



## GLOBAL TASKFORCE

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

### **Full Report of the special event on sustainable cities**

**13 December afternoon, General Assembly Hall, UN HQ, New-York**

#### **Karen Tan, Co-chair for Friends of sustainable cities, permanent ambassador of Singapore to the UN**

She welcomed the presence of mayors and ministers as ultimate implementers of the SDGs, to this meeting aiming at feeding the session of the Open Working Group to take place from 6 to 10 January 2014.

She stressed the contributions of mayors are absolutely vital for making the case of SDGs in cities and call them to contribute to the definition of goals with targets and indicators implementable.

She raised how Member states really appreciate Local and regional governments' commitment on this issue

#### **Deputy Secretary General Jan Eliasson**

Regarding the fact that 1/3 of the world population lives in substandard settlements and 70% of greenhouse gases are emitted in cities, he recalled that "the battle for Sustainable development will be won or lost in cities". He raised the need to fight for potential opportunities offered by urbanization, especially regarding social equality – insisting on the fact that there are more poor in middle income countries than in poor countries.

Inclusive economic growth, including creation of jobs in the respect of environment is part of the challenge.

Insisting on the key role of local and regional governments in the sustainable development agenda he reminded the warm welcome given by the UN SG to the creation of the global taskforce last May.

The agenda at global level has to correspond to national and local agendas: it is needed to connect all levels, not only to solve problems vertically but horizontally as we all share the same agenda.

As we see the fastest rate of urbanization in human history, with the majority of it to occur in developing world, the urbanization provides massive opportunities to showcase sustainability. Cities are major sources of job opportunities, they benefit rural areas surrounding them, they are centres of information and communication, at heart of our lives today: **Cities are hubs of sustainability.**

**Best sustainable development policies are conducted by cities: mayors and local elected are doers and catalyst to be taken as model for the global community.**

To conclude, Jan Eliasson recalled the first 3 words of the UN Charter: "We, the peoples", calling the audience, local elected and UN representatives, to not forget they are servants, civil servants who are responsible to ensure a life of dignity for all, life in peace, development, lawful. Those in responsibility of governing can give the people the conditions of a life of dignity.

**Mayor of Victoria, Seychelles, Co-President of UCLG, Jacqueline Moustache-Belle**, addresses the audience on behalf of UCLG but also in the name of the local and regional governments' networks worldwide gathered in the Global Taskforce. The Global Taskforce represents the worldwide municipal movement that celebrated its hundred years of existence in 2013

She raised the commitment of local and regional governments to share their vision of what the sustainable development agenda should be has they had done back in 2005 where they had presented their vision on MDGs.

The sustainable development agenda should tend to end extreme poverty and continue to put in place building blocks, focusing on all actors to build sustainability, through ONE agenda recognizing different needs and capacities. Sustainable development agenda have to meet the needs of all, ensuring education for all and empowerment of women.

Local and regional governments are drivers of development and should be recognized as specific spheres of government and key actors of the sustainable development agenda.

In this regard, an urban focus will ensure definition of specific targets for transparent, inclusive and participatory institutions to decision making processes, based on the rule of law and guaranteeing Human rights. An urban goal should also ensure well-managed urban areas, providing access to quality basic services and reducing inequalities

Sustainable urbanization concerns all members of UN: rapid urbanization is a major challenge especially in small islands. Urban goal would provide the right framework, mobilising all actors to overcome the challenges in shaping cities. The Post2015 agenda need to provide strong support to decentralization, in support to universal provision of services.

The urban goal approach focus on 3 key areas: Poverty eradication, focusing on slums and equality; Promotion of prosperity through inclusiveness; Protection of environment building on local policy and improved governance.

150 mayors have signed their support to this urban goal as well as partners: Member States and UN representatives were called to recognized the specific nature of local and regional governments level, to ensure the provision of needed resources and create the conditions to allow them to achieve sustainable development policies.

**Karen Tan** ensured that Member States do recognize the specific role and nature of local and regional governments as actors and drivers of sustainable development agenda.

