

**Statement to the SDG Summit
Of the Organized Constituency
of Local and Regional Governments (LRGs)**

NEW YORK, UNITED STATES (16 September, 2023)

The Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments, gathering over 35 global city and region networks worldwide, representing the populations of metropolises, peripheral cities, intermediary cities, regions, rural areas, and small municipalities, serving over 4 billion people gathers today in New York in the framework of the SDG Summit to show their support to the 2030 Agenda, and to reiterate its commitment to achieve the global goals. We believe that we still have a possibility to deliver on the universal development agendas together with the national governments, and we call on exponential action to make it happen.

The world is still far off track from achieving the SDGs, and we need to go beyond incremental changes to transform our societies and achieve the 2030 agenda. There are achievements to celebrate as we have shown in our SDGs reports presented at the last HLPF, but there is also a lack of concrete, multi-level commitments and actions from the international sphere and national governments. **The Global Taskforce of LRGs wishes to relay to the world the opportunities and challenges that still remain to achieve the goals, and the ways in which LRGs are agents to nurture this transformation.**

We arrive at the SDG Summit with more than commitments: local and regional governments have been spearheading localization since the inception of the 2030 Agenda, emphasizing the need for local involvement in the monitoring and reporting of the SDGs through our seven “Towards the Localization of the SDGs” reports to the HLPF. We arrive at this Summit with a Decalogue that holds the key for success and calls for a multilateral system that cares for peoples, democracy, and our planet.

We affirm our commitment to a world without poverty and hunger, to a world that protects and fosters the commons and democracy, to addressing the challenges and opportunities of demographic changes and urbanization, to curbing inequalities within and among territories, to empowering women and girls, youth, and historically marginalized groups guaranteeing health for all and preserving our ecosystems, while mitigating and adapting to climate change, and transforming our relationship with nature. We celebrate cultural diversity and promote global fraternity and sound public institutions as cornerstones to rebuilding trust between communities.

What we celebrate in the SDG Summit Political Declaration

1. We commend the connection of the Declaration to the Summit of the Future, and we look forward to the Summit of the Future and the World Social Summit as part of a same process towards a reinvigorated multilateral system.
2. **The mention of the importance of progressing and implementing the Universal Development Agendas -the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, and the**

- Paris Agreement- as a whole and considering the local situation in each case**, which is what we understand as localization.
3. **The efforts by the independent group of scientists in charge of the 2023 Global Sustainable Development Report to extend consultations with the organized constituency of LRGs as part of the report drafting process.**
 4. The willingness to acknowledge humanity's opportunity to solve **the crises the world faces today and the opportunity that this poses for the transformation of the system** to become more just, inclusive, more networked. Only through multi-level and multi-stakeholder action will we be able to leave no one and no place behind.
 5. **The acknowledgement that international finance architecture needs to be transformed. It needs to be driven by the needs of the majority, with decision-making about it reflective of the diversity of the world's population. We reiterate that we must not only change how we finance development but also what we finance, who has the power to decide, with what means, how it is (re)distributed and how it is measured beyond GDP.** We call to enhance access to sustainable and just finance that prioritizes a new type of development focused on care, ecological transformation and planetary wellbeing and that is accessible to LRGs based on the principles of fiscal decentralization and democratic participation in resource management.
 6. **The support to the empowerment of all women and girls and the achievement of inclusive gender equality as a prerequisite for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda is critical**, as is the fulfillment of human rights and freedoms for all people by fighting racism, discrimination, xenophobia and all related intolerance and ensuring safe, just and orderly migration. Ensuring human rights and engagement of persons with disabilities will prove to be essential to achieve the goals.
 7. The recognition of the *New Urban Agenda* as a critical accelerator of the 2030 Agenda through localization, and the clause on **the need of localizing the SDGs and multi-level coordination to achieve the 2030 Agenda.**
 8. The inclusion of scaling up inclusive and sustainable digitalization and the mention to **guaranteeing the same rights that people have offline also online.** LRGs have been playing a key role protecting digital rights and in fostering local public service provision that also contributes to bridging the digital divide.
 9. The acknowledgement of culture (heritage in all forms, cultural diversity, creativity, transmission of knowledge, intercultural dialogue) as an enabler of sustainable development. It further needs to be considered a global public good, a better recognition of its potential in catalyzing progress on all of the global goals now, and the analysis of a potential stand-alone Culture Goal post-2030.
 10. The recognition of climate crisis, as one of the greatest crises of our times, and the alarming threat that the emissions of greenhouse gases pose, as well as how this affects all countries, and in particular those developing countries who commonly bear little responsibility for causing the crisis but will feel the bulk of the impacts.

