist way of going about politics, in particular in times of crises when top-down and command-and-control approaches to governance prevail.

We call for the recognition of a multi-sphere and stakeholder leadership in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and recovery efforts, driven by the New Urban Agenda as an accelerator of SDG localization, and call for:

- Rebuilding government architecture and redefining finance and economy as crucial for creating institutional environments that facilitate our efforts towards SDG localization.
- Recognizing the role and convening power of the organized constituency of LRGs in leading the local implementation of the NUA and continued acknowledgment of the World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments (WALRG), recognized by the United Nations General Assembly as a review and follow-up mechanism of the NUA.
- Adapting and strengthening governance arrangements based on well-resourced decentralization and subsidiarity, and active and informed civic participation, to better deliver public services and usher in a new era of universal social protection.
- Facilitating SDG localization by collective and revitalized advocacy and partnerships for multistakeholder and multilevel governance, and for capacity-building in favor of better planning and innovation. We call for increasing local and regional government participation in national coordination mechanisms for SDG implementation, and to further strengthen SDG localization as an explicit part of international and national commitments for the 2030 Agenda from a subsidiarity perspective.
- Promoting the role played by culture (heritage in all forms, intercultural dialogue, cultural diversity, creativity, transmission of knowledge), as the fourth dimension of sustainable development, and as a fundamental driver in the push for SDG localization and progress.
- Unlocking financial resources on a large scale by all stakeholders to bridge the investment gap for a sustainable, inclusive and resilient global economy and local economic development. In particular, we call for adequate and equitable financing for

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development, in particular coupled with the establishment of new multilevel financing structures, and for a transformational shift in investment to support new economic models and public policies and ensure that development focuses on the quality of life and well-being of all.

- Founding monitoring and reporting on the progress made towards the 2030 Agenda and the gaps to be based, as all data systems, on participation and co-creation in a circular logic of knowledge sharing, through diverse multi stakeholder mechanisms and with particular attention to the engagement and empowerment of women, in particular grassroots women's groups, racialized persons, people with disabilities, indigenous communities, migrants, informal workers, and all other structurally marginalized groups.
- Further acknowledging and encouraging the role of local monitoring and reporting initiatives. Voluntary Local and Subnational Reviews (VLRs and VSRs) are a testament of our political will to contribute to the systemic changes that need to be triggered from the bottom-up to achieve the SDGs by 2030. We call Member States to structurally integrate local and regional efforts into national monitoring and reporting strategies, including by creating enabling conditions for VLRs and VSRs to be advanced and further developed.

*Transformative partnerships with local and regional governments for quality and equitable local public service provision: towards a new social contract for people and planet*

Policy guided by a Right to the City framework is key to achieving the SDGs, particularly in the realm of local public service delivery. We are committed to striving to eliminate poverty and make human rights tangible for all inhabitants and communities, including by protecting human mobility and fostering social inclusion, highlighting the interlinkages between the SDGs.

As the organized constituency of local and regional governments, we commit to:

- Providing the necessary infrastructure for equitable and sustainable development and ensuring the accessibility of basic public services like education, healthcare, and sanitation, amongst others. We understand innovative and sustainable financing mechanisms and management models as necessary for the successful design and delivery of such services.
- Ensuring the inclusive provision of local public services, with particular attention to recent digitalization trends and bridging all forms of digital divide, while also protecting digital rights at the local level and fostering innovation.

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- Promoting local participatory decision-making and supporting community initiatives to enable collective action and drive social innovation towards achieving the SDGs.
- Building alternatives to the commodification of land and housing, through collective land arrangements, land (re)appropriation for economic commons, and the provision of collective finance.
- Devoting particular attention to SDG 11 this year, in view of its review at the United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), as it is an key to achieving all other SDGs.
- Innovating on housing policies to respond to pressing social needs resulting from the financialization of housing, increasing housing prices, forced evictions, homelessness, poor living conditions – and their impacts on the access to and use of all other local public services.
- Developing transformative partnerships with local and regional governments, for innovative public policies and the provision of affordable, quality and equitable public services.
- Partnering with UN-Habitat to develop inclusive urban safety and security policies and strategies.
- Integrating feminist principles for caring cities and territories, proximity, and accessibility, as a way to foster equality and social justice through local public service provision adapted to the diverse needs and aspirations of all.
- Renewing the understanding and shifting the narrative on the commons as both resources (material or immaterial) and social practices that interconnect the local, national, regional and global spheres of action. From housing, public services or food, to public spaces, culture or the internet, urban commons play a vital role in fostering community engagement and exploring renewed governance options beyond the private/public divide.
- Prioritizing urban issues related to land, housing and local public services, and more broadly to social justice and climate action, which are at the core of the right to the city and are critical priorities of the municipal movement's agenda.
- Stressing the importance of involving local governments from the outset in order for the transformation of informal settlements to be adequate and effective and support in tackling the slum challenge.

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- Leading an ecological transformation that integrates proximity models, biodiversity preservation and resilience-building approaches, and promoting nature-positive models of consumption and production that contribute to regenerating livelihoods and to protecting our planet and our ecosystems

In order to collectively advance a new social contract, based on renewed governance systems and equitable and quality public service provision, we call for:

- Encouraging the leading role we play in re-embedding urban systems within natural systems in ways that restore the vitality of both.
- Recognizing the importance of the urban-rural continuum, considering the interconnections among cities and their broader territories, as well as the role of intermediary cities in safeguarding life systems at risk of degradation by climate change.
- Supporting the structural changes we bring towards new economic models, new production and consumption systems, and climate change adaptation and mitigation plans that guarantee a shift towards systems of care to protect and promote environmental rights and eliminate inequalities.
- Promoting the critical role we play in promoting a just transition towards food systems that are grounded on proximity, more inclusive, sustainable, responsible and solidarity-based. As common(ing) systems, food systems must secure all peoples' access and right to food, guaranteeing food security and sovereignty, inclusion and prosperity, and transforming our relationship with nature.
- Protecting our commitment to defend and guarantee access to safe drinking water and sanitation. This implies considering water as a right and as a public good. To ensure its availability for all, it is essential to overcome its commodification, including through remunicipalization, deprivatization, or by enhancing public management, participatory governance and bringing commoning practices to the forefront.
- Supporting our constituency's commitment to put the right to health of all at the center, and delivering a new era of universal social protection, including healthcare and social welfare. Health needs to be understood from the bottom-up, including all actors in all decisions regarding the health of communities. Universal health coverage must be part of our global commons.
- Creating sustainable and people-centered smart cities, involving local and regional governments at all stages and fostering local capacity-building.

