Major Group Position Paper

The Local Authorities Major Group's Vision and priorities for the Sustainable Development Goals

Initial Draft: March 2014

Introduction

This short position paper details the Local Authorities Major Group's (LAMG) vision and priorities - including themes, goals, targets and indicators – for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the wider post-2015 development agenda and the High Level Political Forum (HLPF). It forms part of the European Commission-funded multi-stakeholder engagement programme *"Sustainable Development 2015" (SD2015)*. This paper provides an opportunity for the Major Group to communicate and consult on its position as a basis for ongoing stakeholder engagement, capacity building and advocacy.

The paper sits alongside similar position papers authored by the other Major Groups. A synthesis report of these position papers is provided by Stakeholder Forum in order to identify common priorities and important differences across the Major Groups' positions and compare them with the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals' (OWG) 'focus areas', published in February 2014. The review will be used as a basis for engagement between the Major Groups and the OWG, and to establish priority clusters for further coordination and advocacy work on those themes. The individual papers will be updated by the respective Major Groups in September 2014 following a series of global and regional capacity building, outreach and advocacy exercises under the *SD2015* programme.

The constituency represented by the LAMG is fully committed to end extreme poverty in all its forms, in the context of sustainable development, and to contribute to put in place the building blocks of sustained prosperity for all. As the government bodies with much of the responsibility for meeting many of the MDGs and goals suggested for post 2015, we commit to ensuring that local and regional governments address these responsibilities and to demonstrating how poverty reduction, prosperity and sustainable development can be combined.

We highlight the need to ensure that the new development agenda is people-centered; focusing on the actors and institutions that are required to build sustainability and prosperity. The new development agenda should be ONE (integrating all processes), and universal at the same time that it recognizes differentiated responsibilities. It should acknowledge local and regional governments as a specific sphere of government and as key actors of development, building on their proven contribution to innovative solutions addressing global and local challenges.

Thus, the LAMG strongly encourages Member States and global development community to adopt a stand-alone goal on sustainable urbanization (UrbanSDG) in the Post-2015 Development Agenda. Such a decision will:

a) Provide holistic, integrated, territorial-based, inclusive, visionary and transformative solutions to address and meet the complex social, economic, environmental, cultural and institutional challenges of the "Urban World" of the 21st century.

b) Seize the opportunities that local and subnational governments entail as actors and governmental stakeholders of development and through urban areas as agents of national economic growth and as the locus of technological, social, and governance innovation.

c) Foster multi-level and multi-stakeholder collaboration, necessary for concomitantly managing and planning urban areas, urban-rural continuums, surrounding areas, communities and ecosystems.

Summary

The LAMG believes that an UrbanSDG must seek to be:

a) "Transformative and Integrative" – led by a multi-sector and integrated territorial approach to reduce poverty and inequalities, linking urban and rural land use, including informal settlements (improving the lives of slum dwellers), with the provision of basic services such as food, energy, water and sanitation, mobility and opportunities for employment –especially, green jobs- , sustained inclusive and equitable economic growth, as well as resilience, with a gender-sensitive approach.

b) "Prioritizing, Enabling and Innovating" – in particular to strengthen local governance, accountable local and regional governments and the exercise of urban planning in order to halt ongoing unplanned, uncontrolled and unsustainable urban development and impacts over adjacent areas –especially, ecosystems, with stronger participation of local stakeholders.

c) "Progressively Measurable as part of Visioning the Future" – with specific criteria to measure "progress", not for the sake of the "indicators" themselves, but rather to encourage accountability, transparency and inclusive engagement and decision-making through participatory dialogues "for the progress".

An UrbanSDG must build upon the participatory approach that was agreed in 1992 and based on Local Agenda 21 planning or similar local participatory planning processes. It is difficult to embrace an UrbanSDG if its implementation does not build on local and subnational participation and territorial accountability in visioning our global future.

