

#Listen2Cities  
#HLPF2024



# JOINT STATEMENT TO THE 2024 HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

of the organized constituency of local  
and regional governments



## **Statement to the 2024 High-Level Political Forum Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments (LRGs)**

We, local and regional governments from across the globe, representing the populations of metropolises, peripheral cities, intermediary cities, regions, rural areas, and small municipalities, gather as an organized constituency convened by the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments and facilitated by United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), at the occasion of the twelfth session of the High-Level Political Forum in New York in July 2024 reiterate our support to co-create a sustainable territorial future through inclusive and effective multilateralism to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, and deliver for future generations.

Local and regional governments (LRGs) define local policies and ensure universal and equitable access to public services that directly impact populations' capabilities to prosper and live fulfilling lives, and our cities and territories' sustainability. Being closest to communities, LRGs innovate public-community partnerships to redistribute prosperity opportunities, build trust, foster culture, educate and engage citizens on global sustainable development issues, and leverage proximity and local democracy to ensure the human rights of all, achieve equality, and advance a just ecological transition.

To achieve the 2030 Agenda and localize its implementation, addressing inequalities and their root causes is urgent. This requires a new social contract that works for all to leaving no one and no place behind. Local public services are essential in this regard, as key levers for the goals. With only six years remaining to achieve the goals set for 2030, it is crucial to acknowledge LRGs as indispensable partners and drivers of SDG localization at the global decision-making tables, promoting a new form of multilateralism. This implies recognizing and supporting LRGs through enhanced participation in policy-making, financial assistance and capacity development.

In light of the 2024 United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), focusing on Goal 1, End poverty in all its forms everywhere; Goal 2, End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture; Goal 13, take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts; Goal 16, promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels; and Goal 17, strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, the constituency emphasizes the need for concerted efforts based on the principles of inclusion, solidarity and subsidiarity.

To fulfil these goals, the constituency is embarking on partnerships around the need to create meaningful impact at scale. Impact to advance equality and wellbeing for all, promote climate action, and build peaceful societies from our cities to the global level. At the 2024 HLPF, local and regional governments power high-impact partnerships to localize the SDGs in review. By building alliances with other spheres of government, civil society, academia, and the private sector, our self-organized constituency is strengthening political processes and developing concrete action that rescue the SDGs and meet the needs of present and future generations.

Reaffirming our commitment to achieving the universal development agendas, understanding that they need to be realized in unison through enhanced cooperation on critical challenges and gaps in global governance, we look forward to the Summit of the Future and the World Social Summit as part of a same process towards a reinvigorated multilateral system in which all the global

development agendas are acknowledged and implemented as one, involving all spheres of governance.

## **Caring for People: Addressing inequalities to end poverty and hunger, and localize SDGs 1 and 2**

### ➤ **Advancing a new social contract centering human rights, equality and care**

Although inequalities and poverty have been increasingly acknowledged as a global challenge shaped by structural conditions at multiple scales, coordinated actions at the local level are indispensable to tackle their territorial manifestations, as well as many of their underlying causes. Urban and territorial inequalities are widening, depriving vast sectors of the population of their basic rights and a decent standard of living, while creating collective risks and also social, economic and environmental obstacles to development. Addressing inequalities therefore requires collaboration at multiple scales, and the actions of local and regional governments are a key place to start.

Local and regional governments address inequalities in their territories by revitalizing rights-based public service provision with care as the basis of a new social contract. They ensure universal access to local public services; they foster local economies of care and equality by orienting local economic development towards equitable prosperity; they strengthen local resilience and climate justice to reduce the exposure of marginalized communities to climate-related extreme events and other socioeconomic shocks. Further, Human Rights Cities draw up strategies and implement initiatives that address poverty and inequalities by leveraging the power of cooperation, solidarity and social justice to encourage meaningful citizen participation. Caring cities and regions advance a feminist agenda that tackles gender-based inequalities and violence against women, disadvantaged groups, guarantees equal rights for all, enhances the youth and future generations, empowers local communities, and puts the wellbeing of people and planet as the highest priority. Caring cities and regions are those that deliver local public services as essential care services.

