



Third Local and Regional Governments Forum on the 2030 Agenda

“The Decade of Action - bolstering change from the ground-up”

Special High-Level Event on the occasion of the 2020 Edition of the High-Level Political Forum

July 13th, 2020 - 8:30 – 12:30 EST

CONCEPT NOTE

Background:

As the COVID-19 pandemic is making clear beyond any doubt, the development agendas need to be addressed as one and supported by strong multilevel governance, solidarity and international cooperation. There exists a growing consensus in the international community that it is in urban areas where the opportunities to reinforce resilience strategies and to achieve the transition towards sustainable societies are highest. At the same time, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the crucial role of local and regional governments as first responders and providers of essential public services. The roadmap for local and regional governments remains the same: the 2030 Agenda and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals

Local public service delivery, as the backbone to deliver the Decade of Action must be maintained beyond the outbreak to effectively address inequalities and to protect the human rights of our communities. This calls for a strengthened multilateral system that scales up knowledge sharing and promotes open dialogue, investment and collaboration between spheres of government, regions, cities and the communities to achieve transformational objectives and to ensure that no one and no place is left behind.

The third High-Level Local and Regional Governments Forum will illustrate the distinct elements essential to the kickoff of the Decade of Action from the perspective of the local and regional government constituency in the post COVID-19 recovery phase through two different lenses. The Forum will highlight the rapid actions local and regional governments have taken in preventing and responding to the COVID-19 pandemic through universal public service delivery and share examples of how they can act as the catalysts in the bottom-up transformation towards sustainability and resilience after the pandemic; and emphasize the importance of multilevel governance, sound local finances, and decentralized cooperation and territorial cohesion in the aftermath of the outbreak.



The overall objective of the Local and Regional Governments Forum is to produce a fruitful debate and strong commitments from different spheres of government and the international community to support a transformative process from the bottom-up based on the SDGs in the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis, while contributing to the Decade of Action.

Local and regional government representatives have a key role to stop the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in territories while ensuring access to essential public services, including housing, public transport and education, as well as access to food supplies and support to the most vulnerable, among other tasks. The COVID-19 aftermath is an opportunity to go beyond temporary solutions to build the long-term resilience of regions, cities and communities by choosing recovery policies that build back better, utilizing the SDGs as an overarching framework and multilevel governance as its core.

Economic aid packages can be planned so that they reduce urban inequalities, diversify the economies and provide incentives for sustainable solutions. Engagement with communities, civil society and other stakeholders can build trust and confidence and provide a platform for innovations for future SDG implementation. Investments in new infrastructure can be channeled towards greener and safer solutions that reduce inequalities. Bold climate and biodiversity actions can strengthen resilience, protect the planet, and safeguard future generations.

Both the ongoing COVID-19 responses and the transformative actions towards building back better will rely on true multilevel governance and cooperation. The Local and Regional Governments Forum will bring together national, regional, and local governments to discuss how enhanced coordination, local and regional government networks and cooperation, as well as adequate resources and coherent implementation of SDGs at all levels can contribute to the achievement of the global goals.

Objectives:

The overall objective of the Local and Regional Governments Forum is to produce a fruitful debate and strong commitments from local and regional governments, national authorities and the international community to support a transformative bottom-up process grounded on multilevel governance based on the achievement of the SDGs in the aftermath of the COVID-19 crisis, while contributing to the Decade of Action, and to:

- 1. Highlight the vital role that local and regional governments play in preventing and responding to crises by protecting and safeguarding the health and rights of citizens** in delivering universal basic services (from health services to housing, to education and food security, and from water to waste management to mobility and digital policies).



2. **Underline the importance of proximity and solidarity, key to overcome crises and** stress the efforts that local and regional governments are undertaking to foster solidarity among territories, protect the commons, and address inequalities to help fight poverty and share economic benefits for all.
3. **Look beyond the outbreak towards strengthened multilevel governance and decentralized cooperation** as the only way to move forward from the crisis and build back better **through an ecosystem of cities, regions, nations** and other stakeholders to solve the interconnected challenges that our world is facing.
4. **Discuss ways in which local and regional governments can ensure adequate resources and strengthened finance**, including through access to capital and financial markets and innovative resource mobilization, to support a speedy recovery from the economic, social and humanitarian crises created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Organization and Participants:

The 3rd High Level Forum will be coordinated by a broad group of partners, in order to allow for inclusive, diverse and representative participation. The organization will be led by UN entities and partners, including UN DESA, UN-Habitat and Local 2030, UNDP and the Global Task Force of Local and Regional Governments ensuring regional, gender and multi-sectorial balance.

Format and outcome:

The event will be organized fully online. Access to the online event will be provided only to pre-registered participants. In addition to the live meeting, a recording will also be provided through the UN Web TV. An engagement with the public via social media will be promoted during the event focusing on highlighting strengthened commitments from local and regional governments across the world towards the achievement of the SDGs.

Simultaneous interpretation will be provided in English, French and Spanish.

A summary of the event will be prepared and broadly shared by the organizers.