



## **SUMMARY**

**13 July 2020**

### **THIRD LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS' FORUM**

The Third Local and Regional Governments' Forum took place on Monday, July 13, 2020 within the framework of the 2020 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). The High-Level event was organized by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), UN-Habitat, UNDP, Local 2030 and the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments.

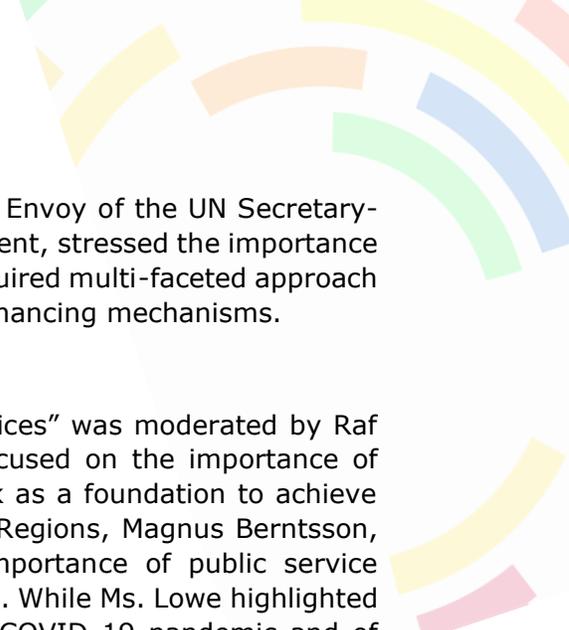
The Forum brought together more than 300 participants and showcased successful experiences from local and regional governments from around the world on the implementation and follow-up of the 2030 Agenda. It furthermore debated the importance of basic service delivery in the midst of the pandemic and in the reconstruction, the need for a renewed multilevel territorial governance and sustainable financing, and finally next steps towards Building Back Better in light of the Decade of Action.

The Forum consisted of an opening ceremony, three panel discussions and a closing ceremony which emphasized the commitment of local and regional leaders towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs as their roadmap towards transformation. National, regional and local representatives further acknowledged the vitalness of full collaboration among spheres of government to build back better after the outbreak.

During the opening, Liu Zhenmin, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations stressed the importance of local public service provision in the recovery of the COVID-19 pandemic and how crucial it is that we uphold the resilience of our societies by building back better together.

Maimunah Mohd Sharif, UN-Habitat Executive Director, underscored that no single sphere of government can fulfill the 2030 Agenda alone and that now more than ever is there a need for multilevel governance and multi-stakeholder collaboration in the achievement of the SDGs.

UCLG President, Mohamed Boudra, Mayor of Al Hoceima and President of the Moroccan Association of Mayors, highlighted the interdependence of sanitary systems and public service delivery, commended the role of local and regional governments in the frontline and called on national development and recovery plans to integrate plans to localize the agendas for basic public services and local community action in order to put an end to the inequalities that have grown with the pandemic. He further recalled the importance of the "Towards the Localization of the SDGs" report as a critical instrument for the constituency's advocacy.



Concluding the opening ceremony, Mahmoud Mohieldin, Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General on Financing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, stressed the importance of the continued provision of essential public services and the required multi-faceted approach needed to recover from this current crisis based on innovative financing mechanisms.

### **Delivering Universal Basic Services**

The first panel of the forum on “Delivering universal basic services” was moderated by Raf Tuts, Director of Global Solutions Division, UN-Habitat, and focused on the importance of upholding basic public services during and beyond the outbreak as a foundation to achieve the SDGs. To this end, President of the Assembly of European Regions, Magnus Berntsson, and Mayor of Banjul, Rohey Malick Lowe, highlighted the importance of public service provision in protecting the health of citizens and the environment. While Ms. Lowe highlighted the importance of sensitizing people to the emergency of the COVID-19 pandemic and of creating ownership of the Sustainable Development Goals in local communities to help combat the negative effects of the pandemic, Mr. Berntsson argued that recovery plans needed to include the environmental aspects and SDGs related to climate and nature, commending the actions already taken by local and regional governments in this regard.