Our position

Cities represent both the greatest challenge and the greatest hope for a sustainable future. Just six hundred urban centers generate 60% of the world´s GDP, consume approximately 70% of energy production worldwide, and account for a roughly equivalent share of global CO_2 emissions. While cities are important hubs of service provision for urban dwellers and the surrounding communities, we also see increasing inequalities both in low income countries and middle income countries. There are worldwide cases where cities are home to extreme deprivation, social segregation, and environmental degradation with one billion people living in slums.

UN projections suggest that almost all the growth in the world's population in 2010-2030 will be in urban areas in today's low- and middle-income countries. The infrastructure to provide food, basic services and employment for all these 1.4 billion new urban-dwellers still does not exist. Moreover, unsustainable patterns of consumption and production and dependency on fossil fuels in existing human settlements continue to prevail. Furthermore, urban population growth will be accompanied by an expansion of the built-up area of cities over neighbor areas, much of which will take place in low-elevation coastal and other risky zones that are adjacent to biodiversity hotspots and prone to cyclones, floods and sea-level rise.

Notwithstanding these challenges, cities and regions also offer the greatest opportunities for advancing economic, social and environmental well-being. The density and innovative capacity of cities provide a unique opportunity to stimulate more sustainable consumption and production patterns. Effective and participatory governance at all levels can harness the agglomeration advantages of cities. Sustainable urban development policies can contribute to the eradication of extreme poverty, stimulate economic development boost urban creativity, culture and diversity, make public services more accessible, increase social inclusion, promote gender equality, boost civic participation, limit urban sprawl, enhance sustainable consumption and production, and reduce degradation of ecosystems, disaster risks and greenhouse gas emissions.

Participation and good local governance are cornerstones for the progress of local democracy. Elected local governments play an important role in ensuring inclusive, transparent, accountable, democratic and rights based institutions. Particular attention should be devoted to the participation of women and other vulnerable groups in local institutions.

Cities will be able to meet all these challenges through coordination, interconnection, policy coherence and integrated territorial approaches at the subnational level. A multi-level approach, based on territories, is a unique enabler to achieving SDGs in all human settlements, and above all to address linking flows among cities, peri-urban, rural and natural areas.

Furthermore, urban spatial planning is a highly effective entry point for improving the functioning of a city and its linkages with rural and natural areas. The effectiveness of how urban spaces are planned, built and managed will be critical to the realization of the economic, social, and environmental aspirations of the SDGs.

In defining the Post-2015 Development Agenda, we urge SDGs OWG members to build on the lessons and achievements of the MDGs, and to capitalize on the megatrend of urbanization in order to halt growing inequality and longstanding poverty through intervening at the city-region scale via an UrbanSDG.

Goals and Targets

Annex-I of this document presents an overview of six proposals developed by members and partners of LAMG, listed below. The LAMG further acknowledges and welcomes additional valuable proposals by other Major Groups and encourages all of these to be considered under the [Sustainable Cities Thematic Cluster](#) position paper as well.

1- [Global Taskforce (GTF) of Local & Regional Governments for Post-2015 Development Agenda towards Habitat III](#)

2- [Communitas Coalition for Sustainable Cities and Regions in the New UN Development Agenda](#)

3- [Joint Statement of Major Groups (endorsed by UCLG, ICLEI, MGCY, WFEO, ICC-France, 4D)](#)

4- [Institute of Advanced Sustainability Studies - City of Bogota](#)

5- [UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN)](#)

6- [UN Habitat](#)

The proposals listed in Annex-I, among others, have the potential to converge into a set of robust targets that can skilfully address the social, economic and environmental pillars of the Post-2015 Development Agenda, supported with strong and innovative participatory practices and multi-level governance processes. As clearly demonstrated during Session 7 of the OWG, there is broad political support, including a majority of Member States and all Major Groups, a detailed vision, and robust technical capacity that the LAMG can capture and mobilize to contribute to delivering the Sustainable Development Agenda from the bottom up. An UrbanSDG would greatly contribute to increasing the ownership of this constituency and to enhance its role at catalyst of development.