**Akwasi Opong Fosu, local and regional governments Minister of Ghana**

The African agenda is urban and therefore needs support for adaptive urbanization: Africa urban population will triple in the next decades following the change of demographic trend and pattern of settlements, which raises opportunities and challenges.

2/3 of GDP in most African countries come from cities however we witness the urbanization of poverty and increase of urban dwellers living in slums: cities need more accessible public services.

The failure of MDG came from lack of national policies addressing urbanization trend and from the absence of clear national policies to support decentralization. All the 8 MDG lack provision of adequate services like water, sanitation, transport and electricity while they are key to the functions of economic activities and women empowerment.

Basic services provision is essential for attractiveness of territories and competitiveness of local business: decentralization needs to be apriority in national policies. There is a

need for a change to the negative approach to urbanization and in particular informal settlements: urbanization is key for Africa sustainability and development

90 billion per year for the next 20 years shall be invested in public services in Africa to ensure sustainable development, but despite the increasing awareness among key stakeholders in Africa and the recognition of the African development Bank that urbanization is a key element of the sustainable development agenda, more efforts are needed.

This is the sense of the Presidential initiative for the African urban agenda – championed by the President of Ghana and supported by the President of Nigeria, to address the challenge of rapid urbanization of the continent in positive way and advocating for an African urban forum to prepare for the Habitat III Conference

He concluded on the strong support Africa is providing to an urban goal to enable leadership role for local and regional governments in provision of basic services for all and taking into account climate change and disaster risk reduction policies for competitive, safe and attractive cities.

#### **Joan Clos Executive Director of UN Habitat for concluding remarks**

Urbanization is a challenge for local and regional governments and national governments; therefore the contribution of group of countries like Ghana as leaders in the urban agenda in Africa is very valuable.

After Rio+20, it was recognized that sustainable development is not only environmental but also social and economical. And in this framework the process of urbanization is of great importance. No country in the world has reached level of development without urbanization: urbanization is promoter and driver of development, a source and multiplier of development. Urbanisation is not the consequence of development.

However, for urbanization to contribute to development there is a need of “proper urbanization”, which is a great new challenge: moving towards 9 billion people over the world with half population in urban areas requires taking care of how we manage the urbanized land. Urbanization cannot be spontaneous without raising a risk of scarcity of resources.

National governments need to establish national urban policies to address fundamental change on the way population will inhabitate planet earth. They are the main actors to address the financial means and needs to ensure adequate resources are directed towards urbanization. Time has arrived where nobody can be absent of the debate on urbanization and urbanization governance.

We are faced with Climate change internationally with next Conference’s in Lima in 2014 and in Paris 2015. No sustainable development will be achieved without taking into account climate change. It is an impressive challenge and a great opportunity to design new urban areas to ensure reduction of emission of greenhouse gas emission.

Urbanization is a human creation: stakeholders and mainly authorities of each country, region, city have special role in designing urbanization – one need to work and to act and take specific steps for designed urban areas – urbanization require political will and commitment accompanied by knowledge and techniques. And it finally needs finances, need of resources to maintain cities in good conditions - collect wastes, provide sewages, guarantee mobility, security, services requiring financial plan.

He concluded by wishing this dialogue will help to raise awareness especially among stakeholders, States and United Nations for the need for renewed policy.

The Permanent Representative of Singapore thanked Dr. Clos and acknowledged the leading role played by UN-Habitat with regard to the conditions for the urbanization process. Consequently she thanked the speakers of the Opening Session and, on behalf of the Co-Chair from Sweden, confirmed the willingness of the Group of Friends to continue collaborating for an SDG on sustainable cities and human settlements.

The **Dialogue Session 1 “Inclusive Local Governance and Universal Service Provision for Sustainability”** was moderated by **Navid Hanif**, Director of the Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination. Quoting the High-Level Panel of the Secretary General on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, Mr. Hanif recalled that local authorities form a vital bridge between national governments, communities and citizens. He further stressed the importance of decentralized development cooperation as key factor to empower regional and local governance.

