

Dr. Mohamed Boudra, Mayor of Al Hoceima, President of United Cities and Local Governments

Opening of the Local and Regional Governments Forum

13 July, 2020 08.30 – 09.00 EST

Your Excellencies, Deputy Secretaries-General of the United Nations, His Excellency, President of the General Assembly, Distinguished Ministers and members of national governments, esteemed mayors and members of civil society, dear colleagues,

Let me begin by welcoming you to this third edition of the Forum on Local and Regional Governments, within the framework of the High-Level Political Forum. Let me thank the co-organizers, The Under Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs Liu Zhenmin, and the Under Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN-Habitat Maimunah Mohd. Sharif, and express my satisfaction at being able to bring, at such a sensitive time, the voices of local and regional governments to the global decision-making table.

We cannot undermine the importance of meeting today, within the framework of the third Forum on Local and Regional Governments, at a time of unprecedented crisis and when our communities need their representatives more than ever. We meet with a twofold objective: to discuss how we carry out the recovery, among all spheres of government, and to ensure that this recovery plan takes into account our common development goals.

Local and regional governments, the constituency to which I belong, have been and continue to be at the forefront of combating the many facets of this crisis, guaranteeing public services that have been key to support our health response, but – and this is the key to the forum – the urgency of crises cannot allow us to forget what is important. What matters is the roots of the crisis, the weaknesses of our systems. Inequality. We know

the causes well and we've numbered them. Indeed, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals must be the priority for our recovery.

That's why we're here for another year, with even more strength and determination. Virtually, but together.

The fight against the virus has become a fight against poverty and structural inequalities, particularly at the local level, which have been exacerbated by the virus, and it has been the provision of public services that contained these growing inequalities. That is why local and regional governments must be involved in the discussion on how to finance them, reviving a long-standing debate that should have taken place long before now.

Talking about local action and community ownership without adequate basic services is a contradiction. This is our key message to this High-Level Political Forum.

Access for people to adequate housing, water, sanitation, education, food systems, mobility and health is a sine qua non requirement. We now have empirical evidence of its importance and the interdependence of our system.

It is important that national development and recovery plans include plans to localize the agendas around basic public services and local action in communities.

The sacrifices of our communities cannot go unnoticed. Our resilience, after the crisis and the sustainability of the planet are at stake in the Decade of Action.

This crisis should be an opportunity to accelerate the appropriation of the 2030 agenda in our communities, adopting this new social contract to build back better and it will be critical to offer spaces at the decision-making table for all spheres of government in the coming year.

Local governments are prepared to co-create a governance framework, and are ready to be consulted and to offer our own localization experiences in the form of our Local and Subnational Voluntary Reports.

I invite you to read our annual report on localization which was released last Friday which gives a good summary of what is being done, but also what remains to be done.

I would like to end by sharing the vision of the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the importance of building a world of solidarity. Local and regional governments around the world have made solidarity their flag during this crisis, and we are convinced that the world that emerges after COVID must make it its flag as well.

The renewed and strengthened multilateralism after the pandemic must be based on solidarity, on the principle of subsidiarity, and must take into account all actors, and the most vulnerable communities. In this year of commemoration for the United Nation's 75th anniversary, we offer our support to rethink multilateralism. We do this for the hope of the generations to come and to those we already represent.

Your Excellency, distinguished ministers, dear colleagues:

From the constituency of local and regional governments, gathered in their networks represented here today, we offer you our commitment, our cooperation and the creativity of our communities. We are ready to contribute, and to jointly shape the world in this Decade of Action.

You can count on us.

Thank you,