Framework

Cross-cutting Issues

While the LAMG proposes an UrbanSDG, we also consider the following themes and issues identified by the OWG as additional priorities: multi-level governance (inclusive, transparent and participatory), peaceful societies and dialogue, human rights, promoting gender equality, cultural diversity and opposing any discrimination, climate change, biodiversity, transport, sustainable consumption and production, institutional frameworks for sustainable development by effective decentralization and strengthening of local institutions, capacity building and finance.

Spreading urban issues across separate goals (for infrastructure, social services, and environmental sustainability) without a goal on sustainable urbanization would fail to harness the urban opportunity through an integrated, multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder approach. Moreover, it would fail to mobilize local and subnational governments as key stakeholders in planning for and managing the urbanization process, the defining trend of the next several decades. Meanwhile, including relevant urban targets where appropriate in other relevant SDGs in addition to an UrbanSDG will support the cross-cutting nature of urbanization.

Placing the Position

Cities and regions are the places where most technological, policy, and governance innovation occurs to address sustainability issues, thereby providing the basis for national- and international-scale adoption of best practices. Most importantly, local and subnational governments will ultimately be the implementers of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as translators and enablers of the various international and national targets and indicators into actionable policies and programs, adapted to the specific needs of a given community. Besides, their bottom-up information is essential to global decision-making and feedback to monitor progress. At the Rio+20 outcome document, national governments have also acknowledged the important role that local and subnational authorities can play as governmental stakeholders in implementing sustainable development.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Parallel to their implementation capacity, which certainly varies based on their respective capacities and resources, local and subnational governments have already been advancing measurable, reportable, verifiable progress, with climate and biodiversity as specific examples. Locally/territorially disaggregated data are required to adequately monitor and address infra-state inequalities, as well as socially vulnerable sectors. The proposed targets and development and refinement of indicators will be adjusted based on the outcomes of the political process through OWG-II as well as the full negotiations, culminating in the high-level summit in September 2015.

Next Steps

Since Rio+20, members of the LAMG have been strongly engaged in the official OWG process and have voluntarily engaged in a worldwide consultation mechanism: Global Taskforce of Local & Regional Governments for Post-2015 Development Agenda towards Habitat III, which includes most of the regional and global networks and enriches the work of the Major Group. They have further engaged in numerous other efforts, including the initiatives of the UN SG such as the High Level Panel, the UN Sustainable Solutions Development Network and the Communitas Coalition and the promotion of the #UrbanSDG Campaign.

The LAMG is committed to continue contributing to the second phase of the OWG. The ECOSOC Integrated Segment on 27-29 May focusing on sustainable urbanization, as well as the second meeting of the High Level Political Forum may provide important opportunities for the LAMG engagement and input into the post-2015 development agenda. Synergies will be sought through the outcomes of parallel processes, including those focused on climate, biodiversity and disaster risk reduction, where local and subnational entities are explicitly recognized. Finally, the HABITAT III process will be a key milestone in the implementation of the post-2015 agenda.

Conclusion

In recent decades, in a majority of countries, local democracy and decentralization have emerged as effective approaches to governance in response to people's demands for democracy, as well as to regional conflicts. These lessons should be reflected in the new development agenda. Furthermore, the LAMG strongly believes that the growing reality of an "Urban World" in the 21st century dictates the necessity of an UrbanSDG. We urge members of the UN SDGs OWG and other policymakers to seize this opportunity through the SDGs by adopting an UrbanSDG as well as reflecting territorial targets in other relevant SDGs. The adoption of such a goal will demonstrate the integrating role cities and regions play, their importance in global resource footprints, and their key contributions in achieving long-term sustainability for all by translating broad global goals into concrete real-world implementation efforts. Moreover, an UrbanSDG will send a strong political signal and provide a solid policy framework to enable and empower action by all levels of government, in strong collaboration with civil society, the scientific community, the private sector, and the philanthropic world.

