





In the midst of the interconnected crises that we are facing, the importance of local and regional governments as providers and protectors of their communities has never been clearer.

The ongoing COVID-19 crisis has underscored that only through multilevel governance, multi-stakeholder collaboration and solidarity can we ensure that no one and no place is left behind. City diplomacy is the transformative diplomacy that local and regional governments can bring to the table in times of crisis. Decentralized cooperation is an integral element to enhance our ability to achieve the SDGs and transform our systems.

To address inequalities, climate change and achieve the SDGs, a stronger, more inclusive and networked multilateral system is needed. Only in this way can we truly foster the transformations needed to localize the 2030 Agenda prioritizing a whole of government and whole of society approach.

The multilateral system needs to consider the many dimensions of an urban world: a system of rural and urban territories, small and intermediary cities, metropolitan entities and regions; and delivering financial support and capacity development for local and regional governments (LRG) to participate in transformation. If we are to leave no place behind, we need to ensure that the rural world gains presence in global debates, in particular when formulating policies with a long-term horizon. Rooting the 2030 Agenda implementation in territorial priorities allows for a new governance framework, improving day-to-day life.

**In light of the 2022 United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and the SDGs in review: quality education (SDG 4), gender equality (SDG 5), life below water (SDG 14), life on land (SDG 15), and partnerships for the Goals (SDG 17), the Local Authorities Major Group recalls the following key issues:**

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#Listen2Cities**

## **Strengthening local public service provision for stronger education and a better shared future**

The impact of the pandemic among those who already had less opportunities is tangible. Workers and persons living in informality, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons have been among the hardest hit. **The current crises in Ukraine, Mali, or Lebanon are also hitting marginalized populations the most, causing displacement and refugees, as well as the tragic loss of lives.**

Local and regional governments have been working to protect their communities even in these complex contexts, working to safeguard those in the informal economy and ensuring their safety, by sanitizing transport, ensuring the provision of food, and working to halt evictions as well as safeguarding the health and human rights of communities. Local and regional governments have also worked to protect women from situations of violence in the pandemic delivering gender-based responses.

**It is essential to build upon the display of care provided by local and regional governments over the past years. Care is a dimension that needs to be incorporated into any and all policy decisions.**

**The role of local and regional governments in education as hubs of learning and innovation are critical to providing accessible, safe and supporting environments to all which foster equality and equal opportunities.** Education is a fundamental right for unlocking the full development of individuals and communities. Local and regional governments have a privileged position to foster educational policies that can empower their communities, develop human capacities and creativity and are partners to national governments in areas such as promoting equal opportunities in quality education, engaging families in the educational policies of their children, fostering gender-responsive education and overcoming barriers to women and girls in education.

### **The Local Authorities Major Group calls for:**

- Including local and regional governments, who have understood the importance of the current context and the vitality of basic services as the lever for improving the lives of our neighbors, in decisions at all levels that involve service provision and mitigating the negative impacts of complex emergencies.
- The uninterrupted support of all levels of government in ensuring the health and human rights protection to everyone and especially to the most vulnerable facets of population and the sustainability and resilience of the environment at large.
- Prioritize education as a motor for sustainable development and strengthen it as an essential public service responding to the needs of all and to the increasing digital world.

## Addressing the interconnected crises through gender equality and feminist policy making

The Covid-19 pandemic has further exacerbated global and local inequalities, disproportionately impacting women, girls and non-binary people, especially those of color, those with different accessibility needs, those of migrant background, older women, and other marginalised groups. **Yet, in response, we have seen the emergence of a powerful global movement: the Feminist Municipal Movement. It calls for a new kind of politics, which centers care, as a pathway to achieving a world in which no one and no place is left behind.**

**Fostering gender equality and the participation of women and local feminist leaders in decision-making is core to the democratic process, and key to enabling governance with empathy and responding to the diverse needs and aspirations of communities.** A feminist politics which promotes solidarity and partnership over competition - where cities and local governments actively work together, as is called for by SDG17 - can contribute to creating spaces for people and the planet to be nurtured and respected and ensure all citizens' rights can be met through enabling environments which are sensitive to gender and account for a diversity of needs.

### The Local Authorities Major Group calls for:

- Mainstreaming gender equality and women empowerment within all policy-making processes.
- Recognizing the transformative power that feminist policy making has in addressing inequalities, overcoming climate change, and achieving the SDGs.
- Fostering the inclusion of women and girls in local leadership and promoting participatory, inclusive approaches that ensure all voices are accounted for and represented in decision-making.

