



Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development

Nrg4SD Position Paper on Urban Development related goal and integrated territorial approach in the post 2015 Development Agenda

Post-Rio+20 and Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda

This paper aims to share some thoughts and contributions from subnational governments, members of nrg4SD, to the intergovernmental process on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The UN Conference on Sustainable Development - Rio+20 outcome document¹ has decided to establish a participatory process to develop a set of SDGs to be approved by the General Assembly. Later decision established the [Open Working Group](#) (OWG) to carry on the task, and from March 2013 to February 2014 it held the so-called “stocktaking” phase, a series of meetings that made a first diagnosis of this process, identifying potential themes and the challenges SDGs will face ahead. Concluded this initial step, OWG will now enter a “decision-making” phase, with meetings to discuss and craft a set of SDGs.

OWG discussions have been very technical-oriented with the participation of experts and stakeholders. In this framework, nrg4SD is following up the debate in its capacity as member of the Local Authorities Major Groups². Besides, it is also directly contributing to the process mainly through two important international initiatives³ that develop technical input and positions on the role local and subnational governments can play in SDGs.

The SDGs should reflect upon the Millennium Development Goals experience and learn from it. Moreover, considering many topics will coincide among the two agendas, we believe both should be merged, creating an improved framework to pursue a sustainable, fair and equitable future for all.

Both local and subnational governments have a key importance in the implementation of policies, strategies and plans worldwide, on a broad range of themes, from tackling climate change and protecting biodiversity to eradicating poverty and promoting gender equality. Exploring the substantial synergy cities and states/regions/provinces have, local and subnational networks are combining efforts to advocate to ensure a **stand-alone goal on Sustainable Urbanization**. In addition, nrg4SD equally promotes the mainstreaming of an integrated **territorial dimension as a cross-cutting issue among other SDGs**.

¹ [The Future We Want](#), § 248.

² [UNDESA Major Groups](#)

³ [Communitas Coalition for Sustainable Cities and Regions in the New UN Development Agenda](#) or [the Global Taskforce \(GTF\) of Local & Regional Governments for Post-2015 Development Agenda towards Habitat III](#)



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#UrbanSDG / stand-alone goal on Sustainable Urbanization

All trends confirm the current importance and share of urban populations will continue to grow, becoming one of the challenges and yet one of the best opportunities in social, economic and environmental matters. Nowadays it is estimated the urban population is half the global, and this proportion is expected to reach 2/3 by 2050. Keeping in mind this phenomenon is mostly taking place in mid and low-income countries, an exclusive goal to address this reality in future international development agenda becomes paramount.

Cities are seen as the main place where economic activity is developed, representing a unique opportunity to create shared wealth and better living conditions to all human beings. Nevertheless, urban areas have become the ultimate scenario for social segregation and environmental deterioration, especially by the proliferation of slum dwellers submitted to terrible conditions.

As acknowledged in the Agenda 21, and increasingly throughout more recent international decisions⁴, cities and subnational governments are key to designing territory-based integrated strategies to attaining sustainable development. A multilevel approach is crucial to curbing GHG emissions and enhancing territorial resilience through risk prevention and management, also to eradicate poverty and ensure universal access to quality public basic services.

For that reason, a stand-alone goal on sustainable urbanization would allow the necessary attention and resources for cities and regions to address global and urban development challenges.

For a substantial contribution on targets for a stand-alone urban goal please refer to the existing compilations of the aforementioned initiatives [Communitas executive summaries](#) and [Global Taskforce proposal](#).

Urban, rural, urban-rural and natural linkages

A broad understanding of the Sustainable Urbanization concept cannot be considered under an isolated institutional policy restricted to the city territory. The urban development can bring progress, innovation and aggregated value to national subnational and local economic, social and technological growth. However, it is followed by an increased demand of natural resources, workers, land and other, and at the same time results in increased waste, GHG emissions, energy consumption, urban sprawl, housing and mobility needs. This entails intensive interference to forests, oceans, migration flows/population dynamics, food

⁴ The Future We Want, CBD decisions and Aichi Framework, UNFCCC ADP negotiations, UNEP stakeholder engagement policy.



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production and rural areas, especially to the surrounding areas and even more to the most vulnerable ecosystems and communities.

A comprehensive stand-alone goal on sustainable urbanization, at a city-region scale, will only be possible by taking into consideration the totality of the territory, including its connectivity to rural activities and communities, and yet to water, forest and ecosystem resources. In this sense, we foster the dissemination of the rurbanization concept, which promotes the modernization and improvements to the rural life experience. The urban-rural continuum provides vital and reciprocal effects, especially in terms of enhancing food systems.