ANNEX-I: Mapping of proposals for a Sustainable Development Goal on Cities developed by Members/Partners of LAMG

	Global Taskforce (GTF) of Local & Regional Governments for Post-2015 Development Agenda towards Habitat III	Communitas Coalition for Sustainable Cities and Regions in the New UN Development Agenda	Joint Statement of Major Groups (endorsed by UCLG, ICLEI, MGCY, WFEO, ICC-France, 4D)	Institute of Advanced Sustainability Studies - City of Bogota	UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN)	UN Habitat
Goal	**The goal should promote socially inclusive, economically productive and environmentally sustainable and resilient cities and territories, with participative, efficient and accountable city governance to support equitable urban development.**	**Achieve sustainable urbanization that is inclusive, productive and resilient**	**Urbanization at the heart of the challenge of sustainable development**	**Establishing a Sustainable Development Goal on Cities: inclusive, resilient and connected**	**Empower Inclusive, Productive and Resilient Cities**	**Achieve safe, inclusive, productive and resilient cities and human settlements**
Targets	**Poverty reduction and equality in urban areas** (e.g.access to basic needs and services, food security, housing and slums, land tenure)	**Cluster One: Fundamental Urban Patterns** (e.g. urban density, green space, travel duration)	**A - Develop strong and accountable institutions:** (e.g. decentralization, participatory democracy)	Increase access to public space and services	**End extreme urban poverty,** expand employment and productivity, and raise living standards, especially in slums.	**Cluster One: Improved Spatial Configuration** (e.g. urban sprawl, public space, public transport)
	More socially inclusive economic growth (e.g. local economic development, informal sector, culture, heritage, job creation, young and women)	**Cluster Two: Urban Life of Dignity for All Within Planetary Boundaries** (e.g. access to affordable basic services, employement, ICT, social inclusion)	**B - Address poverty eradication, inequality reduction and well-being:** (e.g. access to basic services and jobs, gender, nature in urban space)	Deliver social protection to informal sector workers	**Ensure universal access** to a secure and affordable built environment and basic urban services including housing; water, sanitation and waste management; low-carbon energy and transport; and mobile and broadband communication.	**Cluster Two: Improved Living Conditions** (e.g.: slums, land tenure, access to water and sanitation)
	Sustainable and healthy urban environment - (e.g. urban pollution, energy, GHG emissions, resilience, national integration, waste, transfer of ITC)	**Cluster Three: Governance and Accountability** (e.g. participatory mechanisms, local monitoring, multilevel global governance)	**C – Develop strong capacity building framework to make sustainable urbanization a reality** (e.g. local technical and financial capacity, energy-climate, corruption, safety and resilience)	Reduce travel time	**Ensure safe** air and water quality for all, and integrate reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, efficient land and resource use, and climate and disaster resilience into investments and standards.	**Cluster Three: Enabling Urban Policies** (e.g. inclusive national planning, resilience, public expenditure)
	Urban management and governance - (e.g. accountability, multi-level governance, public participation, local government development cooperation and peer-to-peer learning, planning, public space)	**Cluster Four: Enabling Policies** (e.g. preemptive designs and plans for crises and disasters, fossil fuel subsidies, monitoring and peer review at the local level)	**D - Ensure a sustainable ecological footprint, taking into consideration common but differentiated responsibilities** (e.g. mobility, resilience, efficiency, waste reduction, biodiversity)	Limit the use of private vehicles		**Cluster Four: Targets Relevant to Other likely SDGs** (e.g. job creation, renewable energy and improved access to energy)
		Cluster Five: Territorial Dimension of Other SDG Themes (e.g. ecosystem based adaptation, city-region food systems and urban-rural linkages)	**E - Promote local and territorial economic development** (e.g. SMEs, labor rights, PPPs, informal economy)	Green the cities		
			F - Promote sustainable consumption and production (e.g.: overuse, lifestyles, penalties, lifecycle)	Measure the share of regionally grown food in urban citizens' diets		
			G - Culture as driver and enabler of development and people-centered societies (e.g. diversity, Agenda21 spirit, public space, education)			