**Catherine Cullen**, Chair of the UCLG Culture on Committee and Deputy Mayor of Lille highlighted the role of culture as enabler of development. She reminded that, as more than half of the world population is already living in cities, mayors and local governments are in the best position to find solutions to daily problems. As there is a direct link between sustainability and culture, the latter has a direct impact on a range of issues such as fight against poverty, gender equality, job creation and governance. She further stressed that the Urban SDG should contain a target on cultural vitality, as a complementary component to economic viability, social fairness and environmental responsibility.

**Paúl Carrasco**, President of Regions United/FOGAR and Prefect of Azuay, affirmed that, as sustainability has a territorial approach, planning processes need to be changed and adapted to the diversity of local and regional realities. He advocated for re-thinking public policies planning from a participatory view and strengthening institutional capacities to increase efficiencies in the most demanding areas. Mr. Carrasco further reminded how sustainable solutions need to integrate the local knowledge that communities the world around already have.

Among the respondents of the session, **Olav Kjørven**, Special Advisor to the UNDP Administrator on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, highlighted how the Post-2015 process is a unique opportunity to mobilize all relevant involved actors for a shared global development agenda and move global collaboration forward. As implementation happens mostly at local level and policies are increasingly set at local level, international development community needs to support national processes and local actions equally. As sustainable development demands an integrated territorial and spatial approach and sub-national governments are suited for this perspective, universal service provision can only be achieved bearing in mind the local perspective.

**Philip McPhee**, the President of Caribbean Association of Local Government Authorities (CALGA), Chief Councillor of South Eleuthera, Bahamas, Vice Chairperson of Commonwealth Local Governments Forum (CLGF) for the 2013-2015 Board, strongly advocated for a unique urban Sustainable Development Goal. He stated that inclusive local governments is key to the Post-2015 development agenda. He mentioned the need of the urban SDG with localized targets, promoting local democracy and urban-rural linkages. The local targets should cover transparency, accountability, public participation and local governments decision-making, ensuring universal access to services to all. He called for special consideration of cities and local governments in small states such as in the Commonwealth.

**Alain Le Saux**, Secretary General of Metropolis, made a plea for “Cities for all” and against new forms of urban segregation. “Cities for all” implies a Urban Sustainable Development Goal that would need to be commonly shared between central and local

governments and by the international community. It implies universal access to services for all, an equal access to justice and culture while respecting diversity. "Cities for all" enables a city to be inclusive and that fosters dignity. He concluded indicating that an Urban Sustainable Development means that local governments clearly understand their responsibility for sustainable development in cities.

*Interventions from the floor included:*

**Frédéric Vallier**, Secretary General of Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), advocated that local and regional governments are willing to be "shapers", not only "doers", as local politics is the one that changes the world. There is no development without local economic development, he continued.

**Carl Wright**, Secretary General of the CLGF, recalled the importance of local economic development targets, and but emphasized the need of targets around urban governance such as: the percentage of national income and public revenue allocated to local governments, the participatory target around urban planning, safe cities and regular democratic elections.

**Gino Van Begin**, Secretary General of ICLEI, called for a clear difference between "Goal" and "Targets". The goal itself must have an ambition of transformability that allows cities and urban cities work on transformability. The targets themselves should be into percentage terms, and not absolute terms.

**Lawrence Yule**, Mayor of Hastings, President of the Local Government New Zealand (LGNZ) national association, Chairperson of the Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF) for the 2013-2015 Board, advocated for a recognition of the role of local and regional governments play in providing economic development, and in providing a local governance that is inclusive, transparent and participatory. He made a plea for the UN process on Post-2015 to clearly give a space for local governments and give recognition to local development and governance, implementing and monitoring urban targets in urban or rural areas. Local governments need to be part of the conversation, he concluded.

### **Berry Vrbanovic**

Mr. Vrbanovic thanked the UN for inviting him to take part in this discussion and share his views on the post 2015 development agenda.

He firstly addressed the question of why is it important to recognize the challenges of local and regional governments in the post 2015 development agenda recalling that the MDG were well focussed but lacked reflection on implementation at national and subnational levels. He highlighted that local and regional authorities implement a large number of the services that are at the heart of the development agenda. As the world faces global challenges and becomes more urbanized and inter-connected, highly centralized forms of government are proving increasingly ineffective and the role of local and regional governments more important. In this context he, and the members of the Global Taskforce on Post 2015, call for a single goal of sustainable urbanization.