A holistic and territorial-based approach will explore city-region linkages, and will accordingly consider subnational specificities and unique contributions. Therefore, we would like to highlight the following aspects that must be included in a stand-alone goal on sustainable urbanization:

- Recognize city-region scale as strategic and key in the interaction among rural, urban and other ecosystems within the same territory;
- Address urban sprawl, which can result spatial mismatch, and the endangerment of rural communities or forests and other ecosystems;
- Develop city-region land planning and landscape
- Strengthen collaborative, multi-level and multi-stakeholder governance enables an effective political, fiscal and administrative decentralization;
- Ensure a multidimensional, integrated and responsible approach while designing local and subnational policies and strategies - by addressing the different and interconnected themes; by including all the involved authorities and grassroots communities in the definition and implementation process; and by carrying a comprehensive analysis of all effects over neighbor areas;
- Focus on environmental ecosystems to build sustainable and resilient territories, based on risks prevention and preparedness and also the protection of forests and biodiversity;
- Guarantee adequate planning to human migration flows: increasing urbanization levels are also related to cities becoming alternatives for better work and life conditions, especially in low-income countries. This entails intensive displacement in particular from rural areas.
- Integrate food and non-food ecosystems through subnational and territory planning, and hence ensuring sustainable food security and nutrition for all human settlements.



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For a territorial approach

It is paramount to promote joint global efforts and international cohesion in the common attainment towards sustainable societies. However, we must provide SDGs the necessary tools to address the vast diversity and inequalities along different areas within each territory. Spreading territorial targets and indicators will improve global capacity to respond to challenges and barriers in the implementation of SDGs.

Therefore, this proposal does not replace, but rather complement the existence of a stand-alone SDG on sustainable urbanization.

In particular regarding learned-lessons from the MDGs experience, it was noticed the use of national aggregated data and averages is responsible for masking the concrete reality and progress of all targets. Keeping this in mind, a territorial approach will make sure to address at a city-region scale the particularities and specific necessity of each respective area and community.

A territorial dimension should be mainstreamed since it is a confirmed enabler towards achieving different goals as it multiplies the fronts of actions pursuing sustainable outcomes. It increases the number of possible strategies and also of actors involved, allowing multidimensional efforts, localized monitoring tools and allocation of resources.

Core elements and indicators for a territorial approach across all SDGs

For a comprehensive list of indicators suggested by nrg4SD members, please check the [Rio Declaration of States and Regions](#), which contains several ideas under specific thematic areas.

- Data Revolution: raise disaggregated local and subnational data
 - Establish monitoring tools to assess the real condition and inequalities of different areas and segments of the population
 - Improve the participation of local and subnational institutions, as well as of grassroots communities in the provision of data will improve the liability and the civic participation
 - Monitor and end discrimination on the basis of gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, disability, or other status.
 - Coordination and close collaboration within all levels of government
- Establishment of inter-subnational platforms for the elaboration and adoption of comparable metrics, harnessing the work of networks of local and subnational authorities, and under close collaboration with the national level;
- Create mechanisms to support local and subnational specific plans and strategies, for tailored-cut action to respond the needs of each territory;



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- Involvement of local and grassroots communities in the elaboration of plans and strategies.
- Promote local and subnational campaigns for raising public awareness on the importance of the SDGs, as well as the topics and targets it will address
- Foster local and subnational transparency and knowledge and information sharing with regards to sustainable development issues.

Permanent work for Sustainable Cities and Regions

Nrg4SD, as organizing partner of the LAMG, alongside UCLG and ICLEI, has been actively engaged in the international efforts and intergovernmental processes to ensure the best character in the future Sustainable Development agenda. As in the context of Rio+20, nrg4SD will continue to represent the voice of subnational governments and to combine efforts with other local and subnational governmental networks in the advocacy for a truly inclusive and democratic international governance, and consequently towards sustainable, transparent and participative societies. With this in mind, we will continue to contribute to the OWG in definition of the SDGs, and also afterwards towards implementing and achieving these decisions.

Furthermore, we call upon the attention of international community, UN system and Member States to the necessity of adopting a stand-alone goal on Sustainable Urbanization, and likewise to the gains in mainstreaming, as appropriate, an integrated territorial approach in other SDGs. This structure will enable an increased technology and best practices sharing and yet the fundamental allocation of human and financial resources in supporting direct and strategic action in all level of governments. Fiscal, administrative and policy decentralization, with deep involvement of multi-stakeholder, will improve global sustainable governance by allowing the adequate action to each of the future challenges. A goal on Sustainable Urbanization will confirm and empower the role local and subnational can play in this framework.