

Local Authorities

Madam Chair

The Local Authorities Major Group would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on excellent preparatory work done to date towards CSD-17. In particular, we appreciate your commitment to ensure that CSD-17 will be a **forward-looking and action-oriented session** which recognises the **inextricably interlinked and cross-cutting** nature of the development challenges we all face.

We know that more than half the world's population already live in cities and towns. This figure is increasing and is likely to accelerate as food, energy and water security matters intensify. People move to our cities and towns for basic services, livelihood opportunities and security. It is here at **the local level**, where mayors and their administrations feel the strain. They are expected to provide, maintain and build infrastructure and all the other services. Residents and visitors often do not distinguish which level of government they expect these services from.

We are seeing many municipal leaders, also in Africa, embracing their pivotal role in sustainable development as we see our local networks and organisations rapidly growing. For instance, 2008 saw ICLEI - Local Govts for Sustainability double its' membership as we now have well over 1000 committed cities around the world joining forces towards sustainable development at local level, notably in the fields of energy efficiency, adaptation to climate change, IWRM and urban biodiversity, which includes urban agriculture, development of markets and the movement of agriculture up the value chain.

What remain critical are increased national and international recognition of the current leadership role and the often untapped potential of local authorities, also in the Global South, as **excellent incubators for innovation and practical hands-on implementing agents**. Our cities and our towns, - **this is where the action needs to happen, the investment needs to be made and where capacity building, skills development, resources and political support are most required** – and this is also where the results can be greatest. Cities are rising to the challenge but need the help from their nations.

I would like to draw your attention to

- 1) the successful official parallel Mayoral biodiversity meetings at the **CBD COP9** in Bonn, May 2008 and the related COP9 Decision IX/28 - and
- 2) the Local Govt Climate Roadmap sessions at the **UNFCCC COP14** in Poznan in December last year.

On both occasions we saw leading mayors, (with strong support from technical experts, development agencies, various UN bodies and some national delegations), boldly committing to practical and measurable local implementation steps. These local leaders need the support, devolved mandates, resources and recognition from their national governments. We thank those many nations who are already committed to such support.

We look forward to inclusive, well-planned and action-oriented local participation in the WWF-5 (and it is good to see that Mayors from across the world are already committing to the **Istanbul Urban Water Consensus** – the Local Govt Declaration linked to WWF-5. In the same way, the **Local Govt Climate Roadmap process, with strong support from the EU** and others, is moving full steam ahead towards Copenhagen in December and we urge national govts to ensure strong local gov representation in the national delegations for both these upcoming events.

We look forward to the week ahead and thank the Bureau for presenting the LG Major Group with the opportunity to participate in this IPM.