

Joint Statement on behalf of the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments

We, mayors, women and men, local and regional elected representatives and our representative associations and networks:

1. **RECALL** that gender equality and care policies have been historically and increasingly present in the agenda of local and regional governments. The 1998 International Union of Local Authorities (IULA) Worldwide Declaration on Women in Local Governments; the 2013 Paris Local and Regional Governments' Global Agenda for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life; the 2006 European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life; and the Local and Regional Governments' Charter for Gender Equality in Africa under finalization and which will be presented during the Africities Conference in 2022 - all represent landmark documents that positioned the constituency;
2. **REMINDE** about the continued relevance of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, in particular in times of crises and in facing the climate emergency;
3. **NOTICE**, as demonstrated by the COVID-19 pandemic crises, that women and girls, children, people with disabilities, LGBTQI+ people, older people, migrants, among other groups, are disproportionately impacted by crisis and experience unequal access to care systems, including health and social care, public services, and are among the first to have their basic rights neglected or revoked. In addressing the climate emergency and building resilience, lessons can be drawn from the multiple consequences of this health crisis on all women everywhere in the world; and which challenge us to rethink the post-COVID-19 era differently;
3. **EMPHASIZE** the unique transformative role of the Global Feminist Municipal Movement, which aims to conceive equally empowered women and feminist leaders as an integral part of the solution to the many challenges we face in terms of health, climate, economy or fundamental human rights;
4. **SUPPORT** the UN Secretary General report "Our Common Agenda", which recognizes the unique contribution of local and regional governments for an inclusive and sustainable future. The report also underscores that without women and girls' active and equal participation, no meaningful social contract is possible. This is closely linked to a new relationship with the planet, which protects our global commons and the right of present and future generations to enjoy a fair and resilient world.
5. **AGREE** that women and girls' voices and leadership will be fundamental for the successful realization of the Cities Race to Zero and Race to Resilience. Their concerns, rights and inclusive perspectives must drive local governments' solutions to address climate change and build low carbon-emissions' communities. The benefits of climate efforts and investments must be equally distributed and

particularly envisage eliminating all forms of discrimination and disparities of opportunities.

6. **REAFFIRM** our commitment with the Generation Equality and localization of the Global Acceleration Plan for Gender Equality, including by:
 - a) Increasing meaningful participation and decision-making power of women and feminist leaders at the local level for more equal and democratic societies;
 - b) Promoting new leadership and governing models, based on equity, solidarity, empathy, proximity and the collaboration with communities and neighbors;
 - c) Fostering additional local leaders who place care and participation at the heart of the agenda and public policies;
 - d) Advocating for stronger local public service provision and valuing care workers, with particular attention to the diversity of all women and girls, and vulnerable communities;
 - e) Enhancing all women, girls and non-binary people's engagement in public life and access to rights and opportunities, towards closing the digital gap, addressing informality and gender-responsive recovery and resilience;
 - f) Acting for a fair and equitable remuneration of all work and closing gender pay and pension gaps.
7. **CELEBRATE** the establishment of the Global Alliance for Care, facilitated by the Government of Mexico and the UN Women and **JOIN** this urgent call to action, considering the necessary implications of cities and territories in developing an agenda of care.
8. **UNDERLINE** the role of local and regional governments in building caring territories that address and prevent violence against women and girls, contributing to shift long-entrenched social patterns of inequality and discrimination while offering sound mechanisms to support victims/survivors and guarantee access to justice and reparation through local policymaking (local data collection, accessible and safe design of public space and mobility, social life and emergency shelters for victims of domestic violence) and awareness-raising (creation of international observatory on violence against women, peer-to-peer learning).
9. **EMPHASIZE** that the responsibility to attain greater gender equality and to safeguard and strengthen women's rights cannot fall solely on women, who already face accumulated and structural barriers to their full engagement and influence, and who are subject to additional scrutiny and gender bias. More than achieving equality, we must pursue the **transformation** of our systems, contributing to end patriarchy by critically examining and challenging notions of masculinity (as well as norms for femininity), questioning gender barriers and established cultural differences between women and men, and promoting feminist leaders. Gender equality is a societal issue that concerns everyone; it is not just a women's issue. Men's engagement and partnership is key to securing gender-responsive policies and gender-sensitive institutions, as well as in the fight to prevent regression in women's rights and gender equality.

Considering all the above, we:

10. **PUT FORWARD** that valuable lessons came from the COVID-19 pandemic: a different and feminist approach to the very “essentials” of local and regional governments, which includes the transformation of how the “public” is conceived, and new notions of leadership and service provision, based on solidarity and the wellbeing of neighbors and communities, of all people - principles of the Global Feminist Municipal Movement;
11. **HIGHLIGHT** the voices and experiences of the feminist municipal movement that contributed to the development of a series of publications: (i) “Towards a global feminist municipalism movement” which lays out the vision and principles of the movement, consisting of an institutional dimension, women’s leadership and innovative agendas, through prioritization of the public life and of care, paying especial attention to vulnerable people; (ii) “The transformative commitment of cities and territories to Generation Equality” demonstrates the diversity of this movement through interviews with women mayors and local feminist leaders.
12. **COMMIT** to improving the status of women and promoting gender equality focusing on women’s ability to exercise real influence over their economic, social, political and cultural structures including the right to work and rights at work, and the universal access to social protection. Women as political agents of change in communities, must be empowered, educated and integrated to achieve greater participation and improved policy and sustainable solutions to climate change.
13. **COMMIT** to guarantee access and participation to public and cultural life for all, including women and girls, marginalized or vulnerable groups, and to mainstream cultural interventions to help construct more equitable democratic landscapes and city narratives by upturning deep-rooted gender normative rules. Public cultural policies can help improve health, re-think development and production/consumption models, and build just climate-resilient pathways for all. Women’s contributions to cities and territories must be visible through new imagery and the use of a refashioned urban lexicon that reflects women’s creativity, perspectives, voices and struggles, and allows the emergence of new role models.
14. **COMMIT** to continue pursuing the localization of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, with gender equality and the empowerment of women both as a goal and a tool. As the High-level Political Forum reviews Goal 5, the persistent underrepresentation of women in politics and the lack of representative data of women in all their diversity must be addressed, especially at the local level.
15. **INVITE** leaders, at all spheres of government, to systematically involve women and girls in COVID-19 specialized groups and climate-response bodies, task forces and response committee, strengthening and promoting their active participation, and to sign the ‘Call to Action on Women’s Leadership for the Post COVID-19 Era’, on women and girls’ unique potential to achieve a just and green recovery, capable of facing the climate emergency.

16. **CALL** upon national governments and UN bodies gathered in New York to ensure compliance with international agreements and commitments at all levels, to continue enhancing investments and action through Generation Equality and to foresee the organization of the 5th World Conference on Women, to discuss and fight any regression of gender equality in the face of increasing attacks and backlashes.
17. **DEMAND** the full and equal inclusion of women and girls in all spaces, explicitly addressing gaps in digital rights, and unequivocally denounce and protect against any and all forms of violence and disinformation against women occurring in the online sphere, and including targeted at women and girls leaders and activists, which threatens their full capacity to engage politics and lead, especially at the community and local levels.
18. **INSIST** on the value of decentralised cooperation, or, city-to-city and region-to-region cooperation, for accelerating progress on gender equality and empowering all women and girls. Exchanges between communities of all sizes, particularly through the ecosystem of networks and associations, have proven to bring tangible results in promoting gender equality. International networking, sharing and peer-learning, between communities of all sizes, particularly through the ecosystem of networks and associations, and with local women leaders will pave the way to a new, gender-equal era for local and regional governments.

Women & care to recover from the pandemic crisis

Climate crises and health emergencies do not impact women and men in the same way. As the global COVID-19 pandemic spread, we witnessed the impact such a crisis is having on the rights of women, on the increase of gender-based violence and the intensifying of poverty feminization. As availability of sexual, reproductive, and health services is being compromised all around the globe, the barriers women face in accessing local public services magnify.

Women are more likely to work in informal environments. The contribution of women to paid and unpaid care work and the necessity of providing comprehensive local public services must not be ignored and should be properly valued as we establish a framework for the recovery. Valuing and investing in care work and economy, in the engagement of women in public service provision, and the development of local care systems represent keys to women's economic inclusion, contributing to their transition to formal sectors, including through public employment by local and regional governments.

Women leading resilience for the ecological transformation, and climate-induced displacement and migration

The social, economic and cultural impacts of the climate crisis and more broadly, environmental degradation, are gendered. Women and girls, and in particular those living in poverty, are more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. They tend to face higher risks because of their gender-based primary role in formal and informal care work, food, water and waste collection, management or recycling, and household sanitation. When

considering recovery models and the ecological transition, their specific traditional knowledge and skills must be recognized as an asset.

Half of the world's migrants and internally displaced populations (IDPs) are women fleeing from conflict and violence, but also from disasters and the adverse effects of climate change, a phenomenon that will only increase in the coming decades. For women and girls on the move, the drivers of migration differ, to a large extent, from those of men, as do the specific challenges they meet in the migratory process and in the places where they settle.

It is urgent to understand how climate change impacts the lives of all women and girls in order to build resilience and reduce vulnerability. Women should be strategic in leading these climate action plans, in addressing climate change and strengthening local community resilience. Women need to be empowered at all levels to build personal and professional skills to advocate for climate change knowledge and policy response.

The divide in local and territorial policies and action further reproduces the great risk of discrimination and violence, hence reinforcing existing gender inequalities in countries of origin, transit, and destination.

Local and Regional Governments as the “new Carers”

In several moments throughout our lives, we will all need care, in one way or another. In addition to this, it underscores the necessity of agency of those who are cared for and their capacity to self-organize and participate in public life. The notion of caring has thus expanded from being an undervalued (often unpaid or insufficiently paid) “moral duty alien to social contracts” and reserved to the private sphere, mainly a responsibility of women (and racialized people, often migrants), to its inclusion in the policy agendas of an increasing number of local and regional governments around the world.

Digging into the role of local and regional governments as “new carers”, it should be emphasized how, facing the current crisis of the welfare state values, the principles of caring are increasingly permeating all spheres of local policymaking, from education, health and social care, to support to people with disabilities, nursery and extra-curricular activities for children and youth, violence reduction and promotion of a peace culture and social justice, prevention of sexual violence, support and empowerment of migrant communities, etc.