

Intervention of the Local Authorities Major Group
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With the publication of the Zero Draft of the outcome document for Rio +20, many ingredients for the recipe of the so much needed change of paradigm are in the kitchen. The question now is: will the international community get the dish right over the next months?. Certainly the meal being prepared is not an ordinary one. Time is as limited as ever. And we are talking about the chance for world leaders to take realistic stock on the environmental, economic and social state of our societies and trace a courageous, realistic and results-oriented path to sustainable development (SD).

This is why, for the next 4 months, we urge national governments to step up the mobilisation of political will; to conduct transparent consultations towards building blocks; to identify concrete agreements in the 3 dimensions of SD, and to adopt science-based monitoring, reporting and verification mechanisms for these agreements.

This is why from the Local Authorities Major Group we urge Member States to upgrade UNEP into a specialised agency; to transform the UN CSD into a Council; to agree on the introduction of SD Goals, and to take bold action towards the establishment of national SD Councils.

And this is also why we urge Member States to renew their commitment to Principle 10 and accompany this with immediate action, including the participation in commitment registries; the extension of the Aarhus Convention, and the introduction of an Ombudsperson for Future Generations.

Local and Subnational Governments we stand ready to contribute constructively to these national commitments and initiatives.

From a local and subnational governments' perspective, we warmly welcome the substantial reference made by the Zero Draft to Local Authorities and the local dimension. We are glad to see the recognition of their essential role and the need to fully integrate them into all levels of decision-making in paragraph 20. However, we also see some margin for improvement in the integration of local and subnational governments, both as regards decision-making and implementation.

I hope we can all agree on the fact that the scale and urgency of the challenge requires action by all levels of government. Among them, Local Authorities, Cities, Federated States and

Regions, which are often responsible for the development and implementation of SD legislation and policy; for economic strategies and fiscal mechanisms, and for encouraging green private investments. The closeness of these levels of government to citizens allows for capitalising on the increasing demand for action, so we can all transition together towards a new development paradigm. Moreover, many are the Federated States, Regions and Cities - from both developing and developed countries - which make SD happen on the ground also by coming together in decentralised cooperation projects.

Because SD happens at the local and subnational levels, it is essential to ensure the territorial dimension of any agreements. This territorial dimension acts as a reality-check of what can actually work on the ground and constitutes an essential driver for deploying action at the quick pace required. To name a few areas, the territorial dimension should be present in green economy toolkits or roadmaps; in the identification of SDGs; in the establishment and functioning of SD councils, and in the access by local and subnational governments to any new financial mechanisms.

The goals of a sustainable development multilateral agreement cannot be achieved without the contribution of all levels of government. In this context, the full potential of Local and Subnational Governments as *governmental stakeholders* must be recognised and also transposed into enhanced engagement within the UN system.

It is not about questioning the role of national governments as sovereign representatives in multilateralism. It is just about empowering coherent, complementary and synergetic action from all tiers of government. In a nutshell, it is about multi-level governance and leadership in the interest of a realistic, courageous and results-oriented path towards SD.

Last but not least, from the perspective of intermediate levels of government -such as Federated States, Regions, Provinces, etc.- the name of the Major Group Local Authorities is restrictive and fails to reflect the multiplicity and complementarity of competences from other tiers of governments below the national level. And most fundamentally, it ignores the essential and strategic characters of the so-called city-region approach in order to vertebrate the development strategies of territories in an integrated sustainable manner.

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