



# GLOBAL TASKFORCE

OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS  
FOR **POST-2015** DEVELOPMENT AGENDA  
TOWARDS **HABITAT III**

## Global Taskforce response to the UNSG Synthesis Report on Post-2015: The Road to Dignity by 2030

### General remarks

The Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments for the Post-2015 Agenda welcomes the UN Secretary General's Synthesis Report on the Post-2015 Agenda. We appreciate the UNSG's clear statement of the need for the Post-2015 Agenda to be truly transformative, universal, people centered and planet-sensitive, built on the principles of human rights and the rule of law, equality and sustainability (§48-49). We especially value the call for **innovative partnerships, including local authorities** (§22); as the levels of government closest to citizens, local and regional governments will be on the front line of implementing the future development agenda on the ground.

We appreciate, in the introduction of the Synthesis Report, the recognition of the direct and active participation of local governments in the consultative process. Representatives of sub-national governments have contributed to the Open Working Group sessions and the Global Task Force has co-lead the UN consultations on 'Localizing the Post-2015 Agenda' with UNDP and UN HABITAT.

As stressed in the introduction to the report, the world is increasingly urban, which is why **inclusive and sustainable cities** should be one of the goals of the development agenda over the coming decades. We also need stronger **effective, participatory and inclusive governance** (§50). We agree that the new agenda should **integrate the economic, social and environmental dimensions of development**, ensuring **more policy coherence at all levels** (§55). We pledge to **include culture**, recognized in the Report as an important force in supporting the new agenda (§132), as both a driver and an enabler of development.

We agree that a **renewed effective global partnership** should be supported by a rigorous and participatory review and monitoring framework with the involvement of stakeholders at all levels, **including local governments** (§56 & §145). A **data revolution** is necessary to make information and data more available, more accessible and more broadly disaggregated (§56). Disaggregation at sub-national level will be particularly important in order to tackle inequalities within countries.

We also fully support the eight principles proposed in part 3.2 of the Report (§65). We particularly welcome the recognition that sub-national and local authorities "are currently leading the charge for sustainable development" and that they require **adequate resources and capacities** with which to do so (§94 and §128). The recognition that investment in strong institutions, accountability and resilience are essential to ensure sustainability of the SDGs, is crucial (§ 77 – 79).

## **Importance of cities and urbanization**

While we are aware of the need for a concise and aspirational agenda, as mandated by the Rio + 20 Conference, we are nevertheless concerned about the rearrangement of the Open Working Group proposal to regroup the 17 goals into six 'essential elements' (§66). The proposed "clustering" would leave out a number of vital urban and territorial dimensions of the Agenda (e.g. decent housing and urban slum upgrading, access to basic services and sustainable urban transport, urban planning, protection of cultural heritage, resilient cities and communities, and urban environment) while many others are dealt with only superficially.

As stressed by the High Level Panel, "cities are where the battle for sustainable development will be won or lost". Cities and territories are where women and men live, where poverty is tackled, where prosperity is generated, where health and education services are provided, and where ecosystems are protected on the ground.

It is therefore vital that urban and local development dimensions will be clearly integrated in the Post-2015 Agenda and that Goal 11 is maintained, as set out in the conclusions of the Open Working Group, taking into account the importance which Member States as and the major groups attach to this specific SDG.<sup>1</sup>

## **Localizing the SDGs**

The concept of localizing the SDGs was extensively considered during the UN Global Consultation on "localizing the Post-2015 Agenda", which involved over 5000 participants in more than 80 countries. We regret that none of the main conclusions of the Consultation have been included in this Report. As stressed in the communique of the final session of the Consultation in Turin: "*The implementation of the Post-2015 Agenda will greatly depend on local action and leadership, in coordination with all other levels of governance. Any new development agenda will only have an impact on people's lives if it is successfully implemented at the local level*" (See Communique in Appendix and the *Final report of the Global Consultation on Localizing the Post-2015 Agenda*).

## **Fiscal decentralization**

We also support the UNSG's call for countries to adopt innovative ways to raise additional resources to fund sustainable development and to mobilize domestic public and private revenues and international funds (§91). However, we have significant concerns about the lack of any reference to "fiscal decentralization", as recommended by the Report of the *Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing* (p.19). While the Synthesis Report recognizes the role of local authorities in leading investments in local infrastructures ("*...many of the investments to achieve the SDGs will take place at the sub-national level and led by local authorities, § 94*), there is no reference to the necessity to improve their access to these resources (including climate finance). Nor is there any mention of the need to strengthen sub-national governments' institutional environment and capacity to implement fiscal reforms at local level or attract long-term investments to address the critical need for sustainable and resilient local infrastructures.

## **Capacity building**

We fully support the call of the UNSG to strengthen the institutional and human capacities of local governments to assess needs, collect data and formulate responses across sectors and institutions to ensure the implementation of the agenda at local level (§128). We recall, however, that, as a sphere of government, local authorities should also participate in policy making. As

stated in the final report of the UN Global Consultation on “localizing the Post-2015 Development Agenda”, “*strengthening of local governments is critical to foster coordination at the local level (horizontal coordination) and at the national and international levels (vertical coordination) and that stronger legal*” and “*institutional frameworks with regard to decentralisation will support good governance at all levels.*”

### Subnational data and indicators

We agree that there is a need to develop alternative measurements of progress for the new agenda that go beyond GDP, including subjective wellbeing measurements (§135). These indicators should be clearly disaggregated to include urban areas and territories, as this is the only way to identify the most vulnerable groups of the population and ensure that no-one is left behind. Local governments will be essential partners in localizing the targets and indicators and should be included in the **Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data**. We welcome the inclusion of cities as part of the technology facilitation initiative proposal (§125), which could play a significant role in promoting clean and environmentally sound technologies.

### Monitoring and evaluation

Finally, we welcome the idea of a monitoring, evaluation and reporting process based on **country-led accountability** and built on existing national and local mechanisms and processes, with broad multi-stakeholder participation, including local governments (§149). This multi-stakeholder, participatory approach should be integrated at all levels, regional and global, including within the HLPF where there should be regular consultation of all Major Groups.

### Conclusion

To conclude, we would like to underline the importance in the coming months of negotiations on the Agenda of 1) maintaining Goal 11 on sustainable cities and human settlements, 2) ‘localizing’ the targets and indicators of the Agenda so that the diverse development challenges at sub-national level can be addressed and monitored, and 3) recognizing the essentially local nature of development and empowering local governments and communities with the resources they need to make the new Agenda a reality on the ground.

We would like to request that our comments be made available to the concerned drafting group chairs and officials for their consideration and we would welcome the opportunity to provide further inputs and clarifications as appropriate.

