

**Statement to the local and regional government constituency by Parks Tau, President of UCLG and Co-Chair of the High-Level Independent Panel to Assess and Enhance the Effectiveness of UN-Habitat**

As a member of the Panel, I would like to start by thanking UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, for the opportunity to serve on the High-Level Independent Panel to Assess and Enhance the Effectiveness of UN-Habitat. The task has been both a great responsibility and an enormous privilege. I would also like to thank my seven colleagues on the Panel for their dedication and commitment to this process, despite the time limitation we had. It has been enriching experienced thanks, to a great extent, to the many individuals and organizations that provided inputs, evidence and advice to assist us in our work.

The Panel was well aware of how particularly timely this report is, coming as it does at a moment in which the international community is implementing multiple, new global agendas. This made our task all the more exciting and we felt a great responsibility to both inspire change and propose realistic recommendations to catalyse deeper transformation.

As a local leader I attached particular importance throughout the process to stressing the once-in-a-generation opportunity to harness the transformative potential of urbanization to safeguard the sustainability of life on our planet.

With this in mind, our report calls for 'UN Urban' to be set up as a System-wide coordination mechanism to champion the urban agenda across the UN. At the same time, we have called for a "conceptual shift" to a territorial approach to development. Despite its name, 'UN Urban' must challenge the artificial urban-rural dichotomy and work to mainstream a territorial approach to development across the UN. We have called for 'the urban' to be understood in its broadest sense: encompassing metropolitan areas, intermediary cities, peri-urban areas, and the rural surroundings with which they are inter-dependent.

In terms of local and regional governments, our report warns that the UN System has so far failed to recognize the "fundamental role" played by local governments in urban development. Our report further acknowledges UN-Habitat a long-time partner of local and regional governments. We are convinced that, with adequate resources, tools and full ownership of the Member States, as well as developed partnerships, UN-Habitat continues to have the potential to play a significant role in this process. The recommendations to enhance its governance should enable it to play a significant role as a focal point for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

For this reason, we have recommended a formal role for subnational governments in the UN Habitat governance structure, through a Committee of Local Governments, differentiated from that of civil society, but in close partnership with them. This Committee would have a seat at the table to provide formal input into all Policy Board decisions, ensuring that the Policy Board would be informed of the local and regional governance implications of its decisions. This is an opportunity for local and regional governments to build on their contributions in UNACLA. We also call for our constituency to play an advisory role before UN Urban. This is a way to implement article 192 of the Habitat III outcome document, recognising the World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments in the monitoring and follow up of the New Urban Agenda.

I am well aware that the aspirations of our constituency are even greater, but I am convinced that, if all gather around the solid mechanisms that we have put in place, such as the Global Taskforce and the World Assembly, if we continue to forge partnerships with Major Groups and stakeholders, in particular GAP, we will be able to make great contributions to the development agenda and to shape the sustainable future we all want.

I look forward to following the discussions with you on our report over the coming months, in particular at the High-Level Meeting on New Urban Agenda and UN-Habitat convened by the General Assembly from 5-6 September 2017. I have high hopes that the General Assembly's Second Committee will take action in the light of the Panel's recommendations during its forthcoming session and am committed to continue working with you all, as UCLG President, to ensure that local visions and interests shape the global agendas.