## Achieving better life on land, below water, and in all cities and territories

**Achieving better life on land, below water, and in all cities and territories, will only be possible through localization processes that consider big and intermediary cities, small towns, and regions and territories,** which are essential to resilience and alternative models of production and consumption. Intermediary cities are particularly well placed to ensure justice for all and are guarantors of services of proximity, facilitating collective action as communities are smaller and tightly knit.

**All climate action must be supported and reinforced by a change in our relationship with our ecosystems through a change in economic models and a shift towards caring systems, through culture as our motor for sustainable development.** Local and regional governments are essential to embody a vision for a better life on land as the closest level of government to communities and as the protectors of the biodiversity of their territories. Moreover, protecting our oceans and fostering life below water will not be possible without the strong inclusion of local and regional governments in ocean governance.

### **The Local Authorities Major Group calls for:**

- Strengthening the role of intermediary cities, small towns, and rural areas and territories in the achievement of the universal development agendas
- Highlighting the crucial role of multi-level governance and multi-stakeholder collaboration in the protection of our oceans and the inclusion of cities and territories beyond coastal areas
- Strengthening capacities of local and regional governments in building sustainable management models of our ecosystems and biodiversity.

## **Commitment to the localization of the universal development agendas and fostering Voluntary Local Reviews and Voluntary Subnational Reviews**

**Local and regional governments and their networks are committed to the localization of the universal development agendas and to leaving no one, and no place, behind. Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, LRG involvement in monitoring and reporting processes has evolved.** Over 2020 and 2021, the total number of Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) available worldwide has doubled (from approximately 40 VLRs in June 2020 to more than 100 in June 2021). In the same period of time, 15 Voluntary Subnational Reviews (VSRs) have emerged in 14 countries worldwide, which together represent more than 16,000 LRGs. These VLRs and VSRs have proved to influence national dialogues and mechanisms for the implementation of the SDGs, and have also had direct positive impacts in local governance by increasing transparency, accountability and ownership of the Global Goals by local and regional governments and their associations.

**VLRs and VSRs should be seen as policy tools in order to create more traction and ownership of the Goals on top of their use in reporting. Local and regional governments reiterate their commitment to fostering the development of Voluntary Local Reviews (VLR) and Voluntary Subnational Reviews (VSR) with the full support of Local Government Associations, promoting ownership and the achievement of the SDGs and increase local and regional government participation in national coordination mechanisms.**

### **The Local Authorities Major Group calls for:**

- Considering VLR and VSR processes as policy consolidation opportunities that are integral to foster ownership and achievement of the universal development agendas.
- Involving LRGs and their associations in VNR processes, and promoting the development of VLRs and VSRs (country-wide, bottom-up subnational reporting processes on the state of localization of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in a specific country)
- The full recognition of monitoring and reporting processes such as VLRs and VSRs in official HLPF deliberations.

### **Links with the New Urban Agenda, strengthening multilevel governance and financing and capacities for LRGs**

The constituency of Local and Regional Authorities is convinced that the 2030 Agenda is an adequate framework not only for the transformation required for the COVID-19 aftermath, but also to ensure an equitable and inclusive recovery. We are also aware that no single sphere of government or actor can achieve the global agendas alone.

Six years after the adoption of the New Urban Agenda, its calls to ensure the Right to the City, to ensure basic services and to reduce inequalities remain as critical as they were in 2016. Housing, healthcare, and key public services are the work of local and regional governments, and critical to achieving the New Urban Agenda as an accelerator of the other universal development agendas.

**In view of this, it is imperative to ensure a renewed, inclusive HLPF that institutionalizes dialogue with LRGs and stakeholders and which connects to the New Urban Agenda as a means to deliver a multilateral system based on ownership, co-creation, and partnership mechanisms including all actors in decision-making. An effective localization requires a new multilateralism, with local democracy and localization at its core, and strengthened local self-government. To secure adequate financing and revenue streams for better planning and investment to achieve the global agendas through a renewed fiscal architecture to empower local and regional governments to strengthen their own resources and achieve the SDGs.**

## The Local Authorities Major Group calls for:

- A renewed, more inclusive, multilateral system based on ownership, co-creation and peace, including and engaging local and regional governments and their representative associations in all stages of decision-making processes.
- Leveraging linkages between the New Urban Agenda and the universal development agendas to ensure service delivery, and coordination among spheres of government to accelerate their implementation.
- Rethinking fiscal architecture and strengthening local finance to achieve the universal development agendas.