A next generation of public service provision is needed for the wellbeing of current and future generations, based around reinforced social protection systems, that protects care givers and where care services no longer fall on women, racialized persons and/or migrant persons, where accessibility is at the heart of rights-based policy-making and planning. A generation of public service provision that sees housing as a basic common good, beyond it being a commodity. Where access to the internet and technology for all is considered a baseline. Where mental health care and social counselling for people of all ages is available, and where the upskilling of people is prioritized to empower communities and foster human creativity.

**We will protect and promote culture as an integral component of sustainable development, and we reaffirm the role of culture as an enabler of sustainable development and in enhancing efforts to accelerate the 2030 Agenda by providing people and communities with a strong sense of identity and social cohesion, and by contributing to more effective, inclusive, equitable and sustainable development policies and measures.**

These local actions have been combined with efforts to coordinate multilevel governance, joint action and international solidarity to achieve the global agendas, understanding the importance of coordinated action to respond to the structural causes of inequalities and poverty.

**The constituency gathered within the Global Taskforce calls for:**

- Recognizing that the relationship between economic growth and equitable prosperity is not straightforward. Instead, it is conditioned by the extent to which economic growth fuels or counters poverty and inequalities.
- Highlighting the essential role and impact of the human rights-based, equality-driven, gender-responsive and care-centered approaches taken by local and regional governments to address poverty and inequalities and achieve SDG 1.
- Integrating local and regional governments in a structural and systematic way in all global decision- and policy-making processes related to poverty reduction and financing for development.
- Reinforcing the capacities of local governments to address inequalities, including by enhancing their technical skills, fostering local governance capacities, and strengthening multilevel frameworks for poverty reduction.
- We call for a global, multilevel and inclusive policy-making to advance a paradigm shift on development, economic growth, and prosperity: placing care at the center. We urge the UN system and Member States to recognize the role of local and regional governments as key actors to end poverty in all its forms and achieve inclusive, just and sustainable societies.

➤ **Ending hunger and malnutrition and ensuring food security and sovereignty:**

Food insecurity is a systemic issue exacerbated by territorial and socio-economic disparities, resource scarcity, and needs to be addressed through a whole of society and whole of government approach. Malnutrition in women impacts pregnancy outcomes and children's health thereby perpetuating food insecurity and vulnerability across generations. Too commonly does policy formulated to address food insecurity among the most vulnerable people fails to address the underlying issues of poverty and inequality, and food waste. Moreover, inadequate food and nutrition linked with human development and education, affect both growth and attention span leading to important negative effects on learning and school performance. Access to wholesome and nourishing food is a basic human right, essential for our health and prosperity. It is also closely linked to the concept of food sovereignty which underlines the importance that food has at the local level emphasizing its relationship with culture, heritage, agriculture and local economies.

LRGs have a crucial role in guaranteeing sustainable and inclusive access to nutrition, especially in today's complex world, whereby we face various global challenges such as widening inequalities, rising conflicts, and the climate emergency that directly impact our food systems. LRGs, through public service provision, public procurement, and their proximity to communities and civil society play an essential role in ending hunger and must be included within policy processes related to hunger and food security. Ending hunger and malnutrition therefore requires LRGs to be fully involved in food policy promoting sustainable food systems and supply chains rooted in proximity, and the strengthening of local public service provision and multilevel governance.

**The constituency gathered within the Global Taskforce calls for:**

- Recognizing the key role that local public service provision plays in protecting people and the planet and its key link to the implementation of SDG 2.
- Highlighting the link between hunger and malnutrition and poverty, and the multidimensional actions needed to address the inequalities structuring their root causes.
- Ensuring that policies that address the climate emergency also address inclusive and sustainable access to food and nutrition.