He addressed how the goals should be implemented believing that success is not only about setting goals but about making sure local and regional authorities have the resources to ensure they can be achieved. This involves improving capabilities not only through the devolution of powers and resources but through strengthened political and technical capacities and through partnerships with civil society and the private sector.

Local governments have been working together for development cooperation for over 60 years and this movement of solidarity has been successful in supporting capacity

building, service delivery and poverty alleviation. The post 2015 agenda should therefore take into account the model of local development cooperation.

**Carles Llorens** – Government of Catalonia (ONU-FOGAR)

Thanked the UN for allowing him to take part in the session and recalled that as the urbanization debate is becoming more apparent, we understand the crucial role of local authorities but regional and subnational are often overlooked. A city-regional approach to sustainability is important as cities do not exist in isolated spaces, they are linked to territories: the urban relies on the rural and the rural on the urban.

He therefore stated the need for cities and regions to work together on the post 2015 agenda in order to ensure success. He highlighted that the European Union has already begun to adopt a territorial approach in their definition of territorial governance involving state, region and municipality.

**Ronan Dantec** – Elected Representative for Nantes

Affirmed that the two days had been productive in terms of contributions to the debate and highlighted the UN Secretary General's comment that without mayors, progress cannot be made on the sustainable development goals.

Locally elected representatives have a special role to play in this process because they are close to all the actors in their territory and are by default the proximity actors. If we call for a stand-alone goal in the Sustainable Development Goals it is in order to mobilize States on the urban stakes and to encourage them to give local and regional governments the instruments necessary to conduct action. This goal would also reinforce their legitimacy of local and regional governments to create a dynamic of cooperation at the heart of our territories. Accepting the call for a goal on urbanization would be a step forward in promoting the development cooperation practiced at local and regional level and in disseminating it among the global community.

He believes that beyond the post 2015 process and the sustainable development goals, local and regional governments are calling for a new utopia that favours cooperation over conflict and promotes new partnerships to address the challenges of today.

**Noel Arscott** , Minister of Local Government and Community Development Jamaica, Member of the Caribbean Forum of Local Governments and Board Member of Commonwealth Local Government Forum.

Mr Arscott stressed that partnerships are key in the post 2015 agenda: between central, federal, state, provincial, local governments and their associations. National legislative frameworks must be provided by national governments to ensure that subnational levels have the capacities to take forward local targets, both urban and rural. He highlighted the importance for small countries like Jamaica to have local level institutions like CLGF to share expertise and provide spaces for debate.

He finished by encouraging the United Nations to take a strong look at the role of sport and culture in development agenda.

The session was then opened to the floor.

**Frédéric Vallier**, Secretary General of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions.

Mr Vallier highlighted that substantial time is spent adding local and regional government to official UN texts and addressing resistance by other actors. The idea behind an urban development goal is to avoid this negotiating back and forth and create clear space for

local and regional governments to illustrate that they are essential elements in processes like the Post 2015 development agenda.

**Josep Roig – Secretary General, United Cities and Local Governments**

Mr Roig spoke of similarities between this event and his experience with President Topbaş at the discussions of the High Level panel on the post 2015 agenda. In both cases, the overall feeling was that everyone agreed on the main issues and content to be addressed. Nevertheless, when moving towards creating a tentative list of goals, cities and local authorities often disappear. In view of this, the global taskforce has been organizing the positions of local and regional governments to ensure their contribution and visibility in the post 2015 process.

He spoke briefly of the 100 year history of local and regional level governments and stated that the difference between national and subnational governments is that the latter is better equipped to listen to the reality of citizens. Mayors can be the vectors through which people’s voices can be heard and are therefore a key resource to ensuring the success of the SDGs.

He ended by suggesting that if there is no goal on sustainable cities in the SDGs, the key transformative processes of urbanization would be lost and the local and regional governments would feel disenfranchised by this process.

