

**7th SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OPEN WORKING GROUP ON SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDG OWG-7) – 6-10 January 2014**

Sustainable Cities and Human settlements

Intervention of Local Authorities Major Group

Delivered by David Cadman, President, ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability, LAMG OP

THE WORLD NEEDS AN URBAN-SDG TO REACH GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY

Mr. Co-Chair,

It gives me a great pleasure to address the member states of the United Nations in my capacity as the president of ICLEI, which is a global network of local governments for sustainability with more than 1000 members that compasses More than 12 mega-cities, 100 super-cities and urban regions, 450 large cities as well as 450 medium-sized cities and towns in more than 80 countries.

We promote local action for global sustainability and supports cities to become sustainable, resilient, resource-efficient, biodiverse, low-carbon; to build a smart infrastructure; and to develop an inclusive, green urban economy with the ultimate aim to achieve healthy and happy communities.

And we are one of the “oldest kids on the block”, pursuant to our role in the formulation, adoption and implementation of Chapter 28 of Agenda 21 as well as being the only local government network that is accredited as observer at the three Rio Conventions, Climate Change -Biodiversity – Desertification, facilitating global engagement of local and subnational governments in these processes as governmental stakeholders.

ICLEI is also an active member of the Global Task Force of Local and Regional Governments for Post2015 Development Agenda Towards HABITATIII¹ and facilitates Local Government Climate Roadmap².

When reflecting upon the current discussions on the SDGs and what kind of SDGs are needed, I think that it is essential to look at the underlying drivers of current and continuing environmental degradation.

¹ www.gtf2016.org

² www.iclei.org/climate-roadmap

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Whilst these trends are certainly linked to our production and consumption patterns, they are also linked to the current population growth patterns and in particular the rapid urbanization and globalisation.

In 1990, -so when preparing for the first Rio Summit- we were 5 billion people; 20 years later, in 2010, we were 7 billion people. Today, 3.5 billion people live in cities, which is half of the global population.

As a result, currently, 75 % of energy is consumed in cities and thus contributing vastly to Co2, other GHG emissions and pollutants.

The fact that 600 cities account for 60 % of global GDP and that 75 % of all GDP globally is generated in cities contrast the fact that majority of these cities are located in coastal zones of areas highly vulnerable to impacts of climate change and natural disasters.

So the real story here is that it took us 4000 years to provide for the urban infrastructure to host the 3.5 billion urban population as we know it today.

However, if trends continue - we will need to provide in the next 40 years for the same amount of urban infrastructure for another 3.5 billion people, all in need of water, energy, mobility, housing and food.

This vast and rapid urbanization is going to impact all we currently do or have done until now in all spheres of policy, governance and implementation.

Generally speaking, we just cannot continue to construct our buildings, use our cars, produce and consume our products in the ways we have been doing over the last 100 years. We must find more efficient, smart, integrated and equitable ways to do so.

As these are important drivers of our current problems and as these come together in the complex urban systems which cities are, we believe that unless cities and urban areas are taken into account at all levels of governance and policy making including at the global level, sustainable development for this planet cannot be achieved, nor can there be sustainability for us, the people. For these reasons it seems to us ICLEI that it absolutely essential to advocate for a stand-alone SDG on cities.

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At this stage, we also would like to underline the clear role of local and subnational governments in reaching to a global vision of an urbansdg.

As the closest administration to citizens, Local governments are a key partner for driving global efforts sustainability and reaching any goals, pursuant to their role mode to citizens through,

- direct demonstration of good practices in municipal operations
- enabling grants and managing public budgets
- performing their legislative authorities on taxation and incentives
- and exerting their political power through commitments and leadership

The good news, we are not at “point zero” and the past two decades contains a wealth of experience in this regard:

- Inspired by Chapter 28 in Agenda 21, tens of thousands of local initiatives and urban projects in many cities, towns and counties, improved local and global environmental conditions but most importantly, introduced and anchored a participatory governance culture.³
- Strengthened with their global political commitments and through innovative reporting mechanisms, hundreds of local and subnational governments are advancing with their ambitious climate mitigation and adaptation plans and actions.⁴

More importantly, we would like to underline the positive response of national governments and global partners to facilitate recognition, engagement and empowerment of local and subnational governments, which particularly intensified in the second half of 2000s.

Let me recall that, you as national governments have already;

- recognized local and subnational governments as governmental stakeholders of global climate regime, and accepted their role, potential and power in raising global level of ambition⁵

³ <http://local2012.iclei.org/local-sustainability-study/>

⁴ www.citiesclimaterestory.org

⁵ para.7 of Dec.1/CP16, UNFCCC COP16 in 2010 and para.5b of Dec.1/CP19 of UNFCCC COP19 in 2013

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- adopted a 10-year action plan enables their engagement to meet global biodiversity targets ⁶
- and finally at Rio+20 Summit, acknowledged efforts and progress made at the local and subnational levels, and recognized the important role that such authorities and communities can play in implementing sustainable development.⁷

In our view, an urban SDG must essentially seek to be

- a) “Transformative and Integrative”: this sdg must be led by a multi sector approach, linking urban land use including informal settlement with urban energy, with water, with resilience, with mobility and opportunities for employment ,
- b) “Prioritizing, Enabling and Innovating ” in particular the exercise of urban planning as ongoing unplanned, uncontrolled urban development has to be halted.
- c) “Progressively Measurable as part of Visioning the Future”: this SDG will need essential criteria to measure progress and indicators not for the sake of the indicators themselves but rather to allow a local engagement through participatory dialogues “for the progress”.

We encourage delegates and national governments to go beyond localization of SDGs and adopt a stand-alone goal for cities and urban development, in order to meet the challenges, seize the opportunities of implementation of SDGs and ensure a full and rapid transformation of our societies to a universal and holistic sustainable development.

We are also happy to have the diverse and strong support of the global think-tanks including SDSN, all 9 Major Groups and UNHabitat for a stand-alone goal on sustainable urbanization.⁸

If 1 out of 2 will live cities in Urban World of 2030, UrbanSDG is not an option, but a must to reach global goals. The world’s cities and citizens need an UrbanSDG, as much as the national governments and the global community need the support of local and subnational governments as no global targets or goals can be reached without us.

⁶ Dec.X/22, CBD COP10, Nagoya, 2010,

⁷ para.42 of “The Future We Want” Document

⁸ <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=9502&menu=1565&nr=15>, www.urbansdg.org, www.urbansdg.uclg.org