

Statement of the organized constituency of local and regional governments at the occasion of the SDG Summit New York, 24-25 September 2019

We, the constituency of local and regional governments, commit to the ambitious global objectives and to strengthen global cooperation to protect our planet and society today while preserving it for the generations of tomorrow. We are convinced that the implementation of the universal agendas is intrinsically interconnected and that they cannot be achieved in isolation. Only by linking the commitments that characterize the global agendas can we accelerate the pace of the SDGs' implementation to achieve transformation. The 2030 Agenda is critical in leaving no one and no place behind, the New Urban Agenda is central in the acceleration of SDG action, and the SDGs are central in implementing the Sendai Framework and the Paris Agreement which are paramount in addressing the current climate emergency.

Local and regional governments and their networks are leading a global 'localization' movement of the universal agendas acknowledged by the Seville Commitment – a testimony of our support towards territorial cohesion and leaving no one, and no place, behind. Only through effective coordination mechanisms and the establishment of synergies and interlinkages among institutions can we transform these commitments into action.

Localization goes beyond city boundaries. A full territorial approach, based on a system of cities and mindful of the rural and urban continuum can promote both innovation and sustainable development and can help contribute to making our society more inclusive and resilient. This can build on the strength of our communities and provide a new frame for 'co-creating' our cities, regions and territories.

We are encouraged by the development of the **Political Declaration of the SDG Summit**, which acknowledges the importance and the need to bolster local action to accelerate the implementation of the global goals. We welcome both the acknowledgment of localization, as well as the coordinated support from the UN System to local, regional and national governments that are part of this process. We share the aspirations this statement expresses to address the climate emergency and achieve the SDGs through fostering local public services and policy transformations that will lead us towards the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda.

1) Acknowledgement that "business as usual" is not an option

We reaffirm the sense of urgency expressed by the United Nations Secretary General, which compels us to act, to cooperate and to support sustainable living for all. We are aware that our current patterns of **production and consumption** and the **use of resources** that it entails, the **persisting gender divide**, and the limited success in **bridging inequalities** are great obstacles to the achievement of the SDGs and to the sustainability of the planet. We reaffirm that the **costs of inaction** are great and uphold the notion that science continues to stress that increases in temperatures can put not only cities but entire countries at risk.

In this context, we consider the principles outlined in the 2030 Agenda as the most relevant tool for transformation that we will need to put in place to work towards a renewed social contract that addresses the crises we face putting people and the planet at the centre. We are convinced that the public services that we deliver and the policy that we develop are cornerstones of the transformative models but we are also aware that **no single sphere of government can do this alone**.

We are also convinced that there is a window of opportunity present, provided all spheres of government work together and agree on steering our world in the right direction. This highlights the need for **intergovernmental cooperation and the co-creation of mitigation strategies** to sustainably address the **climate emergency** that our world is facing, especially given data that underlines that over thirty percent of emissions reduction depends on intergovernmental cooperation and that about half of urban emissions reduction lies in intermediary cities which are many times left out of national strategies.

2) Reiteration of our commitments



We are committed to strengthen cooperation and the implementation of the universal agendas and the growing **‘localization’ movement** of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is proof that our constituency, as the closest level of government to citizens, respects its duty as **first responder** to the priorities and issues that are affecting citizens today and to cooperate with all spheres of government to fulfil the global commitments. Specifically, we commit to