- We call to **ensure that local public service provision is front and center in the road towards ending hunger**, linking the actions of local and regional governments with actions led by communities to ensure hunger policy is multi-level and multi-actor.
- **Redefining health as a local and global common, at the core of local responses to population and development challenges**

The climate crisis and global health emergencies have shown the vital role of local public service provision and local health and caring systems, and the importance that they play in protecting people and the planet. Local and regional governments reduce inequalities and poverty by focusing on population and development trends from an equality lens, prioritizing the health and wellbeing of all and equality in human rights and dignity. This includes ensuring sexual and reproductive health and rights for all, and guaranteeing universal access to health care and family planning public services, based on the respect of all sexualities, choices and aspirations and reinforcing women's empowerment. By doing so, local and regional governments redefine health and care-related public services as local and global commons.

Local and regional governments are therefore leading the global localization movement of the universal agendas, including the 2030 Agenda, the New Urban Agenda, and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. Celebrating the 30-year anniversary of the latter this year, local and regional governments are renewing their commitment to responding to demographic diversity and population and urbanization challenges in their territories to transform them into opportunities for equality and a just ecological transition across the urban-rural continuum.

**The constituency gathered within the Global Taskforce calls for:**

- Recognizing that LRGs have critical mandates, responsibilities, and impact in designing and implementing sustainable and equitable responses to current and future demographic and urbanization trends, and leaving no one, and no place, behind.
- Strengthening multilevel governance aiming at ensuring health and human rights protection to everyone and especially to the most marginalized and already structurally disadvantaged groups of the population, including women and girls, youth and older persons, poor communities, and migrants and displaced persons.
- Moving towards a new paradigm on demography and ecology for the future: from the divide between society and nature, to sustainability with and for all living beings in our ecosystems.
- **Promoting accessibility as a human right to shape a diverse and equitable future for all**

Accessibility is an internationally recognized human right and a transversal pillar for the inclusion and fundamental freedoms of all; particularly of older persons, persons with disabilities and disadvantaged groups. Mainstreaming accessibility and universal design as fundamental principles in public policies and programs benefits society as a whole by creating diverse, safe, innovative and user-friendly environments for everyone.

LRGs are committed to promoting accessibility as a human right and as a precondition to socioeconomic inclusion, by making the shift towards equitable public service provision shaped by diversity and dignity. This includes improving capacities to implement accessibility in our cities and territories, developing training and awareness-raising, and supporting the meaningful involvement

of organizations of persons with disabilities and older persons in the design, implementation and monitoring of urban policies and programs across all sectors.

**The constituency gathered within the Global Taskforce calls for:**

- Promoting, monitoring, and evaluating the implementation of internationally recognized accessibility standards at the local level and in line with the principles of universal design and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, ensuring disability-inclusive and age-responsive public policies and programs, in strategic partnership with LRGs, Member States, civil society, academia and the private sector.

➤ **Protecting human mobility with human rights and peace as our horizon**

Amidst a historic high of 114 million forcibly displaced individuals (one of every 73 people), cities emerge as sanctuaries, with 70% of the displaced seeking refuge within their bustling confines. Daunting challenges prevail - from the exclusion of migration from national orders and policy discourses and the new EU Pact on migration and asylum questionably forsaking asylum seekers', migrant and displaced persons' human rights and privacy. But amidst these trials, LRGs stand firm, committed to foster inclusive societies where migrants and refugees can cultivate agency and thrive. Recognized as indispensable partners in advancing the global compacts on migrants and refugees, they save lives, secure universal access to services, , champion people-centered and inclusive approaches and foster balanced narratives on human mobility.

At the heart of this transformation lies the local and regional governments' prioritization of human rights of all individuals, regardless of administrative status and social constructs, woven intricately into the fabric of sustainable development. It is a clarion call for comprehensive and solidarily whole-of-government, and whole-of-society approaches. It is only by investing in local action and nurturing safe and regular pathways for all people on the move that we sow the seeds of a future founded on human rights, inclusivity, and dignity.

**The constituency gathered within the Global Taskforce calls for:**

- Increasing the recognition and augmenting the mandates of LRGs as critical territorial actors on global migration governance, including the localization of the global compacts on migrants and refugees.
- Involving LRGs in the discussions and collective responses to climate-induced human mobility and the provision of basic services to all people.
- Protecting and decriminalizing local and regional leaders that support a rights-based approach to human mobility, and the inclusion of migrants.
- Fostering safe, dignified, and regular pathways for all human mobility, through solidarity whole-of-government and society efforts championing inclusive human rights-based approaches.