What are the missed opportunities in the Political Declaration?

11. **SDG 11 is in itself a catalyst for the 2030 Agenda as a whole, underpinned by equitable and quality local public service provision, and its achievement needs to be driven by the key** role of LRGs as political actors. For our constituency, SDG 11 represents the opportunity to place urban and territorial equality at the heart of all actions to achieve the SDGs from a human rights-based perspective. The acknowledgment of the New Urban Agenda and localization as essential cornerstones to the goals is critical, but it needs to be accompanied by a full recognition of LRGs as political actors and integral to decision-making processes.
12. **Equality and the empowerment of all women and girls to achieve the goals is not enough.** We call for the recognition, and addressing of the underlying systemic values that allow for gender-based discrimination, violence, and harmful gender norms, expectations and stereotypes, as well as unequal distribution of care work, to perpetuate throughout our institutions and communities. We call for a paradigm shift, for putting care, solidarity and empathy at the centre of our relationships, policies and actions. It calls for the centering of wellbeing for people and planet, and for a new kind of leadership, which ensures people, in all their diversity, can participate equitably, and actively shape their communities, and thrive. It calls for care as a right and public responsibility.
13. **It will be critical to address the challenges of population, the climate emergency and all emergencies, and inclusion of vulnerable groups and development, through a human rights approach and developing the next generation of public services, which need to be** fostered, supported, financed, and mainstreamed at all levels. Local public service provision is the key to unlocking the transformative potential of the 2030 Agenda, and to care for people and the planet. We urge this next generation of public service provision to be strengthened through a new way of financing development and participatory management and for the era of emergencies that we live in to be acknowledged as such. The Global Commons need to be **seen as both resources and social practices that interconnect the local, national, regional, and global spheres of action.**
14. **Health needs to be mainstreamed and fostered beyond the aspect of the COVID-19 pandemic.** With the approaching High-Level Meetings on Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness and Response; Universal Health Coverage; and the Fight against Tuberculosis, it is critical to ensure equitable access to healthcare – including sexual and reproductive health and care of mental and emotional health - for all our populations, that the outcomes of the meetings can be interrelated so as to bolster health coverage and primary healthcare. Local and regional governments can play a critical part in bolstering health services and protecting health in cities and territories.
15. **LRGs' initiatives in the reporting and monitoring of the global agendas must be fully recognized and further encouraged.** The total number of Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) available worldwide has been growing exponentially since 2016, with over 240 reports to date, representing a total of 579 million inhabitants. Voluntary Subnational Reviews (VSRs) have also been experiencing a rapid increase with 37 reports produced since 2020, representing 170,000 local governments and 1.4 billion inhabitants. In spite of this growth, recognition and involvement are still neither systematic enough nor regular.

Moving towards the UN Summit of the Future

The final report of the **UN High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism, A Breakthrough for People and Planet** that dedicates a full section to cities and regions, recommends a special status for them in the renewed multilateral system. It also proposes that the Summit of the Future serves to identify relevant institutions and processes in which LRGs and the civil society are offered a formal and permanent status, including in the area of sustainable development. We are convinced that this is the way forward for the multilateral system.

Ahead of the 2024 Summit of the Future, the constituency of LRGs urges the multilateral system to empower all actors to ensure transformative change and co-creation to meet the Goals by 2030. Moving towards the Summit, we support the strong Pact for the Future that the United Nations is developing, and we commit to a Pact that reaffirms our contributions to the global development agendas and bolstering transformative alliances and high impact coalitions to accelerate collective progress towards the 2030 Agenda.

Building on the call from “Our Common Agenda”, we recall the critical importance of promoting a more distributive economic system. This system needs to acknowledge the potential of local and regional governments, and empower them through fairer financial and commercial practices to protect and improve local service provision, address inequalities and localize all of the six priority SDG transitions.

We are committed to contribute to a renewed, networked multilateral system in which all actors have a seat at table and are part of decision-making processes to ensure a future for our communities. We welcome the development of a “Local and Regional Governments Advisory Group” by the UN Secretary Generals to strengthen the relationship between the UN and local and regional governments, as a key step forward to ensure all voices are elevated. The unwavering commitments and transformative policies driven by local and regional governments represent the need and aspirations of communities. The future of humanity is in their hands, and counts on the closest level of government to the people to deliver on their aspirations and dreams

Who are we?

The Global Taskforce (GTF) of LRGs is a coordination and consultation mechanism that brings together the major international networks of local governments to undertake joint advocacy work relating to global policy processes. For more information visit <https://www.global-taskforce.org/>



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