1. Strengthening and empowering local leaders in their efforts to work cooperatively and to deliver global commitments in cities and regions across the globe.
2. Continue to **uphold public service provision** which is essential to ensure adequate living standards for all city dwellers and reduce inequalities among and within territories and individuals. It is widely accepted that 65% of targets meant to achieve the SDGs require local and regional government involvement and this will also depend on the achievement of the New Urban Agenda.
3. Promote and adopt low-carbon service provision and low-carbon investments which could aid in mitigating growing public challenges, including air pollution, mobility services, work efficiency, and in general public service provision. Implementing **low-carbon measures** in urban areas around the world could support **job growth and efficiency** in sectors such as **clean energy, sustainable urban mobility, and circular economy** thereby cross-cutting many realms of the SDGs.
4. Promote **culture as the fourth pillar of development** and as a core component of local identity, and its role as a strand of global solidarity, and as a vector for **peace and human rights**. We further commit to foster locally relevant cultural policies and programmes on memory, heritage, creativity, diversity and knowledge which are key for local sustainable development.
5. Contribute to creating new spaces of dialogue among different spheres of government and among the communities we serve and we strive to develop a **multi-level coalition** around implementation of the global agendas which will **foster dialogue** with all stakeholders, in particular through the Local 2030 initiative.
6. Produce **annual reports on the localization of the SDGs** to enlighten the constituency on the importance of action coming from LRGs and on the challenges and bottlenecks they must face to ensure sustainable living. Within this context, the SDG Summit acts not only as a midterm for national governments but also for the LRG constituency and on this occasion, the GTF produced a report which highlights the status of localization of the SDGs within the whole first 4-year cycle of the HLPF.
7. Foster the development of **Voluntary Local Reviews** which stimulate bottom-up transformation to accelerate implementation of the SDGs. Voluntary Local Reviews are more than just a monitoring and evaluation tool: they are a **tool for transformation** that embody the commitment of local and regional governments in taking on the universal agendas at the whole-of-government and whole-of-society level. Moreover, they act as a learning and training tool for public officials; as a mechanism of transparency and accountability to promote increased citizen involvement, and as a lever to boost joint ownership of the global goals. In this sense, we will continue to support their redaction and representation within the international policy making sphere.

3) **Call for strengthening efforts in light of the Implementation Decade**

We call on all governments, international institutions, stakeholders and the communities we serve to embolden ambitions as we gear up towards the Implementation Decade, to fulfill the SDGs and all universal agendas by co-creating them amongst all spheres of government.

We call on national governments and the international community to recognize and empower us as partners in transformation and to truly embrace local governance and territorial cohesion. Specifically, we call for

1. Recognition of the leadership of mayors, governors, and councilors as critical partners in the achievement of global development objectives and cities, human settlements and regions that provide for the needs of citizens today without comprising resources for future generations.
2. Acknowledgement of **local service provision as a critical cornerstone** to the achievement of the SDGs and call for renewed regulatory frameworks and capacities to strengthen our capacity to deliver basic services and govern the territories we serve.

3. Recognition of the importance of **adequate financing mechanisms**, with a particular attention on financial intermediaries and Subnational Development Banks, as part of a broader enabling environment for local and regional governments that meet local realities and the substantial investments needed to support localization of the SDGs, including in public urban infrastructure which is critical in improving the lives of citizens and in supporting our communities in their transformation efforts.
4. Inclusion of local and regional governments and their associations in all relevant policy-making, monitoring and reporting processes, and the establishment of **multi-level coordination and cooperation mechanisms** at the national and international levels.
5. Acknowledgment of the **Local and Regional Governments Forum** co-organized by our constituency, that will celebrate its second iteration during this high-level week, as a critical space for dialogue among LRGs, Member States, and the UN system involved in the definition, implementation and follow-up of this agenda.
6. Recognition of **Voluntary Local Reviews** within the framework of the HLPF which will prove to be essential in the joint ownership of the SDGs and in the co-creation of a strategy to battle our world's climate emergency and achieve the SDGs.
7. An increase in support for **decentralized cooperation** efforts to foster innovation and sharing of solutions among our constituency to support peer to peer learning and knowledge sharing.

In light of the upcoming Implementation Decade, we reiterate that the commitments and efforts of local and regional governments are indispensable and integral to the transformation we need. As an organized constituency, and the level of government closest to citizens, LRGs are committed to leave no-one, no place, and no territory behind.