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- Involving all spheres of government in the protection of the interest of future generations. This implies prioritizing a whole-of-society approach in reflections on the time dimensions of the 2030 Agenda, and engaging with young people and working for the next generations.

## **Revitalizing multilateralism: bring about transformation from the bottom-up in the upcoming international milestones**

The municipal movement has steadily grown stronger and so did the call for greater recognition of cities, territories, and our networks as political actors in a more representative, inclusive and efficient multilateral system. We have been increasingly present in global forums and debates on sustainable development and the localization of the SDGs. This is particularly crucial in the context of complex global crises that can only be addressed by an equally interconnected response through reinvigorated multilateralism.

As the organized constituency of local and regional governments, we commit to:

- Demonstrating in practice the interconnection between the New Urban Agenda, the 2030 Agenda, as well as with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees. We are convinced that, beyond acceleration, articulating them at all levels is key to ensuring structural transformations.
- Fostering structural transformative partnerships with LRGs to regain trust, stressing the importance of representation and participation, in particular of women and structurally marginalized groups; and the urgent need to restore transparency, honesty and accountability within governance processes. By scaling up these principles and improving legitimacy and effectiveness through inclusion and accountability, we can rebuild trust in a more representative, inclusive and efficient multilateral system.
- Calling for the renewing of governance at all levels and the co-creation of a more networked and people-centered multilateralism based on multilevel governance and multi-stakeholder collaboration, to ensure that local populations' experiences, needs and aspirations are reflected and that no one and no place is left behind while we advance towards the 2030 Agenda. Our constituency is paving the way for reshaping leadership based on democracy and feminism, and regenerating multilateralism through solidarity and commitment to human rights, equality and inclusion.
- Supporting the mandate of UN-Habitat and the outcomes of the second session of the United Nations Habitat Assembly which will be crucial to achieving the renewed multilateralism needed to achieve 'Our Common Agenda' and the 2030 Agenda.

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- Continuing to invoke the United Nations Advisory Committee of Local Authorities (UNACLA), as a reference of the active engagement of our organized constituency with the implementation of the Habitat Agenda.
- Commending the work of the Local 2030 coalition and committing to support it to ensure localization is treated as an issue cutting across the work of all UN agencies and partners.
- Contributing to global efforts for advocacy and partnerships by providing substantive contributions to crucial international summits and fora, including the 2023 edition of the High Level Political Forum, the 2023 SDG Summit, the Summit of the Future in 2024 and the World Social Summit in 2025.
- Protecting and supporting the commons, a new economic system, regaining trust, and a new governance architecture, as entry points to make the multilateral system fit for present times. We come together to safeguard democracy, build peace, and achieve universal, inclusive and sustainable development for our people and planet.

We call for a renewed multilateral system to be built upon high-impact partnerships with LRGs and their associations and networks in a structural way, by institutionalizing and systematizing our representation and participation and for:

- Regenerating multilateralism to make it more inclusive, as exemplified by the universality of the United Nations Habitat Assembly, which is a blueprint to systematize the inclusion of all in decision-making processes on urban themes.
- Recognizing and enabling our role as strategically positioned actors in peacekeeping and the protection of human rights and the commons, embracing solidarity and democracy as conflicts worsen and crises are increasingly overlapping.
- Engaging LRGs and their representative associations and networks in all stages of decision-making processes related to the global agendas for sustainability and inclusion, based on the principles of decentralization, subsidiarity and self-government, and through equitable representation, participation, empowerment and accountability in decision-making instances at all levels. The self-organized constituency of local and regional governments welcomes the references to LRGs, their associations, the GTF, the Local 2030 coalition, and the Advisory Board to the Secretary-General on Local and Regional Governments, by UN-Habitat in its report “A sustainable urban future through inclusive and effective multilateralism: achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in times of global crises. Report of the Executive Director on the special theme of the second session of the United Nations Habitat Assembly”.

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- Adapting to the current urbanization trends transforming the balance between and within regions, and considering cities as part of systems, by focusing on the relational aspects, interactions and interdependencies between them, rural, peripheral and urban territories, small and intermediate cities, metropolitan entities and regions. Over the first half of this century, a new global urban system will be set into motion, and in view of metropolization trends, metropolises will play a decisive role in urban and territorial governance, and in particular in reducing territorial inequalities. This needs to be at the heart of the agenda of the United Nations Habitat Assembly.
- Analysing the role of culture as a global public good, including greater consideration of culture's role in supporting SDG achievement now, and the in-depth analysis of a potential stand-alone Culture Goal post-2030.
- Supporting SDG localization processes that strengthen our capacities by setting up enabling institutional environments that allow us to implement, run and regulate efficient, quality and equitable public services.
- Strengthening local actions with global impact through renewed cooperation across spheres of government and stakeholders, fostering public-people-partnerships and limiting speculative investments as a necessity to guaranteeing social justice, empowering all communities and caring for our planet.

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