The relationship between public service provision and multilevel governance was also emphasized during the panel as decentralization and the strengthening of service delivery were highlighted as interconnected and essential, in many countries, in guiding our footsteps towards a recovery. To this end, Chair of the Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF), Rev. Mpho Moruakgomo, mentioned that the new normal needed to include decentralization to strengthen basic services, and argued for the transformation of our consumption models to ensure a recovery mindful of local communities while Abdessamad Sekkal, President of the Rabat-Salé-Kénitra Regional Council, and President of ORU-FOGAR, argued for the importance of subsidiarity and citizens’ participation in decision making for SDG implementation in the post-COVID-19 era.

The importance of financing public service provision was also emphasized during the panel whereby the Director General, Cities and Villages Development Bank, and Acting Secretary General, Ministry of Local Administration, Jordan, Osama Al Azzam, stressed that without sustainable means, we will not be able to ensure a resilient recovery, particularly referring to sustainable energy provision.

The panel was then closed by Deputy General Secretary, Public Services International, David Boys, who underlined that the importance of providing support to local public service provision became even clearer during the pandemic and that now more than ever is there a strong need to reform our current systems to ensure the health and rights of all are protected. He argued that this would allow not only to strengthen local democracy but also to address economic inequality and adequately fund basic services.

### **Multilevel governance and sustainable financing**

The second panel of the Forum, moderated by Haoliang Xu, Director, Bureau for Policy and Programme Support, UNDP, focused on the essential role that multilevel governance is playing in the achievement of the SDGs and during the pandemic as well as the need to scale up local and sustainable financing to ensure no one and no place is left behind. In this regard, Haoliang Xu started the conversation by recalling the importance of multilevel co-creation in achieving

the universal agendas and especially in monitoring and reporting processes such as Voluntary Local Reviews.

During the panel discussion, there was an emphasis on the link between multilevel governance and the achievement of the SDGs with a particular focus on realizing a green future for all. In this regard, Thembisile Nkadimeng, Mayor of Polokwane, President of the South African Local Government Association, and UCLG Co-President, called on all spheres of government to carry out investments for a greener future emphasizing that it is critical for the multilateral system to support and empower local and regional governments to maintain their commitments with the universal development agendas. This message was also echoed by Mr. Ashok Sridharan, Mayor of Bonn, and President of ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability, who urged local and regional governments to present ambitious commitments during the 26th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Glasgow.

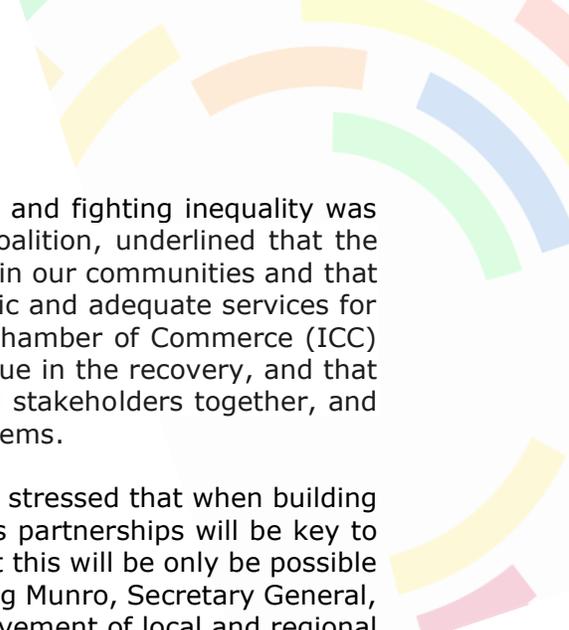
Moreover, the relationship between multilevel governance and strengthening local financing was highlighted. In particular, Claudia López, Mayor of Bogotá, argued for strengthening the connections between local governments to ensure that they receive the adequate financial and technical assistance to ensure green and sustainable recoveries while Célestine Ketcha Courtès, Minister of Housing and Urban Development, Cameroon, called for strong synergies between local and national governments, development partners, and the UN to build back better and rethink sustainable development.

