



GLOBAL TASKFORCE
OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS
FOR **POST-2015** DEVELOPMENT AGENDA
TOWARDS **HABITAT III**

CONTRIBUTION OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS TO THE OWG8
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Local and regional governments from all the regions of the world, represented by the Global Task Force, support the **promotion of peace, the rule of law and good governance as core components of the Post-2015 Agenda**. We consider that these principles are closely interrelated with social and gender equality. For their accomplishment, **government at all levels** –sub-national,¹ national and global– should adopt **strong commitments, supported by measurable and disaggregated indicators in all related goals and targets**.

The Global Task Force highlights that local and sub-national authorities have particular responsibilities related to governance due to their proximity to the communities they serve. In many countries, local governments establish clear guidelines and practices on governance, either set out in law or by self-regulation (e.g. codes of ethics) in order to make sure that they are accountable to their citizens. However, a lot remains to be done if we want to build peaceful and fairer societies for all.

The Rio +20 outcome document confirms the importance of freedom, peace and security, respect for all human rights, including gender equality, and acknowledges 'democracy, good governance and the rule of law (...) as essential for sustainable development'..., stressing that the world 'needs institutions *at all levels* that are effective, transparent, accountable and democratic'. (A/RES/66/288).

Many of the reports and briefs that contribute to this debate (*High-Level Panel on the Post-2015 Agenda, UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, UN TST Issues Brief*) argue that violence reduction and safety, transparent, accountable and effective public institutions, and civil society participation, are all interrelated with sustainable development, 'conceptually, as well as empirically at the national and global levels'. However, they do not sufficiently recognize the importance of **local** actors and actions in fostering these positive relationships. While global and national governance often deals with essential systemic policies, local governance involves intensive interaction with citizens that is crucial for sustainable peace.²

Why are local governments critical for the sustainable development agenda?

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 principles also enable appropriate responses to many other structural needs such as:

Basic service provision

Local and regional governments have taken on an increasing role in a range of basic services that are critical for poverty reduction and sustainable development (e.g. water, sanitation, basic education, health, environmental protection, culture, urban and territorial planning, etc.).³

Territorial cohesion

The world is facing rapid urbanization (more than two-thirds of humanity will live in urban areas by 2050), with an increase in the number of cities with more than one million inhabitants and in the number of medium-sized towns. These urban areas will, to varying degrees, face insufficient infrastructure, difficulty in delivering basic services and increasing environmental degradation. Violence and safety are also growing problems in many urban areas. Urbanization creates a need for innovative mechanisms to govern and serve urban areas that are growing in size, complexity and number. The management of migration is becoming a challenge in many contexts, not only for national governments; local governments are increasingly involved in the management of migration. Local governments are key players in ensuring urban governance and well-functioning interaction between urban centres and surrounding rural areas. As

¹ In this document "sub-national governments" refers to all local and intermediate levels: municipalities, cities, provinces, regional governments, etc.

² A Users' Guide to Measuring Local Governance, UNDP Oslo Governance Centre (2009) p. 7.

³ UCLG, *Access to basic services in an urbanizing world, Third Global Report on Local Democracy and Decentralization*, Routledge, 2014.

the economic and social linkages between rural and urban areas increase, their relationship contributes to regional integration.

Inclusion, accountability, participation

Local democracy has made important progress, but considerable efforts are needed to strengthen effective, transparent and accountable local institutions. Sub-national authorities can only take on their responsibilities and be held accountable by their constituents if the distribution of resources and responsibilities between different levels of government is clearly defined and well balanced. Developing solid intergovernmental relations and appropriate governance represents a daunting challenge that should be reflected in adequate expenditure at the local level.

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, both through traditional forms of public consultation and innovative forms of participation (i.e. participatory budgeting and planning).

Transparency

Improving the freedom of information and access to government data at all levels of government, as well as the disaggregation of indicators and sub-national data collection, is imperative.

Resilience, peace and dialogue

As the TST Issues Brief points out and recent developments in the streets of many world cities demonstrate, violent conflicts are now more likely to take place within states than between them. It is therefore essential that sub-national governments strengthen their resilience to both prevent conflicts and promote peace in the aftermath of crisis and disasters. Intercultural dialogue and the recognition of and respect for cultural diversity forge more inclusive, stable and resilient societies. The role of adequate decentralization and local governance in securing peace in conflict-afflicted areas⁴ should be further acknowledged.

The Global Task Force of Local and Regional Governments stresses the importance of 'democratic self-governing, participative, efficient, accountable and resourced Local Government...within the framework of a better intergovernmental coordination' in order for the SDGs to be successful.

We reiterate the need to include a strong commitment on good governance at all levels, explicitly including all forms of sub-national governments. This should be articulated with a broad SDG on sustainable urbanization with strong components on safety, accountability and basic service delivery that are underpinned by clear governance targets.⁵ The implementation and monitoring of governance targets also needs to be undertaken by all levels of government, including by local and regional governments.



⁴ See DeLoG, *Post 2015 Global Development Agenda, Making the Case for Decentralisation and Local Governance*. (http://delog.org/cms/upload/pdf/DeLoG_WorkingPaperNo2_Feb2013_Post_2015.pdf)

⁵ Local leaders in different forums have called for the recognition of sub-national governments in the SDG agenda (i.e. *Munyonyo Statement*, CLGF Meeting, May 2013 in Kampala, endorsed by local governments and by Commonwealth Heads of Government; the Bonn Declaration of Mayors in June 2013; the Mayors Adaptation Forum and at the 4th UCLG Congress in October 2013, in Rabat).