

NINTH SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OPEN WORKING GROUP ON  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDG OWG-9)  
**5th March afternoon session of OWG with MGoS**

**Response to the Focus area 13. Sustainable cities and human  
settlements**

Delivered by Mireia Rozas, nrg4sd representative in New York, LAMG OP

We welcome the inclusion of a focus area on sustainable cities and human settlements for cities represent both the greatest challenge and the greatest hope for a sustainable future.

Cities and regions 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.

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.

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.

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 can contribute to delivering the Sustainable Development Agenda from the bottom up.

An urban SDG should essentially seek to be

- a. “Transformative and Integrative”: this SDG must be led by a multi sector approach, linking urban and rural land use including informal settlement with the provision of basic services such as energy, 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”.
- d. An urban SDG must build upon the participatory approach that was agreed in 1992 and based Local Agenda 21 planning or similarly local participatory planning processes and sustainable development strategies. It is difficult to embrace an urban SDG if its implementation does not involve multilevel and multistakeholder participation on visioning our global future.

**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.**

1. **Poverty reduction and equality in urban areas:** end extreme urban poverty and universalize access to basic services so that these reach vulnerable urban populations, including indigenous peoples and those living in slums and informal settlements which are also expected to increase due to environmental risks. Poverty lines should take account both food needs and the costs of non-food basic needs (e.g. housing and adequate access to essential services). Food security for all requires that poverty lines are adjusted within countries to reflect differences in the costs of food and other basic needs. Reducing inequalities requires equal right to assets, particularly equal rights for all in land tenure, as well as respecting indigenous peoples territorial rights.
2. **More socially inclusive economic growth:** support local economic development as a process that brings together partners to harness local resources for sustainable and equitable economic development; expand urban employment, particularly for young people and female heads of households, encourage higher productivity by integrating the informal sector and marginalized urban areas; ensure access to the urban services that support employment generation (i.e. transport, housing and electricity) and invest in the urban green economy, urban regeneration, culture and heritage.
3. **Sustainable and healthy urban environment:** ensure a decent life for all within the planetary boundaries, reduce urban pollution and achieve marked reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and energy consumption (including improved management of buildings, transport, waste and wastewater management and wider use of clean fuels and renewable energy; buildings and transport management); and develop robust urban climate change and disaster resilience plans integrated into national climate adaptation and mitigation plans.
4. **Urban management and governance:** sustainable development cannot be achieved without strong, accountable, capable and adequately resourced local governments and citizen participation. A wider concept of public governance, supported by reinforced territorial approach and cooperation between different municipalities and levels of government to develop more integrated urban policies (multilevel governance) and public participation in decision-making processes (multi-stakeholder approach), is an essential component of stronger local institutions. Local government development cooperation and peer-to-peer exchanges among local governments should be used as tools to develop stronger local institutions.

## **Conclusion**

We strongly believe that the growing reality of an “Urban World” in the 21<sup>st</sup> 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 and interlinking 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, indigenous peoples, the scientific community, the private sector, and the philanthropic world.