Finally, Linda Bilmes, Harvard Kennedy School, and UN Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA), stressed that national governments and financial institutions must assist local and regional governments with resources to finance public service provision and commended the efforts of local and regional leaders in integrating the SDGs into local financing such as through the use of participatory budgeting. The Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General on Disability and Accessibility, María Soledad Cisternas Reyes, highlighted that COVID-19 should be seen as an opportunity to make accessibility a main element of our recovery stating that more accessibility means less poverty.

### **Building Back Better**

The third panel of the Local and Regional Governments Forum focused on building back better and was moderated by Elliott Harris, UN Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development and Chief Economist, who highlighted that we can only build back better and provide a more just and sustainable future by addressing the needs of our environment, economies, and societies with the SDGs as a framework.

To this end, Wim Dries, Mayor of Genk and President, Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities, provided “three” key pillars that need to be considered to effectively build back better: 1) policies that are sustainable on both the local and global levels; 2) the full involvement of local and regional governments in the post-COVID19 recovery; and 3) multi-stakeholder partnerships. In a similar vein, Ilsur Metshin, Mayor of Kazan, and President of the UN Advisory Committee of Local Authorities (UNACLA), stressed the importance of upscaling local action to build back better by making an explicit reference to local public service provision during the pandemic. Armand Béouindé, Mayor of Ouagadougou, argued that it is through dialogues, exchanges, and cooperation that we will be able to develop new cities and new economies that can fulfill the needs of our territories.



During the panel, the relationship between building back better and fighting inequality was also stressed. Adriana Allen, President, Habitat International Coalition, underlined that the COVID-19 crisis has shed light on the inequalities that exist within our communities and that “building back better” will necessarily entail the provision of basic and adequate services for all. Andrew Wilson, Permanent Observer for the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) to the UN, similarly stressed that local solutions are of great value in the recovery, and that there is little chance of building back better without bringing all stakeholders together, and fostering inclusion and the resilience of economic and social systems.

Lastly, UCLG Africa Secretary General, Jean Pierre Elong Mbassi, stressed that when building back better we should particularly look at SDG 17 as a guide as partnerships will be key to ensure we foster resilient, sustainable and just societies and that this will be only be possible with the contribution of all spheres of government. Similarly, Greg Munro, Secretary General, CLGF, argued that multilevel governance and the complete involvement of local and regional governments at decision-making tables will foster trust between citizens and institutions.

During the closing ceremony, Tijjani Muhammad Bande, President of the 74th UN General Assembly, stressed that partnerships will be key to overcoming the challenges arising from the pandemic and in the achievement of the SDGs. Specifically, he argued that partnerships between spheres of government will be especially essential in building back better and ensuring the provision of basic public services.

Selwin Hart, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General and Assistant Secretary-General for Climate Action, brought to the participants’ attention that the leadership of local and regional governments has not gone unnoticed, not only in the provision of basic services but also as drivers of transformation on the climate front and he stressed that they must continue to advocate for nature. On the other hand, Antonio de Mello, Coordinator of International Relations, Rio de Janeiro City Hall, Brazil, underlined the importance of strengthening local financing moving forward.

Closing the forum, UCLG President, Mohamed Boudra, Mayor of Al Hoceima and President of the Moroccan Association of Mayors, stressed that our future must be green and sustainable and that the pillar that should guide our footsteps moving forward is solidarity while Secretary General of UCLG, Emilia Saiz, underscored the need for a more inclusive multilateral system to advance in the post-COVID-19 recovery and achievement of the 2030 Agenda. In this regard Ms. Saiz urged participants to provide their SDG acceleration actions to the UN to ensure local voices for the SDGs and the recovery are heard.

Acceleration Action platform: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgactions>

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