**Caring for the Planet: bolstering multilevel governance to accelerate mitigation and adaptation to climate change, and localize SDG 13**

- **Powering local climate action with global impact: safeguarding a just and sustainable world for future generations**

Although multilevel action has been acknowledged in the Glasgow Final Outcome Document, LRGs and their networks still do not have a seat at the Global Climate Table and multilevel action needs to be taken to the next level. There is a clear and urgent need to strengthen the collaboration among

non-party stakeholders and to use robust climate diplomacy as a means to reach the SDGs, as well as to secure a stronger role for LRGs at the Global Climate Table. Furthermore, there must be multilevel approaches to loss and damages' cascading effects.

From the SDG Summit to the Summit for the Future, the acceleration of SDG 13 through localization needs to be further prioritized. LRGs must be recognized as part of the global response to climate change, with the urgent need to level up ambition and take transformative action to realize the SDGs and the Paris Agreement. LRGs need to be included in the design, decision-making, and implementation of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) as outlined by the Coalition for High Ambition Partnerships (CHAMP).

Furthermore, LRGs foster solidarity with future generations by shaping a new social contract anchored in human rights and trust, improving the management of critical global commons, and supporting the provision of public goods and services that deliver equitably and sustainably for all. They also promote the engagement of local communities in local climate action by raising awareness and educating their residents about global interconnections and sustainable lifestyles.

**The constituency gathered within the Global Taskforce calls for:**

- Strengthening climate emergency action through COP28 outcomes and support the SDG Rescue Plan.
- For Member States to endorse the CHAMP Initiative, to foster collaboration among spheres of government, ensuring active and substantive involvement of LRGs in shaping, executing, overseeing, and assessing Nationally Determined Contributions, as well as in National Adaptation Plans, and climate action strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Including LRGs in the diagnostics and governance for loss and damage response.
- Advocating for the localization of finance for climate action and the systemic integration of the local and regional government constituency in multilevel governance strategies and global climate conversations and agreements.
- Integrating LRGs in long-term strategies, foresight and futures thinking to adequately assess and improve the impacts of current political decisions for future generations, and giving equal importance to adaptation and mitigation actions at the local level.
- Ensuring climate action is put at the heart of the SDG recovery plan, and generate multilevel measures to accelerate local action, through the involvement of local and regional governments in formulating the 2025 Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to **strengthen implementation coordination mechanisms.**

➤ **Ensuring access to water and sanitation as a global human right**

Ensuring access to clean water and sanitation is usually the responsibility of LRGs, and depends on effective local and multilevel governance, natural resource management and urban planning. With the multiple crises faced at local and regional levels, including climate change, drought, water scarcity, and lack of access to basic services, LRGs put the safeguard of water as a key priority for their population and territory. LRGs play a critical role in securing universal access to safe water supply and sanitation and must be included in water governance to ensure it is managed as a common good, protecting aquatic ecosystems and biodiversity and fostering care systems.

If water is to be seen as a right and as a local and global common, it is essential to overcome its commodification, ensuring that it is available to all. This implies addressing its provision, including the need to remunicipalize, deprivatize or enhance public management participatory governance,

bringing commoning practices to the forefront. LRGs are best positioned to provide transparent, efficient and inclusive management of water and sanitation services and to create enabling environments for exchange and learning to empower their communities. Participatory policy-making is crucial in order to implement integrated management plans for equitable and sustainable use of water resources and to ensure that public policies promote water and sanitation as a human right.

**The constituency gathered within the Global Taskforce calls for:**

- Promoting an effective right to water and sanitation in the texts and regulations governing their areas of responsibility.
- Promoting all forms of inter-municipal, national and international cooperation, including multilevel governance and decentralized cooperation, to support emerging city hydro-diplomacy in line with the expectations of local communities.
- Giving priority to securing financial resources at local level in close coordination with international, national and basin levels.
- Encouraging community involvement and citizen participation, enabling local populations to contribute to decision-making and effective implementation of projects.

**Caring for Government: Renewing multilateralism, protecting democracy, and fostering peace, to localize SDGs 16 and 17**

➤ **Reshaping the international financial architecture**

Achieving the SDGs requires revisiting the financial architecture, enabling LRGs to leverage various sources of finance, unlocking flexible and tailored revenue streams with the support of national governments, multilateral and subnational development banks, in order to increase resiliency to emergencies that are bound to become more frequent. Financial systems must be a better fit to local and regional government needs, as they are crucial public actors on which the achievement of SDGs largely depends and because they require the means to carry out their part of the responsibilities. While political and administrative decentralization being proposed in many countries across the world as making sense from a context-specific and tailored governance perspective, increased financial autonomy should also match the competences devolved to local governments.

Financing for development requires more than only technical and financial reforms. The large scale changes that the international financing system requires to respond to global challenges, for the people and for the planet implies a deep revision of governance models and their inherent values through more inclusive and increased citizen participation in economy and financial decisions, diverse and innovative financing models and new financial mechanisms with multi-stakeholder partnerships that allow for boosted investments for social infrastructure, fomenting the universal and feminist perspectives of care in economic decisions and creating the environment for the local and regional government levels to meaningfully take part in global economic governance.

**The constituency gathered within the Global Taskforce calls for:**

- Aligning national strategies and financing frameworks with LRG competences and priorities and based on their crucial relevance to the achievement of SDGs.
- Committing to capacitating local elected officials through technical assistance and training to create a pool of public finance experts that can develop local finance resilience in the long run.



- Lifting financial and administrative barriers for LRGs to tap into a diversified pool of revenue sources including innovative financing sources such as land value capture and external sources of finance.
- Developing new financial mechanisms that give access to international financial instruments for LRGs.
- Promoting initiatives for transparent and accountable public finances to rebuild trust from citizens to governments, including through regional and world observatories on local government finances.
- Ensuring meaningful participation of local and regional governments in international fora around Financing for Development, and in particular the Financing for Development Conference in Spain 2025.

➤ **Fostering peace and local democracy**

LRGs are one of the main foundations of any democratic society, as they have democratic mandates, represent the level of government closest to the population and are often able to provide a voice for those who are voiceless. LRGs play an essential role in addressing the systemic roots of violence and their manifestations, promoting a culture of peace and non-violence in our territories. They understand peace as a global public good that needs to be cared for among all spheres of government, developing a renewed social contract with civil society, young people and marginalized groups as part of peacebuilding strategies. Local democracy will need to be a pillar, promoting transparency, accountability, open governance and fighting against corruption.

Cities are the ideal space to tackle conflicts, polarization and the proliferation of fake news to restore trust and protect local and regional elected leaders from violence, in particular women elected officials. By investing in media literacy programs, fact-checking initiatives, open dialogues on social and digital platforms as well as citizen educational activities which include a global perspective. In order to debunk misinformation and promoting a more informed citizenry. LRGs can invest in a strong relationship with free and quality journalism, as well as review the way information is disseminated through social media and the impact of new technologies on the perception of information, as is the case with artificial intelligence.

**The constituency gathered within the Global Taskforce calls for:**

- Eradicating the violence of armed conflicts, which, in addition to direct physical and mental damage, worsens inequalities in many areas, including energy, food security and education.
- Promoting and protecting peace-building initiatives that are born from LRGs, channeling action to address and, when possible, anticipate conflicts that may arise in our streets and territories, to prevent them from turning into violence and thus enhance the belonging, creativity, and cultural thriving.
- Committing to involving women and girls in decision-making, as part of a renewed agenda for peace.
- Acknowledging LRGs initiatives related to SDG 4.7 as key drivers to achieve peace.
- Protecting local and regional elected representatives who face violence in the context of their political mandate.

➤ **Reinforcing local and regional monitoring and reporting initiatives**

Monitoring and reporting initiatives led by LRGs foster transformative change in the governance of the SDGs, improving multilevel governance relations and local public policy-making and service

provision. Enhanced recognition is required at the HLPF and beyond to leverage these processes to achieve the SDGs.

Since their inception around 2018, Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) and Voluntary Subnational Reviews (VSRs) have significantly reshaped reporting practices for the SDGs at all levels, including Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs). Recognized by the United Nations as "an essential tool to show progress and foster exchange on local implementation" of the SDGs, these voluntary initiatives from the bottom up have bolstered the importance of SDG localization in regional and international contexts.

Furthermore, VSRs and VLRs have supported LRGs and their associations in adopting comprehensive approaches to sustainable development through increased collaboration with their national governments and local stakeholders. They have contributed to dismantling institutional and policy barriers, improved data and monitoring mechanisms, and increased transparency and accountability, thus promoting evidence-based and inclusive policy-making.

**The constituency gathered within the Global Taskforce calls for:**

- Promoting the production of VLRs and VSRs and facilitating their incorporation into local, national, and global policy frameworks.
  - Advocating for inclusive whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches to data production, collection and analysis as well as to local monitoring and reporting endeavors.
  - We further call for enhanced involvement of local and regional governments and their associations in national reporting processes from the earliest stage of the process, on a regular and systematic way, in particular through VNRs, the promotion of the development of VLRs and VSRs and the full recognition of local and subnational monitoring and reporting processes in official HLPF deliberations
- **Renewing Multilateralism - Towards the UN Summit of the Future and the World Summit for Social Development**

LRGs play pivotal roles in revitalizing and enhancing multilateralism. Redefining multilateralism and global financial structures starts with a grassroots approach, placing local and regional governments and communities at the forefront. These governments, as the closest sphere of government to people, amplify the voices of local communities in global dialogues, foster partnerships based on cooperation and solidarity, and advocate for institutional transformations to ensure equitable power distribution in global governance platforms.

Building capacity within the public sector and fostering multilevel governance are crucial for reinstating transparency, integrity, and accountability across all levels of governance. Addressing systemic sustainable development challenges necessitates collaborative governance at the territorial scale, requiring enhanced capacities among all stakeholders, institutional platforms for multi-stakeholder engagement. By prioritizing inclusivity and empowerment in decision-making processes, a more representative, inclusive, and efficient multilevel governance framework can be established, anchored in community-level institutional development and skill enhancement.

Ahead of the UN Summit of the Future, and in the framework of the Local and Regional Governments Advisory Group, our constituency has succeeded in getting the draft UN Pact for the Future to include an action that refers to the call we have been promoting.

The World Summit for Social Development, called by the UN Secretary General for 2025, aims to be a unique opportunity to hold a different form of global deliberation and to live up to the values, including trust and listening, that underpin the social contract.

For the self-organized constituency of local and regional governments together with its partnership ecosystem, the Summit of the Future and the World Social Summit will be crucial moments to galvanize a multistakeholder, multilevel coalition that delivers in the challenge of bringing about a global social agenda that puts reducing inequalities at the center of a renewed social contract.

Ahead of both milestones, we call for securing adequate representation in decision-making bodies for the local and regional government constituency, fortifying local finances and fiscal decentralization, and recognizing that LRGs are key actors with policy-making capabilities and have a government character.

**The constituency gathered within the Global Taskforce calls for:**

- In light of the UN Summit of the Future and its Pact for the Future, we call for the inclusion of the following call to action under its Chapter 5 on “Transforming global governance”: "Launch intergovernmental consultations during the 79th session of the UN General Assembly to strengthen the engagement of local and regional authorities as a self-organized constituency in UN intergovernmental bodies and request the Secretary-General to provide recommendations on this matter by the end of 2024 for Member States consideration."
- We further urge and stand ready to promote the localization of the dispositions stemming from the **New Agenda for Peace** into the Pact for the Future, and of the Youth, Peace and Security agenda.
- For this, we call on promoting a structural partnership with the Office of the Assistant Secretary-General for Youth Affairs with the self-organized constituency of local and regional governments, ahead of the UN World Social Summit.
- Ahead of the UN World Social Summit, our organised constituency calls for a global social agenda that is driven by local public service provision to address some of the most pressing issues affecting our communities, our cities and our regions – from universal health coverage to adequate housing, from education for all to decent work and digital rights - and give momentum towards achieving the SDGs through a local SDG